

The Fifth Child

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Doris Lessing's contemporary gothic horror story-centered on the birth of a baby who seems less than human-probes society's unwillingness to recognize its own brutality. Harriet and David Lovatt, parents of four children, have created an idyll of domestic bliss in defiance of the social trends of late 1960s England. While around them crime and unrest surge, the Lovatts are certain that their old-fashioned contentment can protect them from the world outside-until the birth of their fifth baby. Gruesomely goblin-like in appearance, insatiably hungry, abnormally strong and violent, Ben has nothing innocent or infant-like about him. As he grows older and more terrifying, Harriet finds she cannot love him, David cannot bring himself to touch him, and their four older children are afraid of him.

Understanding that he will never be accepted anywhere, Harriet and David are torn between their instincts as parents and their shocked reaction to this fierce and unlovable child whose existence shatters their belief in a benign world.

The married couple in this novel pull off a remarkable achievement: They purchase a three-story house with oodles of bedrooms, and, on a middle-class income, in the '70s, fill it to the brim with happy children and visiting relatives. Their holiday gatherings are sumptuous celebrations of life and togetherness. And then the fifth child arrives. He's just a child--he's not supernatural. But is he really human? This is an elegantly written tale that the New York Times called "a horror story of maternity and the nightmare of social collapse . . . a moral fable of the genre that includes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and George Orwell's 1984." A self-satisfied couple intent on raising a happy family is shocked by the birth of an abnormal and brutal fifth child.

Other Books

The Jewish Way, Called "enriching" and "profoundly moving" by Elie Wiesel, The Jewish Way is a comprehensive and inspiring presentation of Judaism as revealed through its holy days. In thoughtful and engaging prose, Rabbi Irving Greenberg explains and interprets the origin, background, interconnections, ceremonial rituals, and religious significance of all the Jewish holidays, including Passover, Yom Kippur, Purim, Hanukkah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and Israeli Independence Day. Giving detailed instructions for observance—the rituals, prayers, foods, and songs—he shows how celebrating the holy days of the Jewish calendar not only relives Jewish history but puts one in touch with the basic ideals of Judaism and the fundamental experience of life. Insightful, original, and engrossing, The Jewish Way is an essential volume that should be in every Jewish home, library, and synagogue.

APPENDIX B Passover – Prayer for the Seder A special prayer to be inserted into the Passover Seder before opening the door for Elijah THE FIFTH CHILD The One Who Cannot Ask 1 T " V On this night, we remember a fifth child ."