

The Bear

Andrew Krivak

Bellevue Literary Press (Feb 11, 2020)

Softcover \$16.99 (224pp)

978-1-942658-70-2

The Bear is a dreamy dispatch from the end of the world. In Andrew Krivak's palimpsest novel, the reassertion of nature over the bones of human civilization is a dignified and regretless process.

The girl and her father may very well be the last people on Earth. An ecological disaster left most of the world uninhabitable and pushed some creatures toward fearful new incarnations, but sheltered by their mountain, father and daughter feel safe.

In the girl's early years, her father sets about teaching her how to be self-sufficient: how to fish and how to hunt (and how to do both with the utmost respect for the creatures that sustain you), how to make clothes and shelter, and how to battle the aching loneliness that comes with being the last. By the time an accident leaves the girl orphaned, she is also prepared.

Aided by a bear and a wild cat, the girl undertakes a weather-threatened trek back to the place of her birth, hoping to put her father's ashes to rest beside her mother. Communing with wild creatures and helped along by the majesty and magic of the wild, she presses on through breaks in the ice, near starvation, and injuries. In a cave beside her furry protectors, she forges connections meant to last through lifetimes.

The novel concentrates less on the tragedies of humanity's disappearance than it does on the interconnectedness of all beings. Within this story: if the last human goes out nobly, having treated the world around them with respect, all has not been lost. The girl and her father are worthy guides through their latter day landscape, as are the creatures that address the girl through an otherworldly haze. Triumphant to its last breath, *The Bear* is a lovely, unforgettable experience.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (January / February 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author 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.