



The Hiding Place

Trezza Azzopardi

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This exceptional debut novel about family, love, and the innocence and terror of childhood has caused an absolute sensation, garnering no less than eleven leading publishers around the world. Set in a Maltese immigrant community in Cardiff, Wales, and peopled with sharp-edged, luminously drawn characters, *The Hiding Place* is the story of Frankie Gauci, his wife Mary, and their six daughters and about Frankie's betrayal, gambling away his family's livelihood and eventually the family itself. Written in magical language buoyed by grace, it is a mesmerizing exploration of how family, like fire, can shift suddenly from something that provides light and warmth to a dangerous conflagration, sparing no one in its path. The Gaucis' story is seen through the eyes of Dolores, the youngest daughter and, in her father's estimation, the embodiment of bad luck, condemned to bear the mark of a family that is rapidly singeing at the edges. With a lyricism that belies the horrors she so often recounts ("children burnt and children bartered: someone must be to blame"), Dolores presents an unsparing portrayal of the fear and hopelessness of childhood amid grim poverty and neglect, of children growing up without safety nets and on sunken foundations. *The Hiding Place* conjures the coarse sensuality of life among the docks, the smoky cafes and bars, the crumbling homes and gambling rooms of Tiger Bay. Sustained by a tightrope tension and combining the stark, youthful wisdom and the uncanny, perfect pitch of Susan Minot's *Monkeys* with the redemptive liveliness of the downtrodden in *Angela's Ashes*, *The Hiding Place* is a breathtaking, radiant debut.

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