

The Valley of Sage and Juniper

Shay Galloway

Running Wild Press (Mar 21, 2023)

Softcover \$21.99 (440pp)

978-1-955062-60-2

In Shay Galloway's novel *The Valley of Sage and Juniper*, sisters struggle for independence and to keep their family's ranch.

Isaiah and Genesis were so named by their devout mother, Addie. Isaiah is defiant yet mystical, with the ability to detect impending death. Genesis is more bookish and reflective, and she's as skilled as any man with knives and guns. Addie's pious fervor compels her to join the Community, a cultish Christian group helmed by Leader, with whom she's mesmerized. She leaves her husband and daughters to do so, returning only to bring Isaiah and Genesis back to the Community to prevent the girls from becoming "heathens."

The Community's rigid religiosity contrasts with the sprawling Rocky Mountain landscape beyond the church compound. When it comes to the women and girls, Leader and his sons dominate and even impregnate them; violation of the Community's rules results in physical beatings. Leader's presence looms throughout the novel, and his rapacious charisma is developed with finesse. He is furious when Isaiah and Genesis escape his hypocritical congregation; he grows even more determined to take their father's coveted ranch.

The story spans from 1928 until 1944. Its situations are varied and captivating, including a July 4th celebration marked by banter, barbecue, "powder-smoke and summer heat" and the rushing rains that end a drought. As the narrative switches between the sisters, insights into their distinctive personalities arise. As Isaiah approaches womanhood, she finds it difficult to control her strong sexual drive; Genesis is intelligent, capable, and an excellent cook, but she can be quick-tempered and moody. The birth of Genesis's son and her love for his father, Jax, forces her to acknowledge her unsettling, vulnerable emotions.

A novel of subtlety, fury, and complex women's perspectives, *The Valley of Sage and Juniper* reinvents traditional Western sagas.

MEG NOLA (March / April 2023)

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