

Crows Over a Wheatfield

Paula Sharp

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In her major new novel Paula Sharp creates an unforgettable portrait of two families that are shattered by domestic violence, and of the women who ultimately overcome its legacy. Spanning a course of thirty years, Crows over a Wheatfield is the story of Melanie Ratleer, a judge who is approaching the summit of her career with an anguished awareness that she has long since abandoned herself to the comforting impersonality of her work. Melanie has come to the law under the massive shadow of her father, a brilliant and notorious litigator as despotic at home as he is in the courtroom. His young wife, daughter, and especially his son have suffered under his unpredictable and merciless rages, which culminate in a tragedy that tears the family apart and sends its members away in flight to their own safe havens. Years afterward Melanie pays a visit to the small Wisconsin town where her stepmother and brother have settled and grown close to a colorfully unorthodox minister and his daughter, the flamboyant and provocative Mildred Steck. The young women quickly become friends, but as the summer passes, Melanie gradually learns that Mildred's family life is beset by its own brutality, which only another tragedy can bring to an end. After a decade in hiding Mildred becomes the focus of national attention when she organizes an underground movement on behalf of women and children fleeing unjust custody rulings and domestic violence. When the movement finally decides to take a public position on a notorious custody case, the drama that ensues forces Melanie to confront a test of her principles, as well as the many long-avoided ghosts of her past. Written with extraordinary emotional power, Crows over a Wheatfield is a wholly successful fusion of the personal and the political--a suspenseful and controversial novel of rare beauty and insight.



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Louis Jackson:

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Debra Durso:

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