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Rash, Ron. The Cove

Laurel Shelton is a lonely young woman. Living alone save for her brother Hank in an isolated, deeply shadowed cove in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina, she is shunned by the townspeople of nearby Mars Hill and feared as a witch because of a large purple birthmark on her shoulders. Hank has only recently returned from WWI missing one hand and he is fixing up the farm with the help of a neighbor, intending, Laurel believes, to propose to a local girl and bring her to live with them. Living in darkness and shadow and loneliness as she does, Laurel still dreams of sunlight and beauty, having had ambitions to become a teacher and move away from the cove?ambitions thwarted by her mother?s death and father?s long depression and illness. But when she finds a strange man in the cove, sick and feverish with hornet stings, and nurses him back to health, Laurel begins to dream once more?of love, and a life outside the cove. The man, Walter, plays flute like an angel but is otherwise mute, a note in his pocket claiming childhood illness. He falls into step with the siblings, helping Hank about the farm and playing his flute and falling in love with Laurel as she has fallen for him. However, Walter is not all he seems and harbors secrets of his own?secrets that could prove explosively dangerous to his new friends. Meanwhile, a cowardly and bombastic recruiter in town, Chauncey Feith, tries to prove his true worth by exposing supposed ?Hun? spies in their midst. When the fires of xenophobia he has stoked collide with cursed Laurel, disabled Hank, and silent Walter, tragedy can be the only result.

Atmospheric, taut, and expertly realized, *The Cove* is a tale of passion, fear, and superstition with clear parallels to the overheated political rhetoric of today.

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