

BOOK NOOK

Review: 'Faultland' by Suzy Vitello

Renee Struthers
The East Oregonian

"Faultland," a new book by Portland author Suzy Vitello, is a worst-case scenario vision of her home city under siege: right-wing politics have turned the once-liberal bastion of Oregon into a battleground between the bankrupt city's democratic holdouts and the Cascadia Citizens Alliance, who are determined to root out illegal immigrants and others they deem unworthy of life in the U.S.

The Sparrow family, father Clyde and siblings Olivia, Morgan and Sherman, are a train wreck together and separately. Clyde is slipping further into dementia every day, and Morgan is resentful of having to take care of him while struggling to keep her PR career afloat. Olivia's narcissism has driven her husband away, and their daughter is lashing out. And Sherman's cannabis-themed bed-and-breakfast is facing shutdown as the government pulls back on pot legalization.

And then the earthquake hits.

Not the Cascadia Event that everyone was expecting, but a major quake on a lesser fault no one thought was a danger. And for which no one in the epicenter's affluent neighborhoods was prepared.

As the scattered Sparrows struggle to find each other amid the chaos, dark family secrets are unearthed.

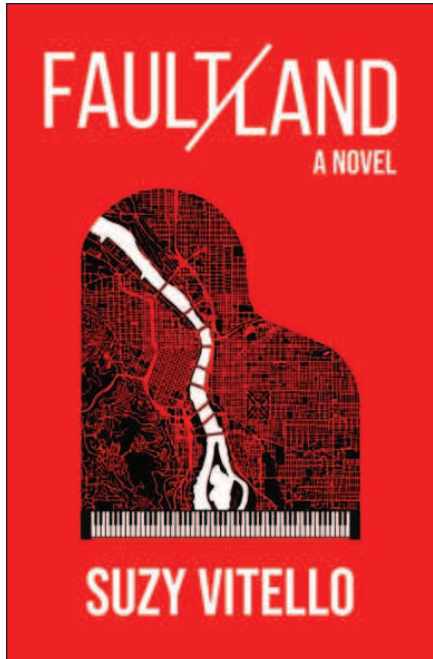
Will the siblings overcome their worst tendencies and survive, or do some faults go too deep?

Vitello takes the worst of the worst of recent fears — climate change, neo-Nazis, eugenics, illegal immigration, Big Brother and the chasm that separates conservatives and liberals — and throws in an unprecedented natural disaster to illustrate how things can go from just terrible to unfathomable in mere seconds.

"Faultland" doesn't offer platitudes but shows the Sparrows in all their intertwined, codependent glory, warts and all. It's a tale of woe, but with a glimmer of hope amid the ugliness that is real life.



Suzy Vitello lives in Portland. "Faultland" (Ooligan Press, ooligan.pdx.edu/books) will be available in paperback and ebook versions on March 30, 2021.



About the reviewer

Renee Struthers is the community records editor of the East Oregonian.

Reading by poet Gary Lark

Art Center East

Contributed information & photo

Oregon poet Gary Lark will read at the next ACE Writing Project gathering, a virtual event beginning at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20.

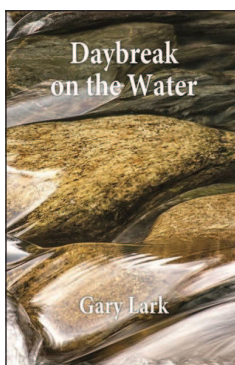
Lark is a retired librarian, storyteller, carpenter, janitor, salesman and hospital aide who lives with his wife in Oregon's Rogue Valley. His most recent collection of poetry is "Daybreak on the Water."

"The Umpqua Valley was a cultural backwater in the 1950s and '60s," said Lark, "but growing up there I experienced a splendid solitude. I was given the opportunity to learn from a master — the Umpqua River."

Lark's collection "Daybreak on the Water" is a glimpse into that teacher at work and a student wading into life.

Wednesday's free event will conclude with a community open mic. Sign-up begins at 6:45 p.m. (maximum 10 readers, each with a five-minute reading limit).

To access the Zoom gathering, register at www.artcentereast.org/calendar/ then scroll down and choose the Jan. 20 Writing Project.



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