



Root Rot

Saskia Nislow

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Saskia Nislow's thrilling and fast-paced horror novel *Root Rot* is about family dysfunction and the inescapable reality of returning to the earth after death.

The Crybaby, the Liar, and the One Who Runs Away explore their grandfather's lake house over a weekend that starts as a traditional family reunion and ends in a complete devolution from reality. Their story told from the viewpoint of a ubiquitous narrator whose identity is kept secret, the cousins explore the strange inconsistencies and earthen decay surrounding the property. They also fight to keep their relationships and sanity intact.

The book's descriptive imagery is captivating and compelling, as with "the sun before had been hidden by the milky skin of morning fog." The persistence of such ethereal and horrifying descriptions adds to the unsettling sensation that drives the narrative. When characters begin to act in ways that are contrary to how they were before, and when the children start to notice odd tastes and visual disturbances, such visceral lines become ominous.

The lake house is a shifty place; the children navigate confusing jumps in time and memory. At various points, they find themselves with one cousin when just moments before they were with someone else. This sense of continual inconsistency is at first hard to piece together. It is unclear whether the narrator is unreliable or if the collective is descending into madness. While these leaps in space are discombobulating, the plot smooths out in time to reveal the truth about what the children are experiencing.

Root Rot is a horror novel filled with suspense and unsettling images as it traces the strange occurrences at a family lake house.

JENNIFER MAVEETY (March / April 2025)

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