

The Rise of Winter

Alex Lyttle

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Set in a time and place when humans have already nearly destroyed the Earth once, Alex Lyttle's *The Rise of Winter* is a richly imagined middle grade fantasy about a young girl who joins with a select group of animals to protect the Earth and its creatures.

Winter is a timid girl, raised by a grandmother who refuses to tell her anything about her parents. Her life is full of questions. Then she hears a bird speak. She dismisses this oddity as a figment of her imagination until she has an entire conversation with a raccoon. This starts a chain of events that leads to the discovery that her father was a Guardian, charged with protecting the Earth. Winter has been selected to take his place.

The anthropomorphized animals that fill the book exhibit personalities ranging from charming to frightening, and they add significant emotional richness to its pages. Winter's family history, including the experiences of her parents, grandparents, and cousin Alectus lead to an exciting central conflict centered around the idea that human activity damages the Earth and must be mitigated. Winter's story calls into question the morality of progress and innovation that exists without consideration of its consequences to Earth and Earth's creatures.

A complex exploration of metaphysical concepts, including the manipulation of energy vibrations to influence the material world, comes in the context of Winter learning to use her special gifts. Well-thought-out explanations for these magical abilities are refreshing and fascinating.

An environmental and metaphysical fantasy, *The Rise of Winter* is entertaining as it introduces a new world and leaves a great deal to explore.

CATHERINE THURESON (May/June 2019)

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