



The Bear

Written by Claire Cameron

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The Bear

The Bear

By Claire Cameron

The Beard Club

A powerfully suspenseful story narrated by a young girl who must fend for herself and her little brother after a brutal bear attack.

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The Bear And Monarch

While camping with her family on a remote island, five-year-old Anna awakes in the night to the sound of her mother screaming. A rogue black bear, 300 pounds of fury, is attacking the family's campsite, pouncing on her parents as prey.

The Beard Struggle

At her dying mother's faint urging, Anna manages to get her brother into the family's canoe and paddle away. But when the canoe dumps the two children on the edge of the woods, and the sister and brother must battle hunger, the elements, and a dangerous wilderness, we see Anna's heartbreaking love for her family -- and her struggle to be brave when nothing in her world seems safe anymore.

The Bear And The Maiden Fair

Told in the honest, raw voice of five-year-old Anna, this is a riveting story of love, courage, and survival.

this was the perfect book to read directly after *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park*, which had a huge chapter about death by bears in yellowstone and how to (hopefully) avoid being killed by them. in the author's note of the bear, cameron says that her inspiration for this novel was the true story of raymond jakubauskas and carola frehe, who were killed by a bear on Bates Island on Lake Opeongo in Algonquin Park, nearly three thousand miles of wilderness this was the perfect book to read directly after *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park*, which had a huge chapter about death by bears in yellowstone and how to (hopefully) avoid being killed by them. in the author's note of the bear, cameron says that her inspiration for this novel was the true story of raymond jakubauskas and carola frehe, who were killed by a bear on Bates Island on Lake Opeongo in Algonquin Park, nearly three thousand miles of wilderness situated two hundred fifty miles northeast of Toronto. there was no explanation for the attack; they did all the things that *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park* book recommended you do to avoid bear-interest, and yet, they were still attacked and devoured.

cameron takes their story and adds two children into the mix: anna, aged 5 and "stick," aged 2. forced to listen to her parents get attacked by a giant black bear without really understanding what is happening, anna emerges from the cooler where she and her brother were stashed at the beginning of the attack and stumbles upon her dying mother who begs anna to take her brother, get into the canoe, and get off the island, to "wait for them" on the mainland.

after some confused resistance, she does just that, and they make it across the water and wait on the opposite shore, through hunger and heat and mosquitoes as anna tries to keep stick from wandering off, entertaining him and waiting for an adult to come and tell them what to do next.

the story is entirely narrated by 5-year-old anna, so it is not a cohesive, linear narrative. it is more stream-of-consciousness writing, with all anna's confusion about her situation, and a focus on the inconsequential details making up the the small, selfish but good-intentioned perspective of a little girl. she both loves and resents her younger brother, and tries to keep her eye on him and keep him out of trouble, but she is easily frustrated by the grown-up burdens she is not old enough to assume.

i personally loved the voice. it seems to me to be a very realistic depiction of what a child would be thinking in the midst of a tragedy she doesn't quite comprehend. she keeps waiting for her parents to come to her rescue, stumbling into and narrowly avoiding other dangers unknowingly, and the story is a combination of memories of her parents and their relationship (another thing she only half-understands) and her frustration with her more immediate surroundings.

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it is occasionally funny, sometimes sad, and pretty tense, because the reader knows more than anna, and so knows that there is more to fear than she herself realizes. i liked the narrow focus, anna's fixation on the barbie dolls her mother will not let her have, her quick-change love-hate of her brother, the unusual connections she makes and the way she expresses these thoughts.

kids in peril always makes good reading for me, and this is one of the better ones i have read. someday, you can read it, too!!

come to my blog! ...more

The Bear And The Nightingale

I wanted to love this book. I was SO excited to read it, so glad that I was approved for an ARC from NetGalley (and thank you, Net Galley, for supplying me with it!), but I just couldn't love it.

The story itself is terrifying and emotional and original. And the writing, in terms of form, is fine. My issue is with the narration and that I couldn't believe it.

As a children's librarian, I'm around a lot of kids, all ages, 0-18. The kids I'm around the most are between the ages of 2 and 6, the age I wanted to love this book. I was SO excited to read it, so glad that I was approved for an ARC from NetGalley (and thank you, Net Galley, for supplying me with it!), but I just couldn't love it.

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As a children's librarian, I'm around a lot of kids, all ages, 0-18. The kids I'm around the most are between the ages of 2 and 6, the ages of Stick and Anna. While I liked the idea of telling the story from Anna's perspective in first person present tense, I didn't find her thought processes convincing. Some of the words used didn't strike me as words a 5-year-old would think, and it happened so often that it would jerk me out of my "reading zone" to think to myself "well that doesn't seem right". I also struggled with believing that Anna remembered so many things. For the most part, when you talk to kids, they can hardly tell you what they did that day. Anna remembered too many things, was able to think about too much at once.

I don't know, I seem to be the only one with this opinion, so I absolutely think people should read it and form their own. The story itself is (cliche, I know) haunting and terrifying. I absolutely believe that Anna would be able to take care of her little brother, and I find the story entirely credible. I just have a hard time believing in Anna's narrative. ...more

Based on the true story of when a couple was attacked by a bear and killed on Bates Island on Lake Opeongo in Algonquin Park- two hundred miles northeast of Toronto- in 1991. There was a lot of mystery around the reason for the attack " which I felt was worthy of a story itself. Given all the facts of what investigators gathered- there was never ever any "clear" reason to explain why the couple "was" attacked "

BUT....

what the author did with this story is "add" small children to tell a story of Based on the true story of when a couple was attacked by a bear and killed on Bates Island on Lake Opeongo in Algonquin Park- two hundred miles northeast of Toronto- in 1991. There was a lot of mystery around the reason for the attack " which I felt was worthy of a story itself. Given all the facts of what investigators gathered- there was never ever any "clear" reason to explain why the couple "was" attacked

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â€”

BUT....

what the author did with this story is â€”addâ€™ small children to tell a story of what it â€”mightâ€™ have been like if children were camping with their parents when the Bear attacked.

What a FRIGHTENING THOUGHT!!!!

As it turns out... it â€”WASâ€™ terrifying to imagine five year old Anna and her two year old brother, Stinky, surviving on their own after their parents were attack...

beginning with them waiting their time out in a Coleman ice chest....â€™listeningâ€™??? to noises of the Bear fighting their parents?/!

WHAT A HORRENDOUS THOUGHT!

We know from the start how the story ends...

but we still feel for these children.

They have limited understanding of whatâ€™s happening around them...

We follow along with Anna - as our 5 year old narrator taking us on a very haunting journey from her Colman. She speaks to us...

through a dream? Or... is it real? that she paddled away on a canoe with her brother?

Her voice and imagination â€”didâ€™ have me wondering how realistic this might be...

Soooo creepy SCARY... why would I want to imagine this story?/! Yet... itâ€™s a book that calls for a one sitting read. PULLS AT YA!

A part of me wonders â€”whyâ€™ this story was created â€”as the REAL story was not only DEVASTATING - if you read about the factual events â€” there was as many reasons for the couple to have NOT gotten attacked at all. They didnâ€™t do anything wrong while camping ...

so - Iâ€™m still more interested in the puzzle around the REAL story. Worth learning of things others might â€”correctâ€™ while camping.

On the other hand -this fast slim book - does have tension - creating visual imagery- and an experience of these small children.

YEP.... you guessed it... NOT an UPBEAT happy dance book ... but â€”kindaâ€™ fascinating....

ALWAYS TERRIFYING! ...more

The Bear Flag Revolt

Child narrators under the age of 10 are tricky to say the least. It can be so easily flubbed and come off as gimmicky or inauthentic. Mostly, I'm not a fan. Louis CK's rant about children and their secrets beautifully sums up the why for me.

So this book, with its five-year old narrator Anna, is going to fail or succeed depending on your acceptance of the childish, stream-of-consciousness storytelling style. Anna is in the grips of some nasty peril after just losing both her parents to a bear ma

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So this book, with its five-year old narrator Anna, is going to fail or succeed depending on your acceptance of the childish, stream-of-consciousness storytelling style. Anna is in the grips of some nasty peril after just losing both her parents to a bear mauling. What's more, she is saddled with the responsibility of her baby brother Stick, aged 2. Anna's point of view is limited by what she knows and what she is able to articulate (for the record, not a whole lot). There's repetition and tangent after tangent. As with any child, you must have patience. You'll get all the information you need eventually, it just might take a while to get there.

Anna's voice grew on me, it really did. She's bratty and self-absorbed like any young kid, but also sweet and funny and brave. Her thorny relationship with her baby brother is heart-wrenching at times, the way she hates him and loves him in equal contradicting measure. There is tension here and a palpable suspense as we watch two hapless babes in the woods stumble from one threat to another -- sunburn, dehydration, poison ivy, and of course, the black bear who may or may not still be stalking them (and who continues to feed on their parents).

This is one of those books you're just going to have to try and see for yourself whether Anna's voice makes you want to keep reading, or throw the book across the room as if it had cooties. Either reaction is possible.

Some spoilers ahead under the spoiler tag:

(view spoiler)[I'm not certain the dramatic back story of the affair and Anna's parents separation was really necessary. I felt this domestic conflict didn't add much to the story other than to reinforce the on-going theme of the "family unit" and Anna's "we are four", "we are two", "I am one" interpretation.

Anna's months of silence after her ordeal and her long road to recovery was interesting. She was obviously much more traumatized by events than her initial telling of the story would have us believe. The trauma definitely lingers since she is haunted by a nightmare for the rest of her life of getting

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mauled by a bear.

Two scenes made me tear up:

At the end when Anna and Stick curl up by the front door waiting for "Daddy" to come home. I look at the door too. It is closed. When the door is open, there is the backyard and then my tree and then the gate where Daddy comes in. He is not home from work. It stays shut and so Stick came down to see if Daddy came and fell asleep. When Anna and Stick are grown, they revisit the site of the accident. Anna lies in the grass where she is certain her mother took her last breath. Lying on the ground I can see him. And that's when I know that Mom could see us. If she was still conscious when she was lying here, and if her eyes were open, she would have seen me luring Alex into the canoe....Maybe she saw that I got into the canoe after him and started to paddle with my hands. Maybe she knew that we got away. I thought that was a lovely note to end on. (hide spoiler)] ...more

I didn't like this.

Child narrators are hard to get right, I just didn't enjoy it.

Got bored with all the flashbacks, skimmed over a lot. Found it annoying and distracting.

5 years old was maybe just too young a narrator for me to get into.

The Beard Hunter

After witnessing the aftermath of a bear attack on their parents after camping in Algonquin Park, Anna (5) and Stick (2) are told to get onto the canoe and escape. This is a haunting and yet beautiful story about Anna's love and instinctive protection for her brother. Cameron also explores the mental anguish which would surely follow such an incident in such a young child, using the broken, childish narrative of Anna to try and understand what is happening.

Hmmm, I think I have to wait a bit to review this one. Have to think about it first. From www.thebookdorks.com:

Ah, shit. This one's gonna be all nature-y and survivalish. Totally not my kind of book at all, except FREE****, so there's that.

I KNOW everyone on the internet (weird, since this is a pre-release and yet so many have already read it) seems to love this book after they've finished. And maybe it's just me being contrary (which is sort of likely to happen, actually), but I don't think I'll. Hmmm, I think I have to wait a bit to review this one. Have to think about it first. From www.thebookdorks.com:

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I KNOW everyone on the internet (weird, since this is a pre-release and yet so many have already read it) seems to love this book after they've finished. And maybe it's just me being contrary (which is sort of likely to happen, actually), but I don't think I liked it at all. I'd tell my students that if they have a strong reaction either way, a book has done its job because it made them think, but even I know that is a load of crap, so forgive me for the all-caps screaminess to come. This one makes me feel a little RANTY.

First off, the attack scene is pretty disturbing since we know that the main characters going through this are kids. I decided not to read this at bedtime since I have some kids, like some kids, and don't generally want to hear stories about horrors happening to kids. It's definitely a daytime book.

Here are my big issues with The Bear (SPOILERS AHEAD):

The cooler – In the middle of the attack, Dad has the wherewithal foresight gumption time idiotic idea to put his two kids in a cooler. I cannot get past that. (Even though this is irrelevant, I am also annoyed that the girl has NAMED her cooler and sees it as a friend. Too quirky = feels forced.) Really, though, I am disturbed that Mr. Whyte's solution is to stuff his two kids in a place where children often suffocate by accident. I mean, this doesn't seem a like a good plan AT ALL. This seems like his brain was already going in not-nice places if this is his first instinct. Because seriously, how is suffocating your

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children the answer to a rampaging bear? Has he thought of this before? Did he lure them out there to kill them all? This guy, for all his nature smarts (I assume? I mean, because they camp a lot and have custom-made canoe paddles and suchâ€¦!) seems like a real Froot Loop once heâ€™s in a real Man vs. Wild situation. And say heâ€™d survived the bear, this could too easily be an â€œoh darn, too lateâ€• scenario! Not cool.

Dadâ€™s logic â€“ WHY DIDNâ€™T THEY ALL GET BACK IN THE DAMN CANOE? Or just him with the kids since Mom seems seriously messed up by then? Barring that, why didnâ€™t he float the kids off in the canoe while he attacks 300 pounds of bear with a clearly flimsy canoe paddle? How is the cooler the best option and WTF is the bear doing while he does this????? I mean, really, how did Dad have a chance to go get Anna, get ALEX (because dammit, STICK is not a name, and yes, Iâ€™m sorry to steal your line, Kelley), get the damn rock to create an air hole and not get eaten? Was he just ignoring his wife being torn to bits during all this???? Was the bear that preoccupied? And did he just go back after locking the kids in the cooler and volunteer himself up as dinner, saying â€œok, bear, Iâ€™m done being a crap-ass dad, so you can disembowel me nowâ€•? I mean, best case scenario, how did he think those kids were going to get out of a locked metal cooler while he attacked the local wildlife with a meager NOT-WEAPON? Did he plan on them suffocating? What kind of outcome were we hoping for here? I just donâ€™t buy that this as a heat-of-the-moment survival solution, no matter how terrible the circumstances.

Poor parenting â€“ And, speaking of terrible, irrational decisions by the dad (and why I REALLY thought there was more going on here with the dad, for a few chapters anyway)â€¦ why the hell is Dad always so mad that he looks like a raging bear who goes off and leaves his family when the baby has a shitty diaper or whatever? Why is this five-year-old child so terrified to be bad? Because her dad will leave? Oh hell no, not gonna like this one. And the mom, for all her trying to keep bad food and BAAAAD Barbies from her kids, sure seems to be useless when it comes to a crisis. What sort of adult needs a five-year-old for comfort when she has a breakup? AND WHY THE HELL WAS THAT USELESS PLOT POINT EVEN IN THERE? Except, maybe because it makes Dad look like more of a doucheâ€¦!

The oh-shit-this-could-be-really-awesome moment â€“ Then it occurred to me that maybe the bear was meant as a symbol. I mean, Dadâ€™s constantly a scary bastard, maybe she just THINKS there is a bear and in a weird, Life of Pi, surreal and head-trippy way, Dad is hurting his family. Maybe she blocks it out because the truth is too hard. EXCEPT not. Because I donâ€™t think that book is this fucking clever. The bear is just a bear; the dad is just a dunce (and one who later cuddles and comforts his daughter in a flashback scene, so I guess I was reading him wrong all along), and the story just sucks. I quit.

Cooler problems again â€“ Oh, did I mention? When the kids finally get out the cooler it is because it breaks like eggshells after Anna kicks it. Um, no. Even bear-mauled metal shouldnâ€™t do that. (Ok, maybe it should.) I honestly have no idea what bear-mauled metal would do under that sort of stress, but it feels too damn convenient. After all, the lid of the cooler has just fallen closed; thus, no more air. OF COURSE, itâ€™s AFTER the poopy diaper, but not before they asphyxiate or at a moment when the bear is still around to be a danger).

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Mom's deadness " Why is Mom's leg pointing up? Is she broken? Eaten? Bleeding out? Giving up? How long has she been there dying and not, I don't know, searching for her damn kids??? (Because seriously, I don't care what a bear just ATE off of me, if I had breath left, that's what I'D be doing!) The book keeps referring to her leg pointed up so it makes me wonder if it is detached. Ew. And yet when Dad's leg is ACTUALLY detached, no real mention until later. Maybe that is just what Anna chose to focus on because the rest was gory, but | blargh.

That beginning " In the author's note, Cameron writes that a bear attack just like this happened in this very park where she once worked (which sounds like the beginning of a horror story at Girl Scout camp). She apparently spent tons of time researching this particular event. I feel like that is awesome because I can get onboard with some realistic fiction. But then she ends the note with "I added the kids." WTH? Adding children in this already tragic, gruesome scenario seems horrific. Had she wanted to retell the real event, I'd be in. If she'd had three folks camping and this happened, and one survives to tell the story, I'd buy it. Had she wanted to retell that real bear attack event reimagined as fiction (even with kids), fine, but then, don't tell me. JUST LET IT BE FICTION. As it is, adding children feels like needlessly toying with the reader's emotions for dramatic effect and I resent that.

Yadda yadda " After the kids get in the canoe, they float off somewhere safe, drink muddy water, go to the bathroom in copious amounts, and I totally check out. They're later rescued, grow up, and finally come back to mourn their dead parents. YAWN. After all the forced tension and implausibility at the beginning, I no longer care, but feel SOMETHING more groundbreaking should have happened.

So I hate to be bitchy and all, since this is a pre-release which I got it for free, and this is only the author's second book, and she looks all pretty and nice when I looked her up on the internet, but sorry, Claire Cameron, this one is a NO for me.

****This book was provided to our book club by publisher Little, Brown and Company as an advance readers copy in exchange for honest reviews. The Bear is scheduled for release on Feb. 11, 2014.

...more

The Bear Jew

I've held off reviewing this for a few days to get a little distance. The book, at certain points, had me shaking with anxiety. And now I'm not quite sure when I'll be emotionally prepared take my son camping for fear of bears or dingoes or anything else.

The story involves 5-year-old Anna and her 2-year-old brother Alex ('Stick'). Thanks to their father's quick thinking, they survive a bear attack, but the parents don't fare so well. The rest of the story is their journey back.

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Anna narrates the entire story. I'd say that choice of narrator paid off, but only because it was executed so well. Anna's thoughts were perfectly scattered for a kid who hasn't developed her filters yet, but still focused on what you would expect would important for a kid (Mommy, Daddy, her teddy bear, being hungry). It took some getting used to, but once I figured how to let the thoughts wash over me rather than trying to figure out what each statement meant, I found it easier to absorb.

I think there were some missed opportunities to make the kind of funny and creative connections that kids can make, but I didn't notice that too much because I was so freakin' scared for these kids.

I'm glad it was so short, I have to say. I'm not sure I could have taken much more of it. But, I say that in a complimentary way. I'm happy to have read it, but I was glad when it was over. ...more

5-year-old Anna and her 3-year-old brother Alex (Stick) survive a bear attack during a family camping trip. Anna tries to keep them alive and safe after their parents are killed.

This book was narrated by Anna. While I applaud the author for taking on this ambitious point-of-view, the voice of this character did not work for me. Anna narrated more like a 3-year-old than a child who is almost six. Not only didn't it ring true, but it was annoying and confusing. The story itself was kind of a let 5-year-old Anna and her 3-year-old brother Alex (Stick) survive a bear attack during a family camping trip. Anna tries to keep them alive and safe after their parents are killed.

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almost six. Not only didn't it ring true, but it was annoying and confusing. The story itself was kind of a let down as well. Just the kids wandering around making stereotypical mistakes like wiping themselves with poison ivy leaves and getting sunburned. And little details bothered me like how a tin of cookies that had multiple punctures from the bear's claws could be dropped repeatedly into the water without any of the cookies getting wet. This book just did not live up to its potential for me. ...more

The Beard

The comparison to ROOM will be made to Cameron's THE BEAR - and it is well deserved. The storyteller is 5 year old Anna, telling the tale of escape from a huge black bear. Her parents saved her and her 2 year old brother; Momma telling Anna to canoe away from the island. Her voice is so believable, a 5 year old little girl IS speaking to you. Powerful, unsettling at times; I needed to break from reading. She mixes the terror with bits of wonder and humor, a perfect blend. The opening section is

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I love to read. And I read a lot. I only choose books I know I'm going to enjoy. But every so often, there's that book that goes beyond that enjoyment feeling - one that absolutely grabs you, has you tingling with anticipation knowing there's an amazing story just waiting within the pages, one that you can't wait to tell others about.

Well, I'm telling you - The Bear by Claire Cameron is one of those books. I literally could not put it down. Twenty pages in, I just knew I wasn't going to bed early

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In October of 1991, a pair of campers was attacked by a bear in Algonquin Park, Canada. "There is no clear reason for what happened other than a hungry bear decided to take a chance on a new source of food." Author Cameron was a counsellor at a summer camp at Algonquin that year as well. "The Bear is based on my memories of and research into this bear attack. I added the kids."

Yes, kids. The Bear is told through the eyes and voice of five year old Anna. She and her two year old brother Stick, are the survivors of an attack that kills their parents - and leaves them alone in the vast wilderness that is Algonquin.

As adults, we know what is happening and what they should do, but Anna is only five and has limited skills, knowledge and experience to draw on. It is frightening and heartbreaking to imagine this truly

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happening - the confusion, the questions, the fear and the loss. Cameron does a truly fantastic job of bringing this to the page with Anna's voice. Through her memories, thoughts and senses (smell and touch are very important to Anna) we come to know the children, the family's life, the parents and their love for Anna and Stick. Anna draws on her memories time and time again as she struggles with what to do.

The Bear is told in a 'stream-of-consciousness', non-linear format that was highly effective and heightened the tension.

Emotional, unsettling, gripping and gut-wrenchingly good. Highly, highly recommended. ...more