



The Past: A novel

Tessa Hadley

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A mesmerizing novel about family and the modern world encroaching upon the old, from one of Britain's finest contemporary novelists.

Three adult sisters and their brother meet up at their grandparents' country home for their annual family holiday--three long, hot summer weeks. The beloved but crumbling house is full of memories of their childhood--of when their mother took them to stay with her parents when she left their father--but this could be their last summer in the house, now they may have to sell it. And under the idyllic pastoral surface, there are tensions.

Alice has brought with her Kasim, the 20-year-old son of her ex-boyfriend, and he makes plans to seduce the quiet Molly, Roland's 16-year-old daughter. Fran's young children uncover an ugly secret in a ruined cottage in the woods, and observe the growing flirtation. Passion erupts where it's least expected, blasting the quiet self-possession of Harriet, the eldest sister. Roland has come with his new (third) wife, whom his sisters don't like...or do they? A way of life--bourgeois, literate, ritualized, Anglican--winds down to its inevitable end: which is a loss, and a release.

With uncanny precision and extraordinary sympathy, Tessa Hadley charts the squalls of lust and envy disrupting this ill-assorted house party, as well as the consolations of memory and affection, the beauty of the natural world, the shifting of history under the social surface. From the first page the reader is absorbed and enthralled, watching a superb craftsman unfold the lives of these unforgettable siblings.

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