



★ 2 A.M. in Little America

Ken Kalfus

Milkweed Editions (May 10, 2022)

Hardcover \$25.00 (256pp)

978-1-57131-144-3

Ken Kalfus's novel *2 A.M. in Little America* takes a disturbing plunge into a troubled future.

Before the US descended into violent chaos, Ron—fresh out of high school, indistinctive, and without a taste for factions or fighting—escaped. Now, he's one of the innumerable American refugees scattered across the globe—both pitied and resented; futureless; the detritus of nationalist aspirations. He works menial jobs in hostile lands for less than the legal wage. He sometimes claims to be Canadian. And he waits—for what, he could not say.

But even as Ron aims for invisibility, hoping that anonymity will save him from expulsion, he meets Marlise, a fellow refugee who sometimes seems familiar, and whose story he yearns to be a part of. During Sunday walks along the water in a land where neither one of them belongs: Marlise becomes beloved to Ron. And then the passage of harsh anti-immigrant laws tears their lives asunder once more.

The novel navigates undefined spaces in a fevered, sinuous state, relocating Ron between nations and aging him by imperceptible decades. People ease into his sight with appeals to his past, but Ron is never certain of the legitimacy of their claims. He knows that politics are dangerous; he knows that nothing is forever. He witnesses world events as though he's outside of them, and he remembers a teacher's warning that facts can be distorted: our eyes and minds can lie to us—and do.

Though imperiled by re-emergent militias, a needful policeman, and the reappearance of another maybe-familiar face, Ron keeps on surviving, clinging to dreams of a home that no longer exists. As it progresses, his tale becomes a potent warning about the consequences of ideological fervor. Heartbreaking and sobering, the dystopian novel *2 A.M. in Little America* has the makings of a modern classic.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (May / June 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.