

★ **Call up the Waters****Amber Caron**

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In the breathtaking and riveting stories of Amber Caron's *Call Up the Waters*, people living close to nature exhibit stubborn resilience and aching sadness.

The ten stories in this stunning collection include startling details and unexpected plot twists. In "Bending the Map," a woman who is part of a search-and-rescue team in a remote mountain town moves in with an obsessive biologist and his creepy animal skulls after her cabin is swept away in a flood. In "What the Birds Knew," a father about to lose custody of his daughter steals rare bird eggs from a cliff nest in Hawaii and warms them against his sick daughter's fevered body; in an unsettling turn, he reflects on his grandfather's "strange impulse to kill the very thing he most loved."

The natural landscapes add tension and a sense of impending danger to these gripping narratives. In "The Handler," a woman flees a failed relationship to care for a pack of sled dogs through a harsh New Hampshire winter. In "Call Up the Waters," children are frightened by their beautiful, troubled mother who uses dowsing rods to map "earth tides" during a devastating drought in Colorado. In "Fixed Blade," a thirteen-year-old girl in a small Oregon town spends her birthday ice fishing for dinner with her drunken father.

These haunting stories unfold in layers to reveal piercing truths. In the "Stonemason's Wife," a woman who sells magazine subscriptions frets about the low, babbling voices eddying in the back of her mind. Her husband, an unemployed stone mason, spends his restless days scribbling equations on scraps of paper and building intersecting walls across their New England backyard.

With astonishing power and in crystalline prose, the stories of *Call Up the Waters* follow people who maintain precarious balance on the edge of the natural world.

KRISTEN RABE (July / August 2023)

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