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TITLE INFORMATION

NOSTALGIA IS HEARTLESS

Sarah Lahey

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BOOK REVIEW

A climate scientist investigates a mystery in rain-soaked Antarctica in this eco-SF sequel.

Earth, 2050. Climatologist and inveterate BASE jumper Quinn Buyers, 30, is not having a great year. She's moved back in with her father, who happens to live in a glass house surrounding a 3,000-year-old eucalyptus tree in Tasmania. Quinn is seven months pregnant and her career has completely stalled. Her talking meerkat robot, Mori, is having an existential crisis, and her mother, renowned physicist (and possible time traveler) Lise, is still missing. Earth's climate has changed so much that weather now exists only at the poles, and a solar storm from the sun is making matters even more unstable. Unfortunately, most of humanity is past caring enough to do anything about it. One far-right group called Shun Mantra wants to give up on Earth completely and start a colony on one of Saturn's moons. When the emotionally distant cyborg and refugee smuggler Tig—who happens to be the father of Quinn's baby—shows up with an offer to investigate a disaster in Antarctica, the climatologist jumps at the opportunity. It may be her last chance to save humanity from an unlivable future—and maybe she'll finally track down her mother as well. Lahey's world is imagined in visceral detail that makes its big concepts completely believable. Here Quinn and Tig arrive on the less-than-majestic coast of Antarctica: "The pier has gaping holes in the floorboards and rotted handrails. Quinn takes small, calculated steps until they reach the snow-covered shoreline, where the snow is the color of mud and sand and shellfish carcasses." The author's excitement over her creation is apparent in her frequent worldbuilding digressions—like the history of Feline Flu, a pandemic incubated in cats—but the plot hums along at a good clip thanks to Quinn's quest. The story builds directly on the events of the previous novel, but it is self-contained enough that new readers can hop on without feeling too lost. The mix of humor, whimsy, and science makes for a climate change-centered adventure that manages to feel escapist and topical at the same time.

A thrilling and immersive work of speculative climate fiction.

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