

Berit Rødstøl: ***THE AFTERMATH***

The author's synopsis:

After a young girl dies in a tragic bus accident, a small West-Norwegian hamlet spirals into a dark cloud of grief and accusations. Stine, the daughter of the bus driver, may have lost her best friend in the incident but doesn't feel like she has the right to mourn. She is torn between her grief over losing her best friend and her anxiety about her father falling apart from his guilt. As soon as Stine is old enough, she leaves the village and the accident behind her and moves away. Her mother remains behind, an outcast in her own town. After her parents pass away, Stine returns to salvage her family's destitute farm and is surprised to find that the village still hasn't forgotten. The novel alternates between the past and the present, as well as the perspectives of Stine and her mother Ingrid.

Grief and guilt are themes common to us all. We all react differently to losing someone and there are no set answers for how we should express our grief. We might sometimes feel as though we don't have a right to mourn. In this book I have chosen to focus on how grief can take many forms and sometimes lead to even greater tragedies.

Ever since I was a child I've been interested in how seemingly small happenings can easily cause divides in small village communities. Their internal justice is absolute, regardless of whether they are judging a harmless mishap or an incident with larger and more far-reaching repercussions. Throughout my work on this novel, I have seen many examples of small communities stepping in like some kind of alternative court of law. In several of these cases, families have been chased out of the village for something one family member did. Many of these families never managed to muster the courage to return, and were torn apart.