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BOOK OF THE DAY

LEON Weitz is a casually-constructed drop out. Early on we find he is a pathologist, then Francine's perspective overtakes our picture of her father.

"At first I thought pathology was the study of paths. I imagined my father discovering new routes to places. Laying down paving stones and carving grooves through mountain terrain and open desert.

"I often told people, if they asked, that my father was a pathfinder. It seemed a much simpler and more straightforward word than pathologist to explain what he did."

Leon's shadow hangs over Francine's childhood. He is always around, even when he isn't there; and when he is gone, there is trepidation. He is a darkly abusive, violent man who leaves Seattle for London with his family in tow.

The early parts of the book are small tasters of what is to come, sudden flares of temper,

WYOMING TRAIL

by Cheryl Moskowitz

Granta Paperback Original, £9.99

the continual impression that only he is capable, terrified children, rows over nothing with Francine's mother, and small reminders of the kind of domestic abnormalities which are everyday occurrences in such a home.

"Help your mother, Cynthia!" my father yelled.

"I'll help too." I took a suitcase from my mother. I didn't want to be conspicuous by special selection.

"Cynthia glared at me and whispered under her breath so my father couldn't hear. 'You don't have to. He didn't say you.'

"Shhhh, I warned. I was determined that things weren't going to feel so divided and gloomy already."

His absence created a vacu-

um in Francine's life. She felt an attachment her sisters do not feel and it is difficult to see how her father remained impassive.

"My address is at the bottom of the page. There isn't really a phone number as I'm in university accommodation so just write and let me know how I can contact you. That's if you want to. Oh, I mean, I hope you do. Anyway. That's all for now, so I'll see you. I hope. I love you. I think. I miss you. I know."

There are moments when reality appears to overtake fiction, where a character and a past are being re-created rather than invented. But this is done without a trace of sentimentality or any attempt to trivialise the importance of the moment, especially the moving sequence towards the end when Francine faces her father.

CARL MACDOUGALL