



West of Then: A Mother, a Daughter, and a Journey Past Paradise

Tara Bray Smith

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A dazzling, devastating memoir about one woman's search for her wayward mother, whose past is inextricably linked with the bittersweet history of their home, Hawaii.

At the center of *West of Then* is Karen Morgan -- island flower, fifth generation haole (white) Hawaiian, Mayflower descendant -- now living on the streets of downtown Honolulu. Despite her recklessness, Karen inspires fierce loyalty and love in her three daughters. When she goes missing in the spring of 2002, Tara, the eldest, sets out to find and hopefully save her mother. Her journey explores what you give up when you try to renounce your past, whether personal, familial, or historical, and what you gain when you confront it.

A tender story that lays bare the anguish, candor, and humor of growing up a half-step off the beat, *West of Then* is a striking literary debut from a perceptive and original writer. By turns tough and touching, Smith's modern detective story unravels the rich history of the fiftieth state and the realities of contemporary Hawaii -- its sizable homeless population, its drug subculture -- as well as its generous, diverse humanity and astonishing beauty. In this land of so many ghosts, the author's search for her mother becomes a reckoning with herself, her family, and with the meaning of home.

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