



The Promise of Happiness

Justin Cartwright

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A powerful elegy to the intimacies and idiocies of family, *The Promise of Happiness* tells the story of an apparently ordinary family on the cusp of an extraordinary moment: the return of the family's prodigal daughter, Juliet. Her release from an upstate New York prison throws the Judds, formerly of London but now scattered, back together.

For her father, Juliet's conviction for a theft she may not have committed had proven the disintegration of a dying society. For her mother, it is a source not only of resentment, but bafflement. And for all of the Judds, it is a moment of both intense joy and confusion.

As Justin Cartwright's novel opens, Juliet's parents await her release and return to England. Charlie, their capable and successful son, has been charged with collecting her and softening her reentry into the world, his own life unsettled meanwhile by his glamorous girlfriend's pregnancy and his ambivalence towards it. Sophie, the youngest and most rebellious sibling, is in the midst of getting her chaotic life (mostly) under control. And Juliet herself is wounded, the perfect daughter made scapegoat for a victimless crime.

With searching perception and gentle humor, Justin Cartwright gradually reveals the inner struggles of the five disparate Judds as they grapple with their conflicting feelings for each other and the moral dilemmas that beset them, bringing them finally together in what is ultimately a celebration of the layers and universal oddness of the love of a family.

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