



by Eva Strasser  
Verlag Klaus Wagenbach  
February 2025 / 208pp  
Fiction

## Wildhof

### *Wildhof*

#### review

Strasser, a successful scriptwriter for TV and radio, has written a gentle, humorous debut novel that tackles big topics such as death, disappearance and betrayal.

When 30-year-old Lina returns to her home village in the Black Forest to oversee the selling of her parents' house after they have died, she brings a small suitcase and is clearly not intending to stay. Lina gives the impression of a successful woman with a job in tech; but there is more to her than meets the eye. She is also on parole for having attacked a colleague for abusing women.

Once Lina arrives, it is obvious that Wildhof – the eponymous village of the story – is full of difficult memories for her. It's where her twin sister Luise disappeared years ago in mysterious circumstances. A few key people from Lina's past still live in the village. First, there's her old flame Toni, who is now a policeman and married to her best friend Nikki. Then there's Nikki's brother, Hanno, who is now the undertaker at the local funeral parlour. Together with John, a potential buyer for Lina's parents' house, the old clique manages to piece together the fragments of what happened to Luise all those years ago. A painting of the lake she left behind seems to hint at her fate. When the lake is trawled on Toni's insistence, Luise's remains are found and Lina is finally able to find some closure.

In the evening after the funeral, however, Toni reveals a long-kept

secret: Luise only drowned after he dared her to swim across the lake. He had been trying to get the twins to reconcile after their relationship soured and, had he won the bet, Luise agreed she would try and make up with Lina. Lina is enraged at this revelation and there is an angry confrontation between her and Toni that escalates into a fight. Eventually, she leaves Wildhof once more, taking Luise's ashes with her. In the end, she quits her job and completes her parole.

In deft brushstrokes, Strasser vividly conjures up a family life, pulling the reader into Lina's world and emotional state. Flashbacks of her childhood memories seamlessly interlace with her ongoing search for Luise in the present. The story is nevertheless easy to follow and Lina eschews all self-pity. Coupling the tension and structure of a thriller with the language of literary prose, Strasser's novel addresses weighty topics while never feeling too heavy.

Find out more:

<https://www.wagenbach.de/buecher/titel/1440-wildhof.html>

## about the author



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Eva Strasser studied Philosophy and Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the University of Vienna and the FU Berlin, and then screenwriting at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB). In addition to screenplays (including for SOKO Potsdam), she also writes radio plays and prose. Wildhof is her first novel.

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