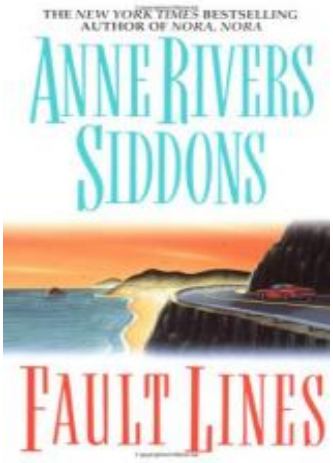
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Fault Lines

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

Merritt Fowler is a natural caretaker. Ever since her mother died when Merritt was three, she's been taking care of her the people in her life. First it was her grieving father and her headstrong younger sister, Laura, then her husband Pom, her destructive and malevolent mother-in-law, Mommee, and her anorexic young daughter, Glynn. With so much caretaking going on, Merritt has little time left over for herself and her own needs. Exhausted and confused, she no longer knows who she is, or what is important to her. But she knows the situation in her household has come to a crisis. In the throes of Alzheimer's, Mommee's behavior has become downright dangerous, and Pom's insistence that she be cared for at home has driven a wedge between Glynn and her parents. When the crisis reaches a boiling point, and Glynn runs away from her Atlanta home to stay with her Aunt Laura, now an actress in Hollywood, Merritt feels compelled to follow. Glynn is awed by Laura's seemingly glamorous Hollywood connections and Merritt feels her control over her daughter slipping even further away. On impulse, the three women take off in Laura's Mustang convertible up the coast to a remote hideaway in the Santa Cruz mountains outside San Francisco, earthquake country. There, in the protective shade of the great redwoods, Merritt, Glynn and Laura struggle to see if the widening fissures between mother, daughter and sister can be healed. When the strange, hermit-like caretaker of their hideaway, T.C. Bridgewater, begins to introduce Merritt to the beauty and power of earthquakes, she feels her old identity slipping away, and a whole new Merritt emerging. With the ground shifting beneath her feet, literally and metaphorically, Merritt must redefine herself and her relationships with all the people she loves, before it's too late.

Discussion Guide

1. Merritt talks of a "woman she left behind in Atlanta" and a new woman who has emerged in the redwoods. Is one more "the real" Merritt than the other? Were they both always present within her? What was it about the Santa Cruz mountains that enabled the second Merritt to appear? How do you think she might reconcile the two of them?

2. Why do you think Siddons chose to set her novel in earthquake country? Are earthquakes an apt metaphor for Merritt's situation? How so? What is destroyed in the earthquake Merritt, Laura and Gynn experience? What does each woman lose? What does each gain?

Author Bio

THE GIRLS OF AUGUST is Anne Rivers Siddons's 19th novel. Her previous bestselling novels include BURNT MOUNTAIN, OFF SEASON, SWEETWATER CREEK, ISLANDS, NORA NORA, LOW COUNTRY, UP ISLAND, FAULT LINES, DOWNTOWN, HILL TOWNS, COLONY, OUTER BANKS, KING'S OAK, PEACHTREE ROAD, HOMEPLACE, FOX'S EARTH, THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR and HEARTBREAK HOTEL. She is also the author of a work of nonfiction, JOHN CHANCELLOR MAKES ME CRY. She and her husband, Heyward, split their time between their home in Charleston, SC and Brooklin, ME.

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