



A Student of Weather

Elizabeth Hay

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From some accidents of love and weather we never quite recover. At the worst of the Prairie dust bowl of the 1930s, a young man appears out of a blizzard and forever alters the lives of two sisters. There is the beautiful, fastidious Lucinda, and the tricky and tenacious Norma Joyce, at first a strange, self-possessed child, later a woman who learns something of self-forgiveness and of the redemptive nature of art. Their rivalry sets the stage for all that follows in a narrative spanning over thirty years, beginning in Saskatchewan and moving, in the decades following the war, to Ottawa and New York City. Disarming, vividly told, unforgettable, this is a story about the mistakes we make that never go away, about how the things we want to keep vanish and the things we want to lose return to haunt us.

A Student of Weather Details

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From Reader Review A Student of Weather for online ebook

Kim says

Honestly, I should be giving this book 1 star, but I'm adding another star because it's Canadian and a lot of the book takes place in an often overlooked part of the country - Saskatchewan.

I just could not like any of the characters - they all irritated me and could not find any redeeming qualities in them to make all their frustrating aspects forgivable. And I just couldn't understand why Elizabeth Hay would allude to so much action yet to happen yet in the next paragraph brush over so many things or mention important events in passing. This book was like a bad Seinfeld episode - it's about nothing. But there was no entertainment factor to be found.

Shirley Schwartz says

This book is totally mesmerizing. I really couldn't put it down. I was totally caught up in the lives of the two sisters Lucinda and Norma Joyce. The book begins right smack in the middle of the dustbowl 1930's on a Saskatchewan farm. This farm is where Lucinda and Norma Joyce were born, as well as Norma Joyce's twin brother Norman. Times were hard and all the country families pulled together to help everyone out. Norma Joyce's twin brother dies at the age of 2 and her mother when Norma Joyce was a little girl. Her sister Lucinda takes over her mother's chores. A young man shows up at their door one day and that event forever changes their lives. From then on Norma Joyce and her sister are rivals for the affection of this captivating young man. This rivalry dogs their relationship forever and changes the course of Norma Joyce's life. And the young man-well he continues on with his own life after he leaves the Hardy girls behind and he's blissfully unaware of the havoc that he has caused. The story covers more than three decades and the setting moves on to Ottawa when Lucinda, Norma Joyce and their father move there. It continues on in New York City where Norma Joyce moves to get away from what she feels is an atmosphere at home that is crushing the life out of her. This is an emotionally intense book to read. Ms. Hay's prose is so succinct and so brilliantly evocative that the story just leaps off the page. And it reminded me that most times people aren't really what they seem to be. The line between good and bad is blurred and no one is ever always good, and in most cases, not always bad either.

Lisa says

This is like two books, first half and second half, 5-star and 1-star.

The first half was phenomenal. I kept dog-earring the pages to remind myself to come back and read an amazing sentence, maybe copy it into my copy journal. The author used present tense in a way that mesmerized you. She also used foreshadowing in a way that slapped you wide awake. I loved that! I was ready to re-read the book before I'd finished it. Norma Joyce and Lucinda, I couldn't wait to see what happened to them.

Then the second half. Norma Joyce was obviously a sicko as a youth but somehow she morphs into someone

we're supposed to respect, like she's normal. Maurice is despicable but she's no better (view spoiler), I was shocked. The story just meandered around, you found out what the foreshadowing was about but it was a big disappointment. Everything just fizzles away and you're left with a trip back to the prairie. Fizzle. The end.

Things I loved: the talk of weather, the names of flowers and trees, and the way different pieces of literature figured in here and there.

I recommend the first half, it was beautifully written, just gorgeous, then I recommend stopping after New York City. And if you don't like reading details about the male sex organ, stop when you read about a tent.

Now for a couple of excerpts:

~ Her small hand reached out to claim him. You hear about women like this, who decide within seconds they're going to marry the man they've just met. It makes you think that boldness counts for more than beauty, and persistence counts for even more.

~ She learned that you can ask anyone anything if you do it in a straightforward way. To see someone questioned by Maurice was to watch a window as the curtains opened. He made people more interesting than they were. They rose to meet the interest he had in them, that was the point, inspired by the quality of their attention.

~ Left behind, one sad old dog. He had known from the moment they began to pack. Lying on his mat beside the kitchen door, he had watched her move from room to room, never lifting his head off the floor - a feat that only a dog could manage, his eyes revolved in his head like tragic marbles.

~ ...doing what she does every day: dusting her father's huge, wounded ego, catering to it, walking around it, patting it, humming to it. Encouraging this great turnip of an ego so that he never grows up, but stands in the doorway exuding his moods until everything has the same turnip smell, the same turnip taste.

BrokenTune says

A Student of Weather was today's choice read to recover from travel, jet lag, and the unpacking and laundry tasks that come with it.

I had high hopes for the novel: It's set during the 1930s in depression-hit dust bowls of Saskatchewan and the New York of the 1960s, and it's by a Canadian author.

The last one, the Canadian factor, may have worked against the book. I'm only half kidding. I love Canadian writing. However, I am also reminded of Will and Ian Ferguson's summary of the Canadian literary novel (found in How to Be a Canadian):

"Handy tip! Write about a family gathering, a funeral or some sort of homecoming. That's the easiest way to bring characters together without having to construct a plot. And make sure to include the free-spirited sister, the recovering alcoholic brother, the other sister (the one who gave up on her dreams and is married to an abusive and/or aloof man) and - last but not least - the standard-issue abusive and/or aloof father figure. Add to the mix some cryptic dialogue about a past betrayal, maybe a dark secret or two, and half-bake at 40F. Do you see how these things just write themselves?"

The thing is, my assessment of every Canadian novel I have read since the Fergusons' above summary has started with a categorisation: either the book fits the description or it doesn't.

The ones that didn't fit the Fergusons' description were, on the whole, much more enjoyable and interesting reads.

Sadly, *A Student of Weather* fits the above description to a T (except there was no recovering alcoholic brother, tho there was a brother who died early on... I am counting this as half a point.). What is even sadder, is that I could not find any other aspect that made this book compelling or that kept me from skim-reading some parts.

It didn't help that the centre premise of the book is based on a love triangle that features some selfish asshat of a guy and two sisters who fight over his affections (which are always engaged elsewhere and for some reason the sisters just cannot see it)... Ugh.

The writing, tho, was very accomplished and I do look forward to trying the other book by Hay on Mt. TBR, *Late Nights on Air*.

Seriously, if that one also has a love triangle in it, I will DNF it faster than than I can type out the book title.

Connie says

The charming Maurice Dove is a botany student sent out to Saskatchewan to study the weather. When he walks into the Hardy home in 1938, he sets off a rivalry between two very different sisters. Lucille was beautiful, golden-haired, orderly and dependable. Norma Joyce was younger, darker, and a collector with a love of nature. Her natural curiosity is stimulated by Maurice's stories. Ernest Hardy, a widower, is a competent but distant man with a clear preference for one of his daughters. Maurice is careless with the love of the two young women causing longterm problems in the family.

"Blowing dust and we think of talcum powder, but it was so coarse it drew blood." The weather in Saskatchewan, especially the wind storms, plays an important role in this book. The hard time on the farm contrasts with their life later in Ontario in an inherited home. The book follows Norma Joyce from her childhood until she returns to Saskatchewan to visit and complete the circle in the 1970s.

Canadian author Elizabeth Hay has created a group of unforgettable, flawed characters. Acts of betrayal, passion, unrequited love, and tortured family dynamics propel the story along. The author's interest in nature shines through with beautiful descriptions of the land and the weather in this enjoyable book.

Misha Mathew says

Rated 4.5

I've sat down to write this review so many times since I read this book almost a month ago. Yet, I couldn't the words to correctly describe my thoughts about *A Student of Weather*. I still can't, but I will try. This is not a fast-paced book, if that's what you like. It doesn't even have a plot as such. In fact, the first few pages were a bit of a struggle to get into. But once I got past that initial hurdle, I could fully appreciate what a

stunning piece of work this is, and how sadly under-appreciated.

Norma Joyce, an imaginative child, was just eight, and her elder sister, Lucinda was just seventeen when they first met the enigmatic Maurice Dove. Maurice seems to know everything that is to know. He is like this mysterious, yet charismatic stranger who seems to belong to a different world altogether - a world so different from that of the small, closed-up world of the two motherless sisters. Lucinda and Norma are instantly drawn to him. Maurice is, at first, enamored by Lucinda's beauty. Norma is jealous and resentful of her "perfect" elder sister, who is also their father's favorite. Lucinda, though she likes to play the part of the "saintly" responsible daughter, has her own jealousies and bitterness. Over the years, the resentment between the sisters increases, as they grow further apart. Maurice ends up breaking the hearts of both the sisters, with some devastating consequences.

There are no characters whom one can call "lovable"; every character is deeply flawed and imperfect. Usually, being unable to like any character spoils a book for me. But somehow that makes this book more realistic, more complex and believable. Despite their imperfections, the author managed to make me feel so attached to the sisters, to feel for them. It was heartbreakingly how their mutual envy ultimately ruined both their lives.

What stands out the most about *A Student of Weather* is the author's lyrical, descriptive prose. The way she describes everything right from the landscape to the characters is mesmerizing, evocative and emotion-laden. *A Student of Weather* is not a light read, nor a very happy one. It's sad, at times even depressing. The ending is not neatly wrapped up, with everything resolved. Yet, every word in this book is to be savored. *A Student of Weather* is a poignant portrayal of the lives of two unforgettable sisters, and definitely worth a read.

Overall:

Spellbinding. Haunting. A must read!

Recommended?

Yes

Sarah says

Achingly lovely. Achingly resonant. It's as if this book was written just for me.

This is instantly my favorite novel.

Jill says

"For most of our lives the days pass waywardly, without meaning, without particular happiness or unhappiness. Then, like turning over a tapestry when you have only known the back of it, there is spread the pattern."

Elizabeth Hay quotes author Jane Gardham as a lead-in to one of the sections of her brilliant and nuanced

novel, *A Student of Weather*. It is an apt quote, because Ms. Hay is fascinated with patterns...from the most ancient to the most contemporary, from natural patterns to patterns of the heart.

The novel begins, as most fairy tales do, with two sisters – one innocent, virtuous and fair and the other dark, homely and inquiring. Both yearn for “Prince Charming” and right away, he appears: “His voice outside, her hand on the coin of frostbite on his cheek, his gift of an apple.”

As readers of fairy tales, we are conditioned to know that the apple bodes badly, whether it’s from the Garden of Eden or from the Tale of Snow White. In this case, the apple is offered by a man named Maurice Dove, a handsome botanist, sought after by both sisters...by the beautiful Lucinda and Norma Joyce, her rambunctious younger sister. “There is always central to old fairy tales, the prince’s tendency to forget,” writes Ms. Hay. “But then maybe charm and forgetfulness always go together. Maybe forgetfulness allows you to be charming because people don’t register enough to be a burden.”

As Norma Joyce obsessively pursues the much-older Maurice, the age-old patterns of unrequited love begin to appear with hints of *Madame Bovary*, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and yes, *Snow White*. Despite herself, Norma Joyce is drawn into a pattern as old as the hills: the spurned lover pursuing a man who is unavailable. Her sister Lucinda will eventually describe her as, “My devious sister who destroys everything she touches.” Whether she can be viewed that harshly – or whether she is a pawn in the pattern of her family life – is something for the reader to evaluate and judge.

Ms. Hay is excellent in her description of the natural world, more so than just about any writer I have read. And so, the inevitable patterns of nature merge with the story, particularly two of the three settings (the third is New York): “Saskatchewan, so bitter, tenacious, aware. Ontario so careless and immune. An affair between two landscapes and two histories no less real, and no less ongoing, than are certain romances between people.”

Is Ms. Hay suggesting that we are, in essence, a microcosm of the world we exist in? I think that’s precisely what she’s trying to say. We are all in the rhythm of life, which encompasses the outside world, the generations, and the roles we are consigned to play.

The tempestuous storms mirror the first half of the novel, when the triangle of Norma Joyce, her sister Lucinda, and Maurice are blowing full force. It provokes an adrenalin rush in the reader, who sits safely, rapt and fascinated by the havoc. And after, when the consequences of this triangle are revealed, the winds get calmer and other patterns are explored – how our early life informs our later life, how the last generation informs the next one, and how life goes on, regardless. I cannot say I was quite as enchanted by the second half, which encapsulates thirty years rather quickly. But I am still in awe of a writer with the mastery of words and the splendor of vision to lovingly craft this world and to weave her tapestry so finely.

Joanne says

This book starts slowly. As a child in the first part, Norma Joyce is so annoying, so clingy, sneaky and needy, as to be unsympathetic and I wasn’t sure how much time I would invest in the book. However, as the pages rolled by, and her life took such sad turns, I began to be more invested in her. Maurice was a truly

horrible person, the kind of shallow, selfish individual who seems so attractive and charismatic on the surface but has no depth, no empathy for others. His abuse of Norma Joyce's affection is callous in the extreme, and nothing he does redeems that for me in the entire book. At first, I felt so bad for Lucinda, with Norma Joyce betraying her, but after a time, it was pretty clear that Lucinda, for all her physical beauty, rather enjoyed the role of victim, and would probably have been a total pain to any man who married her, even though it was never going to be Maurice.

The best part of the book for me was after Norma Joyce returned to care for her elderly father. Just when you think they have made their peace with each other, he throws one last painful punch at her. The last section, when she visits Saskatchewan, is so beautifully written, I want to use the word lyrical, even though that is a cliche. I wanted to drive there and see it for myself. I've been close to that part of Canada, although not quite there, and it haunted me to read her words.

I love this author. Late Nights on Air is one of my favourite books, and I highly recommend you read anything by her that you can. Also try Alone in the Classroom, another excellent novel.

Jennifer says

Yet another re-read. Loved this the first time.

Oh, I still LOVE this book! Elizabeth Hay is a great talent.

"Two sisters fell down the same well, and the well was Maurice Dove."

Elizabeth Hay won the Giller Prize in 2007 for her book Late Nights on Air. I have devoured all of her works and adored each of them.

switterbug (Betsey) says

Elizabeth Hay is both a writer's writer and a consummate reader's writer--a word-siren, language mystic, narrative shaman, and spellbinding painter of prose. In this, her first novel, she creates a ballad-like story of contrasts--truth and deception, love and rejection, light and dark, faith and betrayal.

Two sisters, living with their widowed father, are a study of opposites. Seventeen-year-old Lucinda is lovely, tall, titian-haired, pliable, hard-working, dutiful, and light; nine-year-old Norma Joyce is small, dark, complicated, rebellious, passionate, odd-looking, and sullenly intelligent.

"She [Norma Joyce] was foliage in the wrong place, a jumble of weeds growing out of someone's back."

Beginning on a farm in the Prairie Dust Bowl of 1930's Canada, the story spans thirty years and takes the reader on a looping journey to Saskatchewan, Ottawa, and New York. The farm that Ernest Hardy lives on with his two daughters in Saskatchewan is the oasis in the drought, "a spot of dew in a dry field, a small hill that attracted rain and snow when nothing fell anywhere else."

The Hardy farm is single magnet for moisture in this bone-dry, punishing, skin-splitting, dust-laden

community.

"...dust blew the paint off cars, settled on food while you ate, landed in your mouth while you slept, choked cattle in the fields, and muffled the calls of lost children. So much dust blown so far that it landed on ships in the middle of the Atlantic."

A handsome stranger would arrest the girls' hearts, driving one of them to obsession. Stepping out of a blizzard and into their lives is the handsome, prepossessing Maurice Dove, an Ottawa student studying weather and botany. He lodges with the Hardys on three separate occasions in one year, enchanting Lucinda, bewitching and educating Norma Joyce with his comprehensive knowledge of nature.

Lucinda's maternal nature blossomed in Maurice's presence. She cooked and cleaned with an almost Gertrudian fervor, tucking away dreams like the corners of sheets.

"By the time Maurice was ready to leave, Lucinda would be interested. This was her pattern: tugging carefully at every knot, pressing the wrapping paper flat, saving everything for future use, including her own anticipation."

But Norma Joyce has already reached out to touch his cheek and claim him immediately, believing that boldness counts for more than beauty. She's the shadow girl, the dark side of the moon. She thinks that stealthy intrusions will draw him closer. Maurice indulges in Lucinda's beauty and moist sponge cakes, while he instructs Norma Joyce in climate and history, acknowledging that she is a natural, gifted student.

Hay's metaphorical raveling of landscape and psyche is nothing short of phenomenal. The narrative winds its way through the inner and outer wilderness of the Hardy's lives as the story deepens into the musk and mead of their quiddity.

"Maybe Lucinda's beauty captivated the rain. Or--this thought occurred to him later--maybe the dark, unpredictable sister was the source of all the weather."

There are layers to peel and subtextual strata to mine. Sexual undertones and overtones impregnate the story, a sensuous pollen permeating the prose.

"The leaf's lower part is a split sheath wrapped tightly around the stem so it won't tear in the wind...The underside of the leaves have very few pores; in dry weather they roll up like waterproof tubes to hold in every precious drop of water vapour. As beautifully engineered, he says with a wink, as Claudette Colbert's nifty legs. Slender-tipped, smooth, loose and open, lax at flowering time, puberulent."

The story builds with intensity and eroticism, invoking shattering acts of betrayal and avid, tormented love. There are grains of *The Thorn Birds* and *Gone with the Wind*, but the erudition and subtlety far eclipses either novel. Also, Hay avoids the pitfalls of melodrama and ripens the story with nuanced authenticity. She is a master of detail, describing a word or a concept with filmic transcendence, turning every seed into a flower. There are also vestiges of *Possession*, another book of painful, incinerating love, and botany.

This is a also companion piece to her latest novel, *Alone in the Classroom*. The author has recurring themes and motifs that deepen the reading experience when both books are read. The suggestion that we carry the past forward undulates through both novels, as do early childhood tragedies. The relationship between student and teacher, parent and child, and the value of education--including the study of the natural world--is explored in both tales. I won't give detailed specifics away, as the joy of discovery heightens the pleasure.

Every passage is *sui generis*; every page is brimming with beauty and contrast. This is an extraordinary coming of age story, a novel of survival and redemption, a tale of two sisters and three cities, an unforgettable, incomparable story of deep forbearance and clemency.

Leslie Shimotakahara says

Opening in the sultry prairies of 1930s Saskatchewan, this novel evocatively uses meterology, or the study of the weather, as a metaphor for the turbulence in two sisters' love lives as they fight for the same man's affections. I particularly enjoyed how the author avoids the cliches of a typical love story by exploring what happens when love doesn't work out for either woman ... My full review can be read at my blog, www.the-reading-list.com

Penny (Literary Hoarders) says

A 3.75 really. :-) The quintessential quiet Canadian novel. The 1st in my #20BooksofSummer stack too.

Mel says

This book was very poetically written but very anti-climatic. By the time I finished it, I felt like I had wasted a whole bunch of time.

Aaron Shepard says

This is my second time reading this book, as I wanted to revisit her descriptions of the light and landscape of the prairies. She has a talent for making you feel the passage of time from the perspective of the protagonist - a languid day that resonates throughout the book, or years that pass by at bewildering speed.

Rebecca Foster says

When I first arrived in Leeds for my master's program in 2005, I met a PhD student who was writing her dissertation on Canadian women writers. To my shame, at that point in time I could literally only name one. Margaret Atwood. And I hadn't even read anything by her yet. Fortunately, since then I've discovered more Canadian women writers in addition to Atwood, several of whom I admire greatly: Carol Shields, Margaret Laurence, Mary Lawson and now Elizabeth Hay.

This was her debut novel, shortlisted for the Giller Prize in 2000. I knew nothing about it when I picked it up as part of a 5-for-£1 stack at the Hay-on-Wye Oxfam shop. Set between the 1930s and 1970s, it's something of a family saga but focuses on a pair of sisters, Norma Joyce and Lucinda Hardy, and the tacit feud that arises between them over a frostbitten young researcher who stumbles upon their Saskatchewan farmhouse one January evening in 1938.

“Two sisters fell down the same well, and the well was Maurice Dove.” Seventeen-year-old Lucinda has become a capable family housekeeper since their mother’s death three years ago. Norma Joyce is only eight but has gone through early puberty and is a precocious, sneaky child. Maurice works at an experimental farm and comes back twice more that year to observe a dust storm, drought, and plague of grasshoppers. On each visit, and in the years to come, the sisters quietly jostle for his attention. Despite the upheaval of war and a move to Ontario and then New York City, some things never change.

I loved the way Hay lends her story allusive depth by continually revisiting biblical pairs of opposites: Jacob and Esau, Mary and Martha, and the Prodigal Son and his jealous older brother. The descriptions of the Canadian prairies are also wonderful. My favorite parts of the book were when the two sisters were still together in Canada; once Norma Joyce moves to New York, it starts drifting a bit. However, there are such astute observations about what goes on in familial and romantic relationships, and so many perfect sentences, that I thoroughly enjoyed reading this slowly over the course of a month, and I’d gladly read anything else Hay has written.

Some favorite lines:

“Miniature berries after an endless winter. It’s what saves you. Something delicate and contained after endless loss.”

“Maybe that’s all anyone wants in the end, to be remembered rather than overlooked.”

“Such a delicate thief, the sound of rain the next morning when the lilacs were over and the day lilies just beginning.”

Ashlee says

This book makes me feel as moody as the Ottawa weather in early Spring mixed with the endless rain in Vancouver. Unluckily, the sun never came throughout the book.

The writing is beautiful and i don't regret reading it. However, the stereotypes strike me: with the soft conservative Scandinavian-looking sister being the beautiful one and the dark short Italian&Japanese-looking sister being the ugly sneaky one- and only makes a man want her - sexually! A feeling of a Hollywood blockbuster in the 80s came up to me.

In the end, the personality development is very precise, but yet so troubling and unreal for me. How could someone with such profound feeling of love and hate, someone who's so smart and independent fell into the same trap of vulnerability and a lack of self-respect.

If you like a book with beautiful, fragile and tragic female characters, you would enjoy it a lot. However, if you are a liberal well-traveled feminist in your 20s, this book will make you very 'moody'.

Stacy K B says

Saskatchewan, Canada, 1930s.

The cranky father: Ernest Hardy - The Sister: Lucinda Hardy - The Stranger (who brings the rain to the dusty prairie: Maurice Dove -

The Twin who died: Norman... The One Called Ugly, Strange, lazy: Joyce, remanded Norma Joyce after little Norman died.

Norma Joyce, comes to be the most beautiful child filled with imagination, even though everyone finds her to be ugly and unmotivated. She holds healing, learning and loving in her soul.

A story of two sisters, growing up among the dust of the plains, the dust of a dull life. One sister breathtakingly beautiful, a home maker and favorite daughter. One sister, a collector of objects and stories who would rather be daydreaming in the dust then inside keeping a house. One winter day a stranger enters into the Hardy Family Home and he changes their lives for ever.

Norma Joyce Hardy. Enough said. A powerful and beautiful story of discovery of self and love. A story written with dream like descriptions of the weather, the landscapes.

Words turning into a vision of a painting.

Norma Joyce, a painter, discovers the art of painting one's self a landscape, a life.

5 out of 5: "Top of the list"

(amazon.com review)

Michelle says

Amazing story of love and lust, proving how men can take on two personalities and also how men are affected by war. I felt really sorry for Norma Joyce and how her life panned out, and sad that she never received the love and respect she should have received from her father and the man she loved. I was disappointed by the ending, as I hoped Norma Joyce would find happiness, but the ending was very powerful in that it evoked those feelings of remembering a childhood place, and returning, only to be heartbroken because it had all changed.

Jan says

This quote by Lydia Davis starts the novel:

“But when there are two sisters, one is uglier and more clumsy than the other, one is less clever, one is more promiscuous. Even when all the better qualities unite in one sister, as most often happens, she will not be happy, because the other, like a shadow, will follow her success with green eyes.”

This is a story of rivalry and of obsession. Though not really a happy story, a bit dark at times, actually, it is still a story full of hope, dreams and determination. We meet our heroine when she is 8 and leave her as she celebrates her 43rd birthday. “Norma Joyce Hardy” starts out as a “Joyce” but when her twin brother, Norman, dies, the family renames her “Norma Joyce” (how cruel and sad is that!). Author Hay does an excellent job of describing “dwarf-like” Norma Joyce to us. I have a wonderful picture of her in my mind. Lucinda, the beautiful older sister, is everything Norma Joyce thinks she wants to be but knows she can never be. These motherless sisters (mom choked on a piece of meat and died when Norma Joyce was 5), seemingly exact opposites, live with their stoic father, who favours his beautiful daughter over his “ugly”

one.

Into this cold, wintery, isolated Saskatchewan farm environment, when Norma Joyce is 8, stumbles a handsome 23 year old stranger, Maurice Dove. The year is 1938 and Maurice has been sent by the powers that be, in Ottawa, Ontario, to study the weather and to write about this farm that seems to get rain when everyone else around them is suffering horrific draught conditions. Lucinda and Norma Joyce begin to vie for Maurice's attention. And so this story, filled with erotic obsessions, seduction and eventually doom, begins.

The descriptive writing, taking us back and forth in time for a period of 30 years, is written in such a way that we, as readers, become part of Norma Joyce's life. We know what she thinks ,smells, tastes, sees and what she wants and what she feels. As a natural student of life and a gifted artist, (though she never sees herself as such) Norma Joyce is a fascinating, flawed character. As her life plays out on the Saskatchewan family farm, in the city of Ottawa and in the city of New York, we are with her, every step of the way. A quote from the jacket of this novel says it all: " This is a story about the mistakes we make that never go away, about how the things we want to keep vanish and the things we want to lose return to haunt us."

For me, this story picks up speed and though the first half took me a few days to read, I read the last half in a day.

A most satisfying, is somewhat haunting, read!!
