

# *Bookaholic Magazine*

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By Rebecca Foster

To the privileged Porters, Ashaunt Point, on Buzzards Bay in Massachusetts, is far more than just a summer home; it is the place where the family has retreated for five generations to find sanctuary from the harsh realities of life. As World War II approaches, the Porters' separate peace is threatened by their son's war service and the establishment of an army base on the Point – but this also makes for an exciting season of unsupervised adventure for teenaged Helen and her younger sisters, Dossy and Jane. For Bea, one of their Scottish nannies, this pivotal year proves to be her last chance at romance before spinsterhood sets in. Readers see from her perspective how the summer of 1942 brings a death to hopes and to innocence, only compounding the trauma of the war's casualties.

In a seamless shifting of sympathies, the passing of time is conveyed through Helen's letters and diary entries, narrating the beginning of her academic career and her worries about the legacy she is passing on to her children, especially her fragile oldest son, Charlie. Decades pass, but whether as a drug-addled college dropout or an earnest

human rights lawyer starting a family of his own, Charlie finds Ashaunt a haven – though it, too, is now under threat of both development and decay.

In an astonishing historical sweep, from Ashaunt's first colonial settlers through the cultural upheavals of the twentieth century, Elizabeth Graver's family saga with a difference questions parent-child ties, environmental responsibility, and the dictates of wealth and class. Her complex, elegiac tale, reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Liza Klausmann's *Tigers in Red Weather*, offers multiple points of view in a sympathetic gaze at a vanishing way of life – but an enduring sense of place.