

Title: The Cradle
Author: Patrick Somerville
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Copyright: 2009
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Format: Hardback
Genre: Drama, Domestic Friction
Part of Series: No

A short novel by Patrick Somerville, *The Cradle*, tells the tale of Matt Bishop, who travels to different states in the Midwest to find an old cradle for his pregnant wife, Marissa, and their baby on the way. The cradle belonged to his wife's mother, who left the family several years earlier and took the old cradle with her. Marissa insists that Matt must find this cradle for their baby by contacting her family, though she prefers to know nothing about them. As he travels, he finds out more and more information about Marissa's family, including the fact that she has a five-year-old half-brother whose grandmother no longer wants him. Another married couple is involved with the story when the wife, Renee, reveals that she has a second son that she gave up for adoption, fathered by a boyfriend who died in combat in Vietnam. Her other son, Adam, is fighting in the war in Iraq. Matt and Renee's lives finally intersect and allow the two characters to finally discover their long-lost families.

Somerville, a novelist and television writer, is from Chicago, Illinois. *The Cradle* is his debut novel published in 2009. The story uses various places in the Midwest involving both big cities and small towns to tell this fascinating tale. The many twists and turns and new discoveries make the novel an interesting read. The descriptions of the Midwestern setting express a sense of appreciation for its landscape and beauty that people from the area can appreciate. Although it also brings up some of the negativities associated with the Midwest, the story offers a great visual for the landscape and the kinds of people who live there. The story's inquiry into domestic friction overturns assumptions about the prevalence of strong family values in the Midwest. Many characters in the story permanently leave their families and have no relationship with them. *The Cradle* is a great read when it comes to studying family values and how it affects the livelihoods of the characters and their understanding of their own family members.

Reviewed by Hayley Hines.