



The Hope in Leaving: A Memoir

Barbara Williams

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Handsome Jack is a logger, nomad, and born dreamer. His young wife, Simone, has too many kids and never enough money to support or protect them. The family keeps on the move, shedding a grand total of twenty-seven homes. Their first child, Randy, is sensitive and brilliant and bold, protector of his younger siblings, the fearless star of their childhood adventures and misadventures—until something snaps inside him. The second child who comes a year after him, our narrator Barbara, is the lucky one, who can dream of getting out. Every time the family relocates, she feels “the hope in leaving and doing better next time.”

Poverty, mental illness, sexual abuse, and injustice pursue them wherever they go. They live small-town life hard and suffer, most of all Randy. The great surprise of *The Hope in Leaving* isn’t that these characters descend increasingly into isolation and strife, but that despite this they remain a family, that there is always the spark of wit in their banter, and a kind of closeness no matter what happens, even a sense of normalcy. Gradually, the reader comes to understand why *The Hope in Leaving* is a book that had to be written. In it, Williams proves beyond doubt that there is one thing that can survive the worst of life and even death itself: love without judgment.

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Doris Avey:

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