



Weather Woman

Cai Emmons

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Beneath a New Jersey sky, a young girl with the deck stacked against her falls in love with the weather. Years later, feeling an odd fit with her PhD program at MIT, she heads north to try her hand at television meteorology, whirling into powerful personal realizations in the process.

In Cai Emmons's *Weather Woman*, Gaia comes alive in the girl next door. The novel may fit the definition of a work of magical realism, but its appeal lies in its deeper truths. Bronwyn—lovely, brilliant, and respected by some peers, but put off course by her own uncertainties—first unearths her ability to direct the weather by accident; it arises in her fury against a storm that threatens her life.

A few test runs later, she's learned that she can shift weather systems and natural disasters at her whim. It's draining to do, but rife with possibilities. Halting deadly tornadoes, stopping raging fires, summoning rapids, making the sun shine through the rain: she transforms natural moments again and again. Her exercises culminate in the question of whether she may ultimately be able to combat global warming—one powerful woman against all of humankind's most devastating effects on the planet.

The novel doesn't lead with its politics, but it still functions beautifully as an ecofeminist allegory. Bronwyn may very well be the most powerful woman on earth, but her abilities aren't accessible until she rises above the snickering and judgment of the categorically inferior men around her, from superficial station managers to entitled classmates to a blue-blood boyfriend. They can't see far beyond her pretty face; to be what they want would limit her. For Bronwyn, prioritizing her authentic self, wildness and all, proves to be earth-moving. Literally.

Elevated, elemental language moves the story along. In Bronwyn's confrontations with nature, lines are both scientific and seductive. She gathers a small, appreciative, and awed cohort and travels far to explore her potential; it is a worthwhile trip, inviting celebration of—and activism to preserve—our one shared home.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September/October 2018)

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