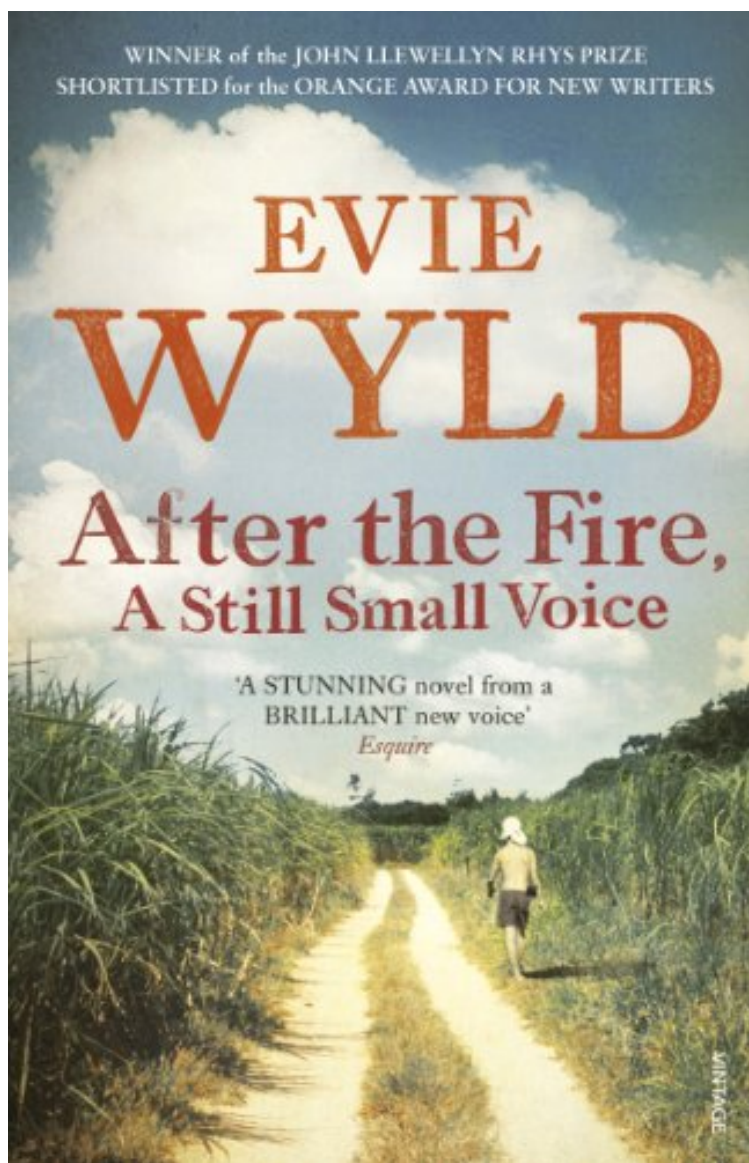


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After the Fire, A Still Small Voice



Par Evie Wyld
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Par Evie Wyld : **After the Fire, A Still Small Voice** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised After the Fire, A Still Small Voice:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrank and Leon are two men from different times, discovering that sometimes all you learn from your parents' mistakes is how to make different ones of your own. Frank is trying to escape his troubled past by running away to his family's beach shack. As he struggles to make friends with his neighbors and their precocious young daughter, Sal, he discovers the community has fresh wounds of its own. A girl is missing, and when Sal too disappears, suspicion falls on Frank.Decades earlier, Leon tries to hold together his family's cake shop as their suburban life crumbles in the aftermath of the Korean War. When war breaks out again, Leon must go from sculpting sugar figurines to killing young men as a conscript in the Vietnam War.ExtraitThe sun turned the narrow dirt track to dust. It rose like an orange tide from the

wheels of the truck and blew in through the window to settle in Frank Collards arm hair. He remembered the place feeling more tropical, the soil thicker and wetter. The sugar cane on either side of the track was thin and reedy, wild with a brown husk and sick-looking green tops. The same old cane that hadnt been harvested in twenty years swayed like a green sea. Blue gums and box trees hepped out of it, not bothered with the dieback. Once it would all have been hardwood. In the time his grandparents had lived out here, just the two of them, before the new highway, maybe then this place was a shack in the woods. The clearing was smaller than he remembered, like the cane had slunk closer to the pale wooden box hut. The banana tree stooped low over a corrugated roof. He turned off the engine and sagged in his seat for a moment taking it in. There was a tweak at the back of his neck and when he slapped it his palm came away bloody. Home again home again diggidy dig. He could have driven here without thinking. He could have turned the radio up loud and listened to the memorial service at Australia Zoo. They were calling them revenge killings, the stingrays found mutilated up and down Queensland beaches. He could have let his hands steer him to Mulaburry, those same roads hed hitched along as a kid, sun-scarred and spotty, scrawny as a feral dog without the bulky calves and wide hands he had now. But never mind that, hed still pulled over on to the slip road and smoothed out the map and read aloud the places, and he still sent his eyes over and over the landmarks, searching for the turn-offs he knew were not written down. The tension in his arms had got so strong he wanted to bust a fist through the windscreen but instead, as a road train roared by and rocked the Ute in its wake, hed clutched the wheel, crumpling the map as he did it, feeling small tears made by his fingertips. He had gripped the wheel hard so that it burnt, and he pushed like it might relieve the feeling in his arms. But it didnt help and then he was outside, banging his fists on the bonnet for all that he was worth, his nose prickling, his throat closed up, the bloody feel of some bastard terrible thing swimming inside him. And when he was done and spent, he had climbed back into the truck and refolded the bugged map, and when he couldnt make it fit together hed laughed softly and started the engine. The air outside was thick with insect noise, heavy with heat, and the old gums groaned. The padlock on the door was gone and the idea that some other bastard might have claimed the place as his own nearly made him turn round and shoo all the way back to Canberra. The whole thing was suddenly hare-brained. Tearing through drawers at home trying to find some sort of clue as to what he was supposed to be doing, hed found an envelope with a picture of his mum in, taken on one summer holiday at the shack. There she was, hanging up a sheet in the sun, the same wide teeth as him, the same sort of boneless nose. Different hair, though hers a blonde animal that moved in the wind. He was like his father, wiry, black, not from these parts. By her shoulder was the window and inside you could just make out a jam jar with a flower in it. It was like being smacked on the arse by God. Couldnt have been more than a month after she was hanging up that sheet that theyd been driving in his dads old brown Holden when a truck hadnt stopped at the intersection. When he woke up there was no more mum and no more old brown Holden. It wasnt difficult getting out of the rental agreement. Hed been late and short in the last three months since Lucy left. A week from then and he was on the road, two suitcases of clothes, the rest of everything in boxes for the op-shop and the padlock keys burning his thigh through his pocket. Hed taken the first part of the journey that evening, ended up in a motel close to midnight, with a sun-faded poster of a lion eating a zebra above his bed. He hadnt slept, hed drunk from a three-quarters empty bottle of Old and hed let himself think about Lucy then. The sick feeling of trying to make it all right. The endless meetings theyd had across the table, to see if there was a way round it. The months afterwards when hed sweated if he dropped a plate, the look on her face. Careful, or Im going. Or when the coat hangers tangled themselves and made a jangling as he shook them, her pointed silence. There were other things he thought of in that wide-awake night. Being alone, fixing himself up. Getting done with the drink, sorting through the things in his head as shed wanted him to. He stopped the Ute and opened the door. Holding his hat on to his head, he stepped into the sound of cicadas that shrilled like pushbike bells from the cane. He slammed the door louder than hed meant to and walked towards the shack. The smell of sweet ozone and the clump of his boots in the dust was alien. It was darker and smaller than he remembered. It tilted inwards a little like a sagging tent. He cleared his throat. Hey! he called before reaching for the door. Inside it hadnt changed, and it made his chest tight to see. There should have been broken windows, mess left by kids, dust and leaks, mould on the walls. But there was not. The shack had a feeling about it like itd been waiting. There were no wildflowers in jars, it wasnt swept, there wasnt the sparkle of sand in the cracks of the floorboards, but the placement of things was just the same. It was like the last person there could have been his grommet self fifteen years ago and it made a warmth at the back of his throat. No one was there. There were no other belongings, just the old things that had lived there for ever. On a high shelf a grey elephant, a kewpie doll and a mother-of-pearl shell. The

wedding-cake figurines of his parents and grandparents that had always stood on the telephone table, dustless inside their glass bell jar. There was no telephone he'd forgotten that. Sat on the stack of plastic chairs in the corner, a Father Christmas with a felt body and a rubber face. The wood-burning stove that had been put together a little wrong and now and again used to chug black smoke into the room, which would have his mother up and in the doorway coughing and flapping with a tea towel. He took a step inside and heard the familiar creak of the floor. The place wouldn't recognise him this heavy or hairy. The sink was dry, with a sprinkling of dead flies upside-down in it. The beds were there too, a double and a rickety single all close together so that as a kid he'd lain awake, wide-eyed at the sound of his parents at night, wondering what is that and why are they doing it? A thin blue and white striped blanket covered his old bed, tucked at the feet in the way he hated, where you'd have to kick your way free, so your feet didn't pin you down. He dragged out the mattresses and afterwards he slung the bed frames in the back of the Ute. The idea of sleeping on either of them filled him with dread. The smell might be there, his mother's hand cream, or the witch hazel his father used for aftershave, in the days before he stopped bothering. Later it was more of a flaying than grooming. There might be particles of their skin there, he might find a long blond hair and know it was not his. They were things that needed to be forgotten about, for starters. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* Haunting and brilliant. *San Francisco Chronicle* Incandescent. . . . An eerie chiaroscuro of blinding sunlight and tenebrous bush, rendered in language so naturalistic and sensual it seems more felt than read. . . . After the Fire has the kind of dark shimmer that mesmerizes as it disturbs. . . . What distinguishes Wyld is her incandescent empathy for her male characters and the things they are unable to say, the assurance with which she reaches for a rough-edged authenticity over the easy pleasures of lyricism. *Vogue* This surefooted and even-handed multi-layered tale is fiction writing at its best with characters so vividly drawn, they seem to literally leap off of the printed pages. *Tucson Citizen* An astonishingly assured debut. . . . A stunning work from a brilliant new voice. *Esquire (UK)* Mesmerising. . . . A novel both taut and otherworldly. This adroit examination of loss, lostness and trauma is the beginning of great things [for Wyld]. *The Independent (London)* A gritty novel. . . . Rough and beautiful. . . . It speaks to the muscle in Wyld's writing, which in richly telling detail describes the experiences 40 years apart of two Australian men. . . . Wyld distinguishes herself as another fine Australian novelist. *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* Written in pithy, crystal-sharp prose, this is a compelling read that uses the Australian landscape to mirror its characters equally unforgiving emotional terrain. *Financial Times* Wyld has a feel both for beauty and for the ugliness of inherited pain. The mood is creepystrange creatures in the sugar cane, grieving neighbors, a missing local girl and the sentiment is plain: Sometimes people aren't all right and that's just how it is. *The New Yorker* A terrifically self-assured debut. . . . It's a cauterising, cleansing tale, told with muscular writing. *The Guardian (London)* A searching study of the way war-induced damage passes from fathers to sons. . . . Uniting the disparate narratives is Wyld's brisk, atmospheric style and her fascination with men who commit appalling acts, but are not appalling people. *Times Literary Supplement (London)* Passionate. . . . After the Fire is not a book of simple feelings. . . . One must admire Wyld for her courage. *Bookpage* Just sometimes, a book is so complete, so compelling and potent, that you are fearful of breaking its hold. This is one. . . . With awesome skill and whiplash wit, Evie Wyld knits together past and present, with tension building all the time. In Peter Carey and Tim Winton, Australia has produced two of the finest storytellers working today. On this evidence, Wyld can match them both. *Daily Mail (London)* Ravishingly atmospheric and wisely compassionate. . . . There's no doubt that Wyld is a writer of immense abilities and depth. *Booklist* A triumph of subtle, original and unsentimental writing . . . Wyld explores the restrictions and distortions in the lives of men who won't or can't talk through whatever is eating away at them [with] great restraint and poignancy. *The Australian*