



The Salt House

Lisa Duffy

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In the tradition of Jodi Picoult and Lisa Genova, this gorgeously written, heartbreaking, yet hopeful debut set during a Maine summer traces the lives of a young family in the aftermath of tragedy.

In the coastal town of Alden, Maine, Hope and Jack Kelly have settled down to a life of wedded bliss. They have a beautiful family, a growing lobster business, and the Salt House—the dilapidated oceanfront cottage they’re renovating into their dream home. But tragedy strikes when their young daughter doesn’t wake up from her afternoon nap, taking her last breath without making a sound.

A year later, each member of the Kelly family navigates the world on their own private island of grief. Hope spends hours staring at her daughter’s ashes, unable to let go. Jack works to the point of exhaustion in an attempt to avoid his crumbling marriage. Their daughters, Jess and Kat, struggle to come to terms with the loss of their younger sister while watching their parents fall apart.

When Jack’s old rival, Ryland Finn, threatens his fishing territory, he ignites emotions that propel the Kelly family toward circumstances that will either tear them apart—or be the path to their family’s future.

Told in alternating voices, *The Salt House* is a layered, emotional portrait of marriage, family, friendship, and the complex intersections of love, grief, and hope.

The Salt House Details

Date : Published June 13th 2017 by Touchstone

ISBN :

Author : Lisa Duffy

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Family

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From Reader Review The Salt House for online ebook

Kristy says

Hope and Jack Kelly's life changes irrevocably when their young daughter, Maddie, doesn't wake up from her nap. Hope, working a few rooms away from Maddie's crib, is paralyzed by grief and unable to return her to freelance writing job or really, most portions of her life. Jack, meanwhile, throws himself into work to escape the pain: spending hours away from his family on his lobster boat. Maddie's two older sisters, Jess and Kat, are forced to deal with the loss of their sister while watching their parents fall apart. Young Kat is trying to make sense of it all, while teenage Jess struggles watching her parents argue constantly. Then Jack's childhood rival, Finn, returns to town: threatening Jack's fishing territory and sanity.

This is a raw, heartbreaking novel full of real emotion. It's honestly awful and a little gut-wrenching at times: it's so powerfully written that it made me want to hold my two young daughters extra close. The brutal reactions and grief of poor Hope and Jack are tough to read, as is watching their children struggle.

Duffy is an excellent writer: the book is quite well-done. The story unfolds a year after Maddie's death and is told in varying perspectives by each member of the Kelly family. She captures each of their voices perfectly, even young Kat, who may be the best of all.

There is certainly some drama in this novel, though it's mainly the story of two hurt people coping in their own (stubborn) way. My heart went out to Hope, and I quite liked her two daughters, but I found myself often frustrated with Jack, even though I recognized he was grieving. Even so, his stupidity and inability to communicate drove me a bit crazy at times.

This is a well-written story of family, grief, and love. It's not always an easy read, but it's a certainly a worthy one.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Edelweiss (thank you!); it is available everywhere as of 06/13/2017.

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MaryBeth's Bookshelf says

This novel was so heartbreaking and sad, but was so full of love and hope.

Hope and Jack Kelly live in a coastal town in Maine. Hope is a writer and Jack is a fisherman. Tragedy strikes when their young daughter does not wake up from a nap one day. We see from each character's perspective how it affects their life and their individual struggles to come to terms with what has happened. Hope is unable to work and really function at all. Jack works himself to death, taking many risks out on an ocean that is unforgivable. Also, someone from Jack's past comes back and threatens to expose secrets and take their livelihood. Their daughters Jessica and Kat have their own struggles - Jessica watches her parents fall apart and begins a relationship with a boy and Kat thinks she can fix things for everyone.

This book was so emotional, layered with the different characters voices, a must read!

Megan says

What I really enjoyed about this book the most, was the setting. The plot centered around the Atlantic Ocean, which is basically my very own front yard.

Along with my love and respect for the water and the commercial fishing community, which is how my own family has made their living for generations. The Salt House, tells the story of a family, from a coastal town, struggling to navigate through their own personal grief of losing a family member, while trying to makes ends meet and find their way back to each other !!

??????? Stars !!

Debra says

In a small coastal fishing town in Maine and family is attempting to cope with the death of their youngest family member, Maddie, who died in her crib. This book details the family's attempt to deal with their grief, heartbreak and to find a way to move on. This book is told through the family member's voices. Hope is the Mother who used to be a writer but has found that she cannot write anything since her daughter died. Jack is a lobster fisherman who throws himself into his work to help support his family - even more now that his wife is not working and their relationship has suffered since their daughter's death. Jess is a teenager watching her parent's relationship suffer while attempting to have one of her own. She finds herself drawn to the son of her father's rival. Kate is a young girl trying to make sense of her own grief and the grief of that of her family members.

A year has passed and Hope (her Mother) is having great difficulty moving on. She does not want to spread her daughter's ashes and does not want to return to the Salt House - a home her husband (Jack) inherited and they are fixing up. Hope spent the last days of her daughter's life at the Salt House with her and finds it difficult to return to where Maddie was conceived and spent her last day. She knows that this is affecting her marriage but feels stuck and does not know how to let go and continue her life. Jack is suffering in silence and works hard long hours not only as an escape but to take care of his family.

Their lives are further pushed to the brink, when Ryland Finn moves back to town and wants his old fishing grounds back. There is instant tension and hints dropped that past hurts/grievances/issues from their past have not been laid to rest but are festering beneath the surface waiting to explode and affect all of their lives. Jack has a secret that he does not want to share with Hope. Again, he keeps silent throwing himself into his work and doesn't want to take the advice of his best friend who wants desperately to help.

This book is about a family trying to move on after a heartbreaking loss. Saying goodbye to a loved one and letting go are hard. How does one let go and move on? What power do secrets have over our lives? How do you forgive your past mistakes?

This debut novel was very moving and emotional. This is a beautiful and poignant book about love, loss, hope, friendship, moving on, and grief. As a reader, I could feel the family's pain and loss. The characters (most of them) are likable and I rooted for them to find healing and peace a year after their loved one's death. Nothing in this book felt rushed. The length was perfect. I felt as if I was riding on their sea of grief with them. Love, loss, grief, guilt, moving on are difficult themes which were discussed with grace and care in this moving book.

I received a copy of this book from Touchstone and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

See more of my reviews at www.openbookpost.com

Jennifer Blankfein says

Lots of tears! Visit <https://booknationbyjen.wordpress.com> for all book reviews and recommendations.

In *The Salt House*, author Lisa Duffy masterfully takes us deep into the layers of emotions of the Kelly family as they work through feelings of guilt, responsibility and pain following a tragic family loss. After losing their baby, Hope is paralyzed with her grief; she is having trouble moving forward and is unable to return to work. She refuses to scatter the ashes and has been reluctant to continue with the renovation of *The Salt House*, the home the family loves and plans to move in to. Jack, a lobster fisherman, throws himself into his work on the boat, is rarely home with the family and is neglecting his health. Overcome with guilt, combined with the sorrow of losing a child, and the stress it put on the marriage, the Kelly family's world starts to cave in. The daughters, Jess and Kat, are living and dealing with the loss of their baby sister in their own ways while baring the brunt of parental stress and disagreements at the same time they are trying to grow up. So well written from each person's point of view, the characters dig deep to expose their pain, past and current, and their journey together sets an example for how families can rescue each other from debilitating hurt and grief by facing it head on with truth and honesty. I felt emotionally overwhelmed and shed many tears while I read *The Salt House*, a sign of a great book that really touched me, and when it ended I had feelings of renewal and hope for the future. At under 300 pages, this is a great book to pick up this summer...I loved it!

Lolly K Dandeneau says

via my blog: <https://bookstalkerblog.wordpress.com/>

"Am I one of your favorites, Hope?" Dad sometimes asked, his dark eyes drilling a hole into the back of Mom's head. You got the sense he was holding his breath when he asked the question. It would get him a laugh and a hug, but over her shoulder, Dad wasn't laughing. In those moments, if need had a face, it would've looked like Dad.

This is a heartbreaking story, about a terrible tragedy that rips every thread that keeps this family together. Everything was glorious between Hope, Jack Kelly and their three daughters. They were renovating *The Salt House* to create the perfect family home, their lobster business was finally thriving through their hard work and then their youngest child silently passes away through an accident that her mother Hope feels she could have, should have, prevented. The guilt is paralyzing, a monster that is devouring Hope and the rest of the

family. Though time has passed, she can't focus enough nor write a word, though her career was helping them financially. But how does a mother move on when she feels she too died in that horrific moment? How can she enjoy her beloved husband's touch, allow herself a drop of joy, open herself to nurturing the children that remain when she can't move past the loss?

And what of the husband and children? The husband now awash in his own silent grief, becoming angry with his helplessness, drowning himself in his job- desperate to keep his family from sinking? Someone has to earn the money, and he will do it, even if he dies in the process. It's summer in Maine, but there isn't much sunshine for Jess and Kat. Jess sees too much, not far from adulthood herself, and is angry at her mother's emotional absence, determined to see her dad stop making excuses and blaming himself for her mother's cold detachment. Kat doesn't know the full story of what happened to her baby sister, nor her role in the tragedy, and Hope wants it to remain so. Jess wants to punish her mother, she wants to prod her to feel, because she isn't the only one suffering. Young Kat can't understand where exactly Maddie has gone, why there hasn't been any sort of closure nor ceremony. Worse, she is being picked on by a boy and Jess wants to solve at least that problem for her kid sister, not realizing how her family is tied to his, nor that she is about to fall in love.

It is a summer of love and a little bit of madness. Who is Ryland Finn and why are there secrets between him and Jack? He is fast becoming a threat to the family's business, and in a short time what was once a promising future has become a bleak horror show. Why can't Hope bear to step foot into The Salt House, the dream home that once was the seed to their happy future? Why is it a year later the pain is still fresh, and no one is moving on? Secrets will out, and sometimes it takes nearly going over the edge before a family can find the pieces to put themselves back together.

Will they be able to find a new way to live after so much grief, tragedy? Or is this the end of the Kelly Family?

The girls will have your heart, the shifting perspectives is vital to the telling because any parent can relate to the horror of losing your child, the shame and guilt that while you were oblivious, wrapped in your work, your child suffered her last breath. To put yourself in the children's shoes is different, because they seemed to lose their sweet sister and need to make sense of their grief but their parents are anchored to their pain and can't see past their own loss. Everyone is aching but full of buckets of resentment. This story hurts, it's too realistic, and that's exactly why it's beautiful. Some are too young to understand what's happening around them and yet my well be the wisest ones to remember just what their little sister Maddie would have wanted. Don't be fooled by the pretty summer cover, it's not a light breezy read. It's weighted with pain. Hold tight to those you love, because everything can change in a moment, and you can't always see what's dangerous until it's too late. Wonderful.

Publication Date: June 13, 2017

Touchstone

Kelsey says

Read on submission and absolutely loved! Total page turner with rich, real, salt-of-the-earth characters in a

memorable setting.

Tammy says

A perfect summer read. The Kelly family are dealing with the after-math of grief after losing their youngest child along with current life that proceeds to move forward in all of its ups + downs during that following year. Emotional and gritty but also vibrant with love and faith. A memorable book!

Diane S ? says

3.5 A family attempts to overcome their grief in the face of a terrible loss, the death of their youngest daughter. We hear from each of the family members; Jack, a lobster trapper, Hope, who cannot come to terms with how the death occurred and her guilt, eldest daughter Jess, who is the keeper of secrets, including her burgeoning love for Alex and the youngest, at 8, trying to understand the things she overhears. Jack has some darkness in his past which will be reawakened when an old enemy shows up at a dinner party.

I loved the setting for this, coastal Maine and the salt house on the water, a house they were refurbishing when the tragedy struck. The difficult and competitive life of those who need to make their living from the water. A clear and concise writing style, however, though hearing from each character gave us an overview of each character and how they were thinking, dealing with their grief, I also felt it kept me from fully engaging with them. I actually liked two of the secondary characters better, Boon and Hope's mother were the two that came alive in my mind.

This is a good, solid story and others may have better luck in connecting with these characters. This is, however, a poignant look at a family trying to stay together while facing the worst kind of adversity.

ARC from Netgalley.

Bam says

Set in the coastal town of Alden, Maine, this wonderful debut novel revolves around how one young family deals with life-shattering grief. It's told in the four alternating voices of the Kelly family: Jack, a hard-working lobster fisherman, the strong, silent type who doesn't easily share his feelings; Hope, his beautiful wife, a freelance writer who cannot now put pen to paper; Jess, their sixteen-year-old daughter, on the cusp of womanhood, and eight-year-old, irrepressible Kat, who doesn't really understand what is going on with her family.

A year has passed since baby Maddie died in her crib but the family has not been able to move on--in fact, things are devolving and the once-happy marriage seems to be falling apart. To make matters worse, Ryland Finn, an old enemy of Jack's, is back in town and wants his old lobster territory back--an area Jack needs to support his family and pay two mortgages: one on their home and one on the Salt House, their cottage.

Running through the story is a guilty secret from Jack's past that he keeps to himself. Hope begs him to tell her what it is but Jack can't bring himself to share: "Hope turned off the light, and there was darkness,

overtaking me. A thick black oil spreading through my body, heavy and suffocating, making it difficult to breathe. I wondered if I had brought this year to us; if losing her was payback for my mistakes; the universe handing me what I deserved."

Jack is my favorite character. He wants so badly to fix things, to make it better for everyone. But the only way he knows how to do that is to work, work, work, pushing himself to exhaustion.

Jess's observation about her father and Kat: "They pushed away the things that bothered them and filled the space with movement. Always busy, always doing something, no time for sitting around mulling things over."

Jack's best friend and partner, Boon, calls him 'pigheaded and stubborn' when he won't let him help the Kellys out financially but Jack learned self-reliance from his father: "First you borrow, and then you beg" was his warning.

Grandma is visiting from Florida and adds a comic element to the story with her pithy sayings. But this once she is right on when she says: "So much of life is finding that balance. The balance of holding on and letting go." She thinks it is time for her daughter to let go: of her grief but more specifically, of Maddie's ashes, which are hidden in her closet. Isn't it time to move on? Maddie needs to realize she is not alone in her grief.

I look forward to reading more from this talented new author. Duffy has the ability to bring her characters to life, help the reader to understand their emotions, guilt, reactions and motivations. The voices are pretty distinctive--only on a few occasions, when picking up the book mid-chapter, did I have a moment of confusion about which character was speaking. The gorgeous Maine setting is worth experiencing too. Do a little arm-chair vacationing this summer and read this book!

*Thanks to NetGalley, the publisher and author for the opportunity to read an arc of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Angela M says

This story of a grief stricken family, dealing with the loss of their youngest child and baby sister is told in alternating first person narratives by each family member . They not only relate their feelings on the loss, they give us their views on their relationships with each other . It's hard to imagine unless you've experienced this kind of loss what it might be like. The entire family is impacted but what I connected with the most was who they were as individuals and as family before the tragedy. I caught glimpses of that throughout and then again with glimpses of hope at the end. The most genuine connection I made was with 8 year old Kat, who just wants her baby sister to be where she was happy and I felt most heartbroken for the mother, Hope, who seems the most overwhelmed by her grief. For me it lost stars because of the drama of an event from Jack's past and the melodrama of the teenage romance of the older daughter, Jess. The setting in coastal Maine was lovely and reminded me of trips from the past that I made there . Solid three stars .

I received an advanced copy of this book from Touchstone/Simon & Schuster through Edelweiss.

Kate Olson says

Heartbreaking and hopeful, *The Salt House* drew me in and wouldn't let me stop reading until the very last word. The first half of the book had me aching with sadness for the Kelly's family horrific loss of their baby daughter (I had to take a short break from reading to process it), and the second half had me combining that sadness with awe for the perseverance and determination of this family in their quest to survive their grief.

The multiple narrators (all 4 members of the family had their own alternating chapters, both parents as well as their 8-year-old and 16-year-old daughters) fully immerse readers into the family's grief and attempts to cope, and give the story a richness that would not be possible if the story were told from only one perspective. The daughters, Jess and Kat, are refreshingly honest in their youthful take on the past year, while the parents, Hope and Jack, are achingly raw in their inability to return to life as normal.

Duffy's descriptions of the coastal Maine fishing town are absolutely beautiful, and reinforce my desires to visit this area of the US at some point in the not too distant future.

This book will stay with me for a long time, and I will recommend it to everyone I know. However, if you are a parent of a baby or young toddler, be aware that it made me eternally grateful that my children are past the age of Maddie in the story, as I don't know if I would be able to put my little one down for a nap again after reading this book. Grief is hard to read when you can't imagine yourself exactly in the shoes of the grieving, but almost unbearable when you can.

Thank you so much to the author for providing me with a finished copy of this book for review - all opinions are my own.

Suzanne Leopold says

Hope and Jack Kelly's marriage has hit a speed bump. Hope has been depressed since the tragic death of their youngest daughter. She cannot move forward from her grief and is unable to continue her work as a writer. The family is struggling to pay their bills due to renovations on their second home named, "The Salt House". They can't seem to finish the construction which forces them to continue making payments for two homes.

Jack works as a lobsterman in Maine and is part owner of the business. Work has helped him avoid his grief and to ignore his marital problems. His two teenage daughters are in the background watching their parent's marriage implode. Jack's feels threatened when his high school rival, Finn, moves back to town and makes claims to their family's lobster business. The added stress begins to build and Jack lashes out at family and friends. His unresolved grief and hidden secrets are in need of an outlet.

The Salt House is an interesting perspective of how burying problems can lead to deep rooted consequences. This is portrayed very clearly as each family member of the Kelly household narrates a chapter from their perspectives. This is a debut novel by Lisa Duffy.

Katie Ziegler (Life Between Words) says

Yet another book about grief. I've been reading so many - and have another on the docket (but probably not this month) - I feel like I should do a recommendations video, probably.

While I read this book it felt like I had heavy weight sitting in the pit of my stomach. This one was tough for me because in this one the family is dealing with the death of their small toddler who died tragically during a nap. It's absolutely heart wrenching. As a parent, that just guts me. I have a *really* hard time with it, but thankfully the actual death isn't dwelled on too long. The grief, however, is the main point, so you're dealing with ALL of the aftermath. The book picks up a year after the death of their daughter and you switch between perspectives of each surviving member of the family. I think it was hardest to read from the mother's perspective because it's the one I relate to the most. And Lisa Duffy does a beautiful job of making her grief palpable. Really, though, this book is about the working through and coming back. It's about how a family knits itself back together after an unimaginable tragedy.

One thing I absolutely loved about the book was the setting. It takes place on a coastal town in Maine and the father in the family is a lobster fisherman. I mean...it doesn't get more picturesque than that. You can practically taste the salt in the air. It's wonderful.

I tend to like books that switch between perspectives, but in this case I am not sure it always worked for me. I kind of wish it would have maybe had two perspectives instead of four - just the mom and dad. Partly because I didn't entirely believe the voice of the 8 year old, sometimes the voice felt too mature to me? Also, I think the stories of the parents were more powerful, and switching between just those two would have made the story land more solidly for me. I didn't dislike Jess, the teenager's, story, but I also felt like, once again, it took away from those more powerful elements of the book. How losing and grieving for a child shakes a life - work, home, and especially marriage; and how this couple finds those things again.

I was debating between 3 and 4 stars for this one and I really don't know at this point. It's somewhere in between, I think. There was a lot I loved, but it wasn't perfect.

Jennifer says

I received this book from Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review

3 stars

I am usually a sucker for good family dramas, but for some reason, this one just didn't suck me in. The book starts 1 year after the death of baby Maddie and is told in alternating viewpoints of each family member. I typically enjoy this format, but for whatever reason, I just wasn't feeling it enough in this book.

Maybe because the book started 1 year post tragedy that I found it hard to connect with the characters or maybe they were just under developed, I'm not sure. But either way, I thought that this book skimmed the surface and wasn't as deep and engaging as I had hoped. Being compared to Jodi Picoult in your summary is going to set some pretty high expectations and this one did not reach mine. There was just an overall lack of emotion and depth that I look for in a domestic drama.

It may sound like I didn't enjoy the book and that is simply not true. If I didn't enjoy it, I wouldn't have finished it. But in the end, it wasn't as enjoyable as I was hoping it to be, and that could just be on me.
