



Latitudes of Melt

By Joan Clark

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In a chilly dawn in 1912, a fisherman finds a beautiful infant floating on an ice floe in the North Atlantic. This is her story. The inhabitants of the fishing village believe she is a changeling. But it is only many years later, after marriage and motherhood, that the mystery of her origins is solved.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this meandering tale of an extraordinary woman's life, Clark (Eriksdottir; Swimming Toward the Light) strives to give everyday existence a magical aura, with mixed results. The novel opens with a fantastic conceit: a baby in a basket on a piece of ice survives the sinking of the Titanic and is discovered by a kindly Newfoundland fisherman, Francis St. Croix. He dubs her Aurora because she is found "in a gleaming dawn," and she becomes part of the St. Croix family. Aurora is a delightfully quirky child, who seems to embody the unusual circumstances of her incredible journey. She has white hair, is never cold, gambols barefoot where others hesitate to tread, loves nature and has a special affinity for animals. The small community in the valley of the Drook, where the St. Croix family lives, looks upon her as of another world. Even Tom Mulloy, the man she comes to marry, sees her as "a fairy maid." The book shifts from Aurora's story to that of her children: Nancy, a headstrong woman who wants to be everything her mother isn't, and Stanley, a late bloomer who overcomes personal tragedy and retains his mother's passion for exploration, becoming a deep-sea-diving expert on ice. It is Nancy's daughter, Sheila, who unravels Aurora's mysterious past and links her to a family that set out on the Titanic for a new life in America. Clark captures the stark magnificence of Newfoundland and portrays a changing world as technology and civilization make indelible marks on a fading seafaring era. Labored prose and overdetailed storytelling weigh down the tale, but Aurora's story will please those with an interest in northerly lands and Titanic mythmaking.

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From Library Journal

One morning in 1912, Newfoundland fisherman Francis St. Croix finds a baby floating on a chunk of ice. When no one claims her, he takes her as his own and names her Aurora. Her mysterious origins plus her white hair and her eyes, one blue and one brown make people suspicious. But as the years pass she gains acceptance, marries lighthouse keeper Tom, and has two children whose lives reflect the social, cultural, and political developments in Newfoundland. Daughter Nancy leaves home for the city of St. John and has an affair with one of her instructors that results in a child and then marriage, and son Stan becomes a scientist studying ice. It is Nancy's daughter who finally solves the mystery of Aurora's heritage. Clark (Victory of Geraldine Gull) weaves Newfoundland traditions, shipwrecks, and the barren, ice-covered landscape into the ebb and flow of the lives of her characters as they experience the Depression, war, and the Sixties to create a story of an outsider's gradual acceptance of and by a community. Recommended. Joshua Cohen, Mid-Hudson Lib. Syst., Poughkeepsie, NY

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From [Booklist](#)

In a novel as subtle as the working of water on ice, set in a place in the North Atlantic known as the Latitudes of Melt where icebergs dissolve, Clark reveals the life of Aurora St. Croix, who was discovered as an infant on an ice pan off the coast of Newfoundland, and explores how families, emotions, and countries are lost, found, or sometimes simply melt away. Clark writes for both adults and children, and the fancy found in tales for the young shapes Aurora's childhood as she wanders the barrens, runs into fairies, and takes up residence with a fox family. As odd as that may seem in a novel that tackles the confederation of Canada, the prejudice of Protestant families in Ireland, and death in any number of manifestations, it's just

that juxtaposition of the fey and the mundane that moves the novel forward. Lush with the revelations of many characters and the richly described landscape of Newfoundland, Clark's tale exposes the daily struggle to build a life and cope with its inevitable dissolution. *Neal Wyatt*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Amy Hewitt:

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Connie Simpson:

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Floretta Simmons:

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