

The Flow: Rivers, Water and Wildness

Amy-Jane Beer

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Amy-Jane Beer's memoir *The Flow* is about the drowning of a friend and how it almost destroyed her love for rivers.

In 2012, Beer's friend group set out on a New Year's Day kayaking trip. One friend, Kate, never came home. For seven years, painful emotions, motherhood, and daily needs intervened to keep Beer from facing the loss of her friend. She resisted going back to the river, which, of all the rivers she'd kayaked, now became the one reserved for "another day."

But a cold "poster-bright" autumn day changed this stasis. The music of robins and rushing water marked Beer's descent to the place where Kate disappeared—a mean, tight space with relentless waters where her friend was submerged for ten minutes. She took a solo swim in an icy pool below the treacherous rapid, wearing her bathing suit backwards. The experience brought back laughter and a vigorous, joyful sensation of vibrancy. She knew then that she would go back to rivers now, but at a slow rate and while paying attention.

Rivers, Beer reveals, are capable of bringing both life and death. They possess magic and mysteries that science has yet to comprehend. Featuring cinematographic, unmissable descriptions of such rivers, her book is informative, moving, and astounding. And it follows the flow of Britain's other waters, including the swirling vapors of the sky's invisible atmospheric rivers; rivers that were historical highways through the wilderness; and the ways that water interacts with, shaped, and continues to shape the land and its inhabitants.

The Flow is an epic memoir that inspires awe for rivers and reveals their dual nature as both boundaries and portals.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November / December 2022)

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