

The Hush

John Hart

A sacred plot of North Carolina woodland is the setting for a supernatural thriller in the latest from two-time Edgar Award winner Hart (*Redemption Road*). Johnny Merrimon is ten years removed from the shattering events of *The Last Child*, which killed his twin sister and tore the rest of his family apart. He has since become a prickly recluse, living in self-imposed isolation in the forbidding swampland of Hush Arbor, six thousand acres he alone knows how to traverse. His best friend Jack, now a local attorney, is his only invited guest, and others who attempt to conquer the Hush often meet inexplicably violent ends. The property has belonged to the Merrimons for centuries but is haunted by the souls of the freed slaves who once lived there, and one of the descendants believes the land is rightfully hers. Johnny and Cree Freemantle have to channel their shared past to settle their dispute, inhabiting their ancestors through phantasmagoric fever dreams and reckoning with the dark secrets the Hush has kept for 150 years. **VERDICT** Hart continues to deepen his palette in this ambitious sequel, which is distinctive enough in story and tone to be read as a stand-alone. Recommended for fans of Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island* and Tom Franklin's *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*.

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