



# Fragile Beasts: A Novel

*Tawni O'Dell*

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## **Fragile Beasts: A Novel** Tawni O'Dell

When their hard-drinking, but loving, father dies in a car accident, teenage brothers Kyle and Klint Hayes face a bleak prospect: leaving their Pennsylvania hometown for an uncertain life in Arizona with the mother who ran out on them years ago. But in a strange twist of fate, their town's matriarch, an eccentric, wealthy old woman whose family once owned the county coal mines, hears the boys' story. Candace Jack doesn't have an ounce of maternal instinct, yet for reasons she does not even understand herself, she is compelled to offer them a home.

Suddenly, the two boys go from living in a small, run-down house on a gravel road to a stately mansion filled with sumptuous furnishings and beautiful artwork—artwork that's predominantly centered, oddly, on bullfighting. And then there's Miss Jack's real-life bull: Ventisco—a regal, hulking, jet-black beast who roams the land she owns with fiery impudence.

Kyle adjusts more easily to the transition. A budding artist, he finds a kindred spirit in Miss Jack. But local baseball hero Klint refuses to warm up to his new benefactress and instead throws himself into his game with a fierceness that troubles his little brother. Klint is not just grieving his father's death; he's carrying a terrible secret that he has never revealed to anyone. Unbeknownst to the world, Candace Jack has a secret too—a tragic, passionate past in Spain that the boys' presence threatens to reveal as she finds herself caring more for them than she ever believed possible.

From the muted, bruised hills of Pennsylvania coal country to the colorful, flamboyant bull rings of southern Spain, Tawni O'Dell takes us on a riveting journey not only between two completely different lands, but also between seemingly incompatible souls, casting us under her narrative spell in which characters and places are rendered with fragile tenderness.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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