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Ann Halam

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When Sloe was tiny, her Papa disappeared and she and her mama went to live in a prison camp in the snowy north, in a time and place when there are no more wild animals. Mama's crime: teaching science, and her dedication to the hope that the lost animal species can be reborn. To Sloe, Mama's secret work is magic, as enchanting as Mama's tales of a bright city across the ice where they will be free.

Years later, Sloe is sent to a prison school, and Mama disappears. At 13, Sloe escapes, pursued by a mysterious man. With only hope to keep her going, Sloe sets out on a solitary 1000-mile journey. But she is not truly alone for Mama left Sloe a gift: the seeds of five missing species and the knowledge to bring them to life.

From the Hardcover edition.

Siberia Details

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From Reader Review Siberia for online ebook

Loz says

I don't how I felt about this book.

I liked the Lindquists, although the idea was very strange and certainly isn't possible, yet.

Not sure I liked the main character though, and it had, what I felt, was a pretty sudden ending.

Asghar Abbas says

At a glance Siberia looks like such an unassuming little novel. Let's see; a vague title which could mean anything, a seemingly simple story, a bland synopsis, a dull and uninspiring cover. But how wrong was I!

Sure, at the beginning it was boring, soporific even. But this is by far one of the most incredibly well written fantasy novels, excellent pacing, better plotting, a believable MC who is human and humane. Though what she is wearing on the cover of this edition is a little misleading. Looks like designer wear to me, when in the book she barely has adequate clothing for the winterlands.

But seriously, this is dystopia done right. Which False Hearts could have been. Oh please, False Hearts wished it was this amazing. Heck, I enjoyed this more than the Wolf in the Attic and I really did like that one, sort of.

Siberia is another great find from 2013. What I love about this is that I came across northern lights. Twice! Too bad it wasn't Aurora Aksnes and that this reminded me of Book of Blood by Clive Barker I read last December. Love that month .

What exactly had happened to the world in this book? To get to the point of the current setting? What had set off the eternal winter. The Cause and Effect is kinda kept mysterious here. Though it is more than hinted that the climate change and the damage we have done to this planet were a factor and that is the main reason. Let's face it, we are exhausting our world. Don't worry, not gonna preach here, haha. What we are doing to each other and to this earth is an issue. The premise is plausible because that could happen in reality too. Which is always scary. Because it feels inevitable.

Despite all that, the novel did end fairly well. The ending was fair and I am all about the endings, the good ones at least. I thought it will be a copout but it wasn't. It concluded, with my many thanks. For a briefest moment, I got a sense of Mad Max Road Fury from it too, go figure.

oh, I also liked how springtime was deemed more dangerous than the winter. I love when they change things like that. The reason this doesn't have five stars is that there wasn't more snow in it. By that I mean, the wastelands should have been explored more, the adventure could have been more grander. That's why it felt it was finished before it actually got started.

Speaking of epic adventures being done just right, everyone should look up Kubo and the Two strings. In

fact, if you are going through some things and you need to smile, I highly recommend Kubo and the Two strings and Pixar's Inside Out. Sheer story telling. They can help you get over anything.

Addendum : Oh, how I love this excerpt from the author's note; the Seedsavers at the end :

you could, if you like, imagine that Sloe's journey starts somewhere to the east of Warsaw; she travels to the Baltic coast, and the city where the sun always shines is across the sea in the south of the Sweden... somewhere around Malmö? But maybe not. You can imagine the adventure happening wherever you like. The Siberia I'm talking about in this story is not a place. Siberia is a state of mind.

Last Word : But tell me, how can I think of the cold, snow, Winter, any winter and not think of this from Dec 2015 :

https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog...

Judith says

Meh. 2,5 stars

Dee brown says

excellent! i think the GOP and Trump should read this cautionary tale of a dystopian , global warming society.

Amanda Coppededge says

Dystopic YA novel. Great main character.

Danii says

I picked this book up from a charity shop, the synopsis sounded interesting and I thought it would be good to have on standby. To my amazement, by page 2 I was hooked! I didn't realise it was a young adult book, but in some ways it reminded me of Fuse, Delirium or Divergent. The difference for me, is that Siberia is almost believable; it is a possible future that could be closer than we think; it's 21st century meets sci-fi meets World War 2....and I loved it. Being a short novel, I read it over 2 nights. Brilliant heroine and great scenery, a full 5/5 from me :-) A modern fairy tale which makes you feel a little bit magical and about 8 years old

again.

Sally says

Quite a fascinating story, with a very different premise. At first it reads like something similar to *The Endless Steppe* - a favourite of mine, hence my attraction to this book - but then it's not *just* a straight forward "family exile to Siberia" story. Because this isn't the 40s, it's in a dystopian future and the crux of the matter isn't some war or the exile at all, really.

Sometime in the past of this strange future, most wild mammals fell into a huge decline and "the government ordered that seedbanks should be made", DNA storehouses for all the diversity that was being lost. The idea was that when the climate again improved, the earth could be repopulated. Well, that was one idea. The other, secret idea was to push all wild mammals to extinction so that humans would not have to compete with them for the scant resources in this frozen world.

Where Sloe comes into this, is her mother has one of these seedbanks. And when her mother is taken away while Sloe is at boarding school, it's up to Sloe to take care of the "Lindquists", one for each order of mammal (besides cetaceans and pinnipeds, which were thought to be lost), and get them to safety. And there begins her huge adventure, where she ends up "creating" a half dozen different animals to help her. The fun part there is she doesn't know what they are, so you can only guess based on her descriptions, until she learns some names!

Lesley says

Again, she combines heavy ideas (extinction, genetic engineering) with action, but again I'm not sure about the pace.

Rachael says

Synopsis: When Sloe was tiny, her Papa disappeared and she and her mama went to live in a prison camp in the snowy north, in a time and place when there are no more wild animals. Mama's crime: teaching science, and her dedication to the hope that the lost animal species can be reborn. To Sloe, Mama's secret work is magic, as enchanting as Mama's tales of a bright city across the ice where they will be free.

Years later, Sloe is sent to a prison school, and Mama disappears. At 13, Sloe escapes, pursued by a mysterious man. With only hope to keep her going, Sloe sets out on a solitary 1000-mile journey. But she is not truly alone for Mama left Sloe a gift: the seeds of five missing species and the knowledge to bring them to life.

This strange and beautiful book was borrowed from my Aunt and I am so happy to have read what it probably considered to be young teen fiction but has so much more depth, detail and almost prosaic parts. In the author's note, Ann Halam said that Siberia wasn't a place in this book, more so a state of mind and that is

definitely how it felt. When I book is all in the first person for the same character, I am always worried I will grow to hate them and grow tired of them - more so if they are female! However, I grow to love Sloe and am careful for her, am scared for her and throughout her journey, really enjoyed seeing the immense character development that happens - which you would expect from a girl hardened by a 1000 mile journey across ice. I began to realise that she also wouldn't annoy me because Ann Halam did not create an obnoxious protagonist who thinks the world revolves around them, instead Sloe knows not to wallow in self pity as she knows it will only hold her back.

Each scene had something different, something new but kept it realistic and kept the reader's prior emotions and opinions about the characters and events. Something about this book really made it special to me. Whether it was the charisma of the main character, or the heart-warming, heart-wrenching nature of the journey she had to undertake, it's definitely a book that will stay with me for a long while now that I have read it.

It also has some dystopian elements to it too. In the author's note, it is mentioned that Halam wanted to portray her ideas about the future of Earth's wild animals due to things like global warming and how they might be preserved and kept with us, maybe or maybe not by the 'seed banks'. Although you might think it a depressing subject as a bleak 1000 mile journey across frozen wasteland could not possibly be made joyous, Ann Halam's writing style and voice somehow make it readable and enjoyable, rooting for Sloe.

I have to mention though why not the 5/5 stars and it is only because, in some of the settings that Sloe found herself in, it wasn't fully transparent to me where she was in relation to where she had just been and how she got there - although this may be just me, it did confuse me a little and cause me to go back and re-read the previous page.

I will also be reading a few other books by Ann Halam, as I was intrigued by the intros to them at the back of 'Siberia' such as 'Taylor Five': Taylor Walker seems like any ordinary 14-year-old. Ordinary—if you overlook the fact that she lives on the island of Borneo, on a primate reserve run by her parents, and knows how to survive in the jungle. Obviously, Tay isn't just like everyone else. But she is like one other person. She's exactly like one other person. Tay is a clone, one of only five in the world, and her clone mother is Pam Taylor, a brilliant scientist.

Ines says

A girl & her mother are sent to a prison camp because of her father's actions against a politically oppressive regime. Her new life is one of great hardship, where science becomes a taboo subject & knowing too much can get you killed.

This is written as a children's/teenage book, yet it has a very bleak & tragic setting. The tale is cunningly presented in a simplistic way, which draws you in through its very lack of explanation, the mystery is held in suspense.

The I felt the story was written from a teenager's perspective, looking back upon her childhood & realising that she knew so little. Her descriptions of the manipulative children she meets are child-like yet shrewd - she is aware that all relationships are a double edged sword. She survives the indignities of a brutal school & the vacillations of her peers during which time she almost forgets the great secret she must keep. The adventure picks up and becomes more optimistic as she begins to travel & the limits of her knowledge

broaden. She meets a shadowy character, who sheds some light on her parents' past & the reasons for her plight, but she doesn't know if she can trust him with her secrets.

I stayed up until 5 in the morning to read the last few chapters, which seemed to end all too soon, so now I miss the character & would like to read more about her.

Conan Tigard says

I did enjoy the story of Sloe and her adventure, but there were a couple of questions I never got answered. Everyone likes a point of reference in time when they are reading a book, especially if it takes place in the future. What year does this book take place? At first I figured it was the near future, but that changed as I read on. It has to take place pretty far into the future, maybe hundreds of years. As bits and pieces begin to fall into place, the reader slowly gains a thin grasp on what is happening, but the truth is never completely revealed. This left me with a sense of incompleteness at the end of the story. There are a lot of questions that the reader has that are never answered.

It seems that Russia has dropped Capitalism in the future and gone back to its old, suppressive ways when it was a Communist country. Why? Also, why is the world so cold? That is never explained. Why did humans kill off all of the animals? Why are they called mutants? Was there a nuclear war that mutated all the animals and is causing a Nuclear Winter. If so, why haven't the humans mutated too? These are just some of the questions that the reader needs answered . . . and they never are. Still, I did like Sloe and her journey to find the City of Lights, but never really bonded with the character. Trying to figure out what the Lindquist kit was was also frustrating.

Overall, Siberia by Ann Halam is not bad, but could have been a lot better if more thought was put into explaining why things happened to the reader instead of just leaving them wondering.

I rated this book a 6½ out of 10.

rachel says

Ich werde Siberia abrechnen, weil die Geschichte einfach nicht mein Fall ist. Fantasy gefällt mir normalerweise, aber über irgendwelche ausgestrobenen weißen Tierchen zu lesen erfreut mich nicht.

Viel zu dem Buch kann ich nicht sagen, da ich mit dem Lesen noch nicht weit gekommen bin. Trotzdem werde ich es so gut wie möglich versuchen. Ich habe mir das deutsche Buch gekauft, das ein schwarzes Layout hat, auf dem vorne eine weiße Blume abgebildet ist. Sie hat einen besonderen Wert im Buch. In Siberia wird aus der Ich Perspektive geschrieben, was dem ganzen keinen Nachteil gibt. Der Schreibstil ist auch flüssig und leicht zu lesen.

Es wird in von Hauptperson erzählt, so das man den Eindruck hat, sie würde mit einem Sprechen. Es geht um sie (damals noch ein kleines Mädchen) und ihre Mutter. Sie werden aus der "Stadt" in eine Art Gefängnis

gebracht, eine Stadt, in der man mit anderem Geld zahlt und in einer kleinen Hütte wohnt. Ihre Mutter ist eine Wissenschaftlerin, die etwas außergewöhnliches erfindet. Um die Spannung nicht zu nehmen, sage ich dazu nichts. Damals gibt es nur noch 2 Arten von Tieren, die "Ungeziefer" und die "Mutanten". (Falls ich das richtig verstanden habe) Aber es gibt keine mehr in der Stadt, weil die Menschen nicht mehr viel Wert auf Tiere legen. Auch ist durch die Umweltverschmutzung, eine zweite Eiszeit ausgebrochen und es ist immer kalt und die Meere sind zugefroren. (Ich hoffe das dass richtig ist, denn in dem Buch ist soetwas nicht erklärt. Das muss einem selber klar werden)

Mehr werde ich nicht dazu sagen, weil ich 1. nicht sehr weit gekommen bin und 2. die Geschichte sonst zu langweilig wird.

Kiki says

My first impression of this book is that it is not well written. Much of the grammar seemed off, but to such a large extent that I'm guessing Siberia wasn't originally published in America. Aside from that though, I felt many of the sentences were weak, there were loose ends that sort of floated around, and the book was generally confusing. Also, parenthesis should not be that prevalent, not if it's a well-written novel. There were some brilliant passages, where the talent of the author really shown through, but those excerpts were few and far between. There was an entire paragraph about "following your heart," a cliche that had absolutely no relevance to the rest of the book. And the entire end of Rescue City? Way too rushed and anticlimactic, not to mention cliche. (view spoiler) To make matters worse, the protagonist's mom was badly written, intended to be a loving, wise mentor-figure that instead came across as a misty-eyed idiot. (view spoiler) Badly done.

Another point that really bothered me was that the author did a terrible job of setting the initial scene. I started the book with no knowledge of the genre; I should have figured out by the end of the first chapter what general area I was reading, but I was instead feeling Holocaust, Soviet Union, fantasy, dystopian, and other genre-vibes, which left me feeling more grumpy than intrigued. I had to read reviews to determine that Siberia was, in fact, a dystopian version of our world.

But the novel did have quite a few redeeming qualities. I found the central plot to be pretty unique for a dystopian novel. I also really enjoyed the protagonist's character growth and her harsh background, especially her desire to trust others despite the practical knowledge that it was a bad idea. The subplots of her journey, such as New Dawn and Little Father, were also pretty fun to read about.

But gosh, the writing was awful. I felt like taking a red pen to the book to adjust the sentences. It makes me wonder if this book was self-published, because there doesn't seem to have been an editor.

Arminzerella says

Rosita and her mother are taken to a prison camp when Rosita is just a young child. Her father left them prior to their expulsion from the city and Rosita knows nothing about what has happened to him. Her mother is a scientist, and to keep Rosita occupied, she starts to teach her things about science and about the Lindquists - copies of the wild creatures that used to roam the earth before it got cold and before humans killed most of them. Rosita learns how to grow and care for the Lindquists herself and her mother tells her that one day she will be responsible for their care. Rosita becomes "Sloe" at school after her classmates attack her for having

an unusual name. She comes away from the incident with a permanent limp. After that she distinguishes herself in school and they send her away to a school for the brightest prison camp children. There she makes a terrible mistake – revealing that her mother was scientist. Her mother is taken from the camp and punished for refusing to give up her former career and beliefs. Sloe is miserable, and eventually is expelled from the prison school and returns to the prison camp where she and her mother used to live. She discovers that her mother was able to hide the Lindquists and that she's left her a map so that she can find her way to them. Sloe decides to make the journey. She encounters all kinds of trouble along the way and others discover that she has the Lindquists. The most persistent of her pursuers is Yagin, who is an ex-scientist and now works for the Fitness Police. He manages to capture her several times. Although he claims to be her friend, Sloe doesn't trust him. She eventually makes it to safety and learns her mother is still alive.

Part science-fiction, part history, and part vision of the future, *Siberia* is an excellent, suspenseful tale of a young girl's mission across the frozen wastelands of a possible future Russia.

Ardene says

A dystopia told from the point of view of Sloe (Rosita), *Siberia* begins when Rosita (age 4-5?) & her mother arrive at a work camp in the country. Her father has disappeared, her mother is put to work making nails from pieces of metal, and Rosita is left to her own devices in their cabin until she is sent to school a few years later.

While many people assume this novel is set in Russia, it seems to me that this could be anyplace after pollution/climate change have occurred, damaging the environment and resulting in a government that limits the access of people to resources and education.

There are, perhaps, a few wild animals in this world, but people are mostly on the lookout for pests (roaches, rats, seagulls) and 'muties which must be killed to prevent their spreading to the fur producing animals grown on the fur farm near the camp.

Rosita's mother teaches her at home to start with, and Rosita discovers some "magic" her mother can do to create live animals from dust with a secret Lindquist kit. (In actuality, biology.) Rosita & her mother plan to wait until she is older & escape from the camp to take the kit across the plains, through the forest & across the sea to the "other side."

School presents its own problems, getting along with the other children being a major one. This results in the choice of a new name for Rosita: Sloe (the name of a sour plum that grows on some shrubs at the border of the camp.)

Sloe is sent to New Dawn school as an adolescent where she continues to do well academically and falls in with a group of students stealing and selling goods from the school on the black market. The death of one of these students when he is caught, and the discovery that her answering a teacher's questions about her mother and the Lindquist kits result in the disappearance of her mother make Sloe feel guilty and despairing. One of the guards seemingly befriends her, but she is eventually kicked out of school and sent back to the camp.

Sloe does discover that her mother's Lindquist kit was not found when her mother was taken away, but her neighbors are asking if her mother didn't leave her a legacy, and Sloe decides to make the trip she and her mother planned on alone. The remainder of the book are about Sloe's travel & adventures as she seeks to find

"the city on the other side."

The presentation of the atmosphere of distrust with an emphasis on survival at any cost in both the camp & the schools is good, as is the question of who Sloe can trust.
