

★ **Music for Tigers****Michelle Kadarusman**

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When Louisa is sent to her Uncle Rufus's bush camp in Tasmania's Tarkine forest—"the forest at the bottom of the world"—she is less than thrilled. She had intended to spend her summer practicing her violin audition for Toronto's Symphony Youth Orchestra. Keeping one eye open for spiders and snakes is not her idea of fun.

But Louisa's uncle's camp is not a dusty relic as she feared. It is a wildlife haven that was started by Louisa's great-grandmother, Eleanor. With the camp set to be demolished, Louisa is let in on the sanctuary's greatest secret: a pack of thought-to-be-extinct Tasmanian tigers! Most of the pack has retreated to safety, but a lone tiger, Ellie, was left behind, directly in the bulldozers' path. With the help of new friends, Louisa summons her inner strength to complete her great-grandmother's mission.

The wilds of Tasmania are described with tangible reverence, making clear the drive which the characters have for preserving it. Louisa notes the "minty pine scent" of eucalyptus trees and the moss "like a lace shawl forgotten on the forest floor." Descriptions of the "pastel-blue sky" and twinkling constellations are enchanting, while Louisa's growing attention to the natural beauty around her mirrors her increasing commitment to the camp and its mission.

Mel, the woman who runs a nearby lodge focusing on eco-friendly tours, and her son, Colin, provide insight into the Aboriginal legacy of the land. Colin, who has autism spectrum disorder, is an exceptional cook and a knowledgeable bush guide; his friendship with Louisa is moving as they grow with and learn from each other.

A stirring tale that will inspire young readers to take to heart our collective responsibility as stewards of the planet, *Music for Tigers* is a coming-of-age story with a conservation twist.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (May / June 2020)

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