



Perfect Reader: A Novel

Maggie Pouncey

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In this enchanting debut novel, Maggie Pouncey brings to life the unforgettable Flora Dempsey, the headstrong and quick-witted only child of Lewis Dempsey, a beloved former college president and famous literary critic in the league of Harold Bloom.

At the news of her father's death, Flora quits her big-city magazine job and returns to Darwin, the quaint New England town where she grew up, to retreat into the house he has left her, filled as it is with reminders of him. Even weightier is her appointment as her father's literary executor. It seems he was secretly writing poems at the end of his life—love poems to a girlfriend Flora didn't know he had. Flora soon discovers that this woman has her own claims on Lewis's poetry and his memory, and in the righteousness of her loss and bafflement at her father's secrets—his life so richly separate from her own in ways she never guessed—Flora is highly suspicious of her. Meanwhile, Flora is besieged by well-wishers and literary bloggers alike as she tries to figure out how to navigate it all: the fate of the poems, the girlfriend who wants a place in her life, her memories of her parents' divorce, and her own uncertain future.

At once comic and profound, *Perfect Reader* is a heady, uplifting story of loneliness and of the spur to growth that grief can be. Brimming with energy and with the elbow-patchy wisdom of her still-vivid father, Flora's story will set her free to be the "perfect reader" not just of her father's life but of her own as well.

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