

Breathing Lake Superior

Ron Rindo

Brick Mantel Books (Oct 4, 2022)

Softcover \$19.95 (252pp)

978-1-956897-11-1

In Ron Rindo's gripping novel *Breathing Lake Superior*, a grieving man goes on a troubled religious odyssey.

Sixteen-year-old John lives in suburban Milwaukee with his mother and stepfather, Anna and Cal, and his stepsister, JJ. David, the adored baby of his family, seems to possess a special aura. He's the one sibling "biologically linked to both parents," and his surprise conception defied his father's vasectomy.

Despite being a blended family, the group experiences minimal conflict. Anna is nurturing and protective, JJ exhibits general teenage rebelliousness, John is intelligent and insightful, and David spreads joy and constructs Lego mini-masterpieces. But when David drowns at the local pool during the summer of 1999, his family is overwhelmed by shock and sadness. Cal, in particular, veers into a deep depression. And then Cal's despondency turns to spiritual fervor. He insists that he, Anna, John, and JJ move upstate to an abandoned farm near Lake Superior, where he builds the New Eden Church of God with Signs Following.

Though the novel begins with deceptive complacency, the events following Cal's conversion spiral into gradual madness. His manic behavior endangers the family's emotional and physical well-being. They endure life on a failing farm without electricity or plumbing. Even supportive Anna struggles to comprehend her husband's actions.

As Cal's church becomes more established, he develops distinctive charisma. His initial sermons are admirable, advocating for charity, direct action, and the rejection of "braggy" materialism. Passionate and committed, Cal even seems to be able to perform faith healings. Cal's subsequent visions, however, lead to chaos, as he changes from a former teacher inspired to preach God's word to a gun-toting zealot.

Amid wondrous descriptions of rural, seasonal beauty, the novel *Breathing Lake Superior* examines moments of intimacy, love, and humor against a formidable biblical background.

MEG NOLA (September / October 2022)

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