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Hannah And The Mountain: Notes Toward A Wilderness Fatherhood (American Lives)



HANNAH —————

————— and the Mountain

*Notes toward
a Wilderness Fatherhood*

Jonathan Johnson

American Lives Series • Tobias Wolff, Editor



Synopsis

Longing for a home in big, wild country that would keep them passionate and young, Jonathan Johnson and his wife, Amy, set out to build a log cabin on his family's land in a remote and beautiful corner of Idaho. But what began as a doable dream for the two of them suddenly looks quite different when, on their first morning in the cabin—without electricity, a telephone, running water, or real windows—the couple learn that Amy is pregnant. In this lyrical and intimate chronicle of making a home the hard way, Johnson describes the competing joys and anxieties of preparing for fatherhood in a setting as challenging as it is promising: a paradise of mythic snowfalls and warming wood stoves and elk tracks at the front door, but also a place where vision, and even struggle and compromise, are not always enough. *Hannah and the Mountain* tells a rare and delicate story of two people exploring the unmapped territories of loss and grief and finding solace and grace in the mountains. It offers the reader an unforgettable portrait of a couple growing up, learning nature's hard and beautiful lessons, and discovering a love of place and each other strong and wild enough to renew them and be carried into the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hannah and the Mountain reviewed by Jacob Powers
It is difficult to find a text that gives balance between nature and family. Granted, each genre holds its own, but to find a book that discusses both the love of the wilderness and the love of family is rare. Fortunately Jonathan

Johnson, with his memoir *Hannah and the Mountain*, has successfully done just that. Johnson's narrative at first focuses on his goal to renovate a cabin owned by his extended family for over forty years for him and his wife, Amy, in the Idaho wilderness: "[We] came to the mountains because our adult lives were rushing toward us and we wanted to go out and meet those lives in a place that would keep us young and free and filled with passion. After years of school we were ready to settle into the long story of home." This feeling of home quickly takes a step forward when Jonathan and Amy discover that she is pregnant with their first child. Now, with the combination of extensive renovations and the limited amounts of resources to do so, the intent to form a home suitable to raise his future child in quickly takes off. Yet Johnson does it all in hope-hope that his firstborn will experience the beauty and awe of the wilderness that he and his wife adore. Tragedy, however, ensues as the memoir (which reads a lot like a novel) quickly disintegrates from its optimistic dreams into the harsh realities of a complicated pregnancy. The baby is carried too low, putting pressure on and stretching the lower uterus, threatening a premature birth: "Amy'd been having pains low in her abdomen all along...the hope was that the pains were the result of these problems, not the contractions that could be causing the problems."

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