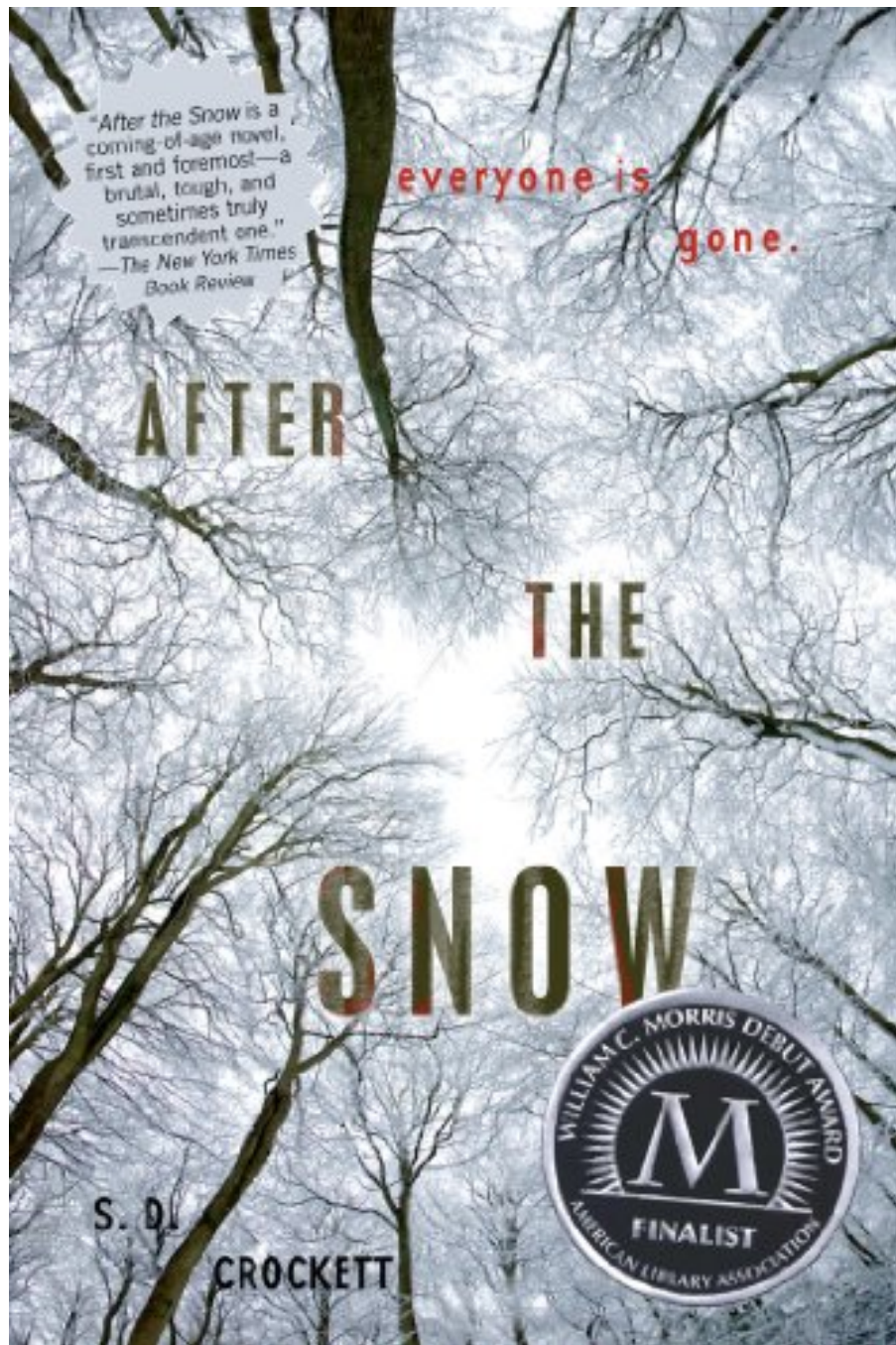


AFTER THE SNOW BY S. D. CROCKETT



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Review

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About the Author

After the extremely hard winter of 2009, S. D. Crockett asked herself, "What if winter never ended?" and from that thought, her debut novel, After the Snow, was born. Crockett lives in the United Kingdom.

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The oceans stopped working before Willo was born, so the world of ice and snow is all he's ever known. He lives with his family deep in the wilderness, far from the government's controlling grasp. Willo's survival skills are put to the test when he arrives home one day to find his family gone. It could be the government; it could be scavengers?all Willo knows is he has to find refuge and his family. It is a journey that will take him into the city he's always avoided, with a girl who needs his help more than he knows.

S.D. Crockett on narrative voice and an especially cold winter:

What was your inspiration for After the Snow?

Well, apart from the unbelievably cold winter during which I was writing?in an unheated house, chopping logs, and digging my car out of the snow; I think much of the inspiration for the settings in After the Snow came from my various travels.

In my twenties I worked as a timber buyer in the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia, and that work led to travels in Eastern Europe and Armenia. As soon as I step off the plane in those places it smells like home.

It may sound strange to say when After the Snow is set in Wales, but really the practical dilemmas in the book come directly from places I've been, people I've lived with, and the hardships I've seen endured with grace and capability. I was in Russia not long after the Soviet Union collapsed and I've seen society in freefall. Without realizing it at the time, I think those experiences led me to dive into After the Snow with real passion.

What would western civilization look like with a few tumbles under its belt? What would happen if the things we took for granted disappeared? I wanted to write a gripping story about that scenario, but hardly felt that I was straying into fantasy in the detail.

What do you want readers to most remember about After the Snow?

We all have the capacity to survive, but in what manner? What do we turn to in those times of trouble? Those are the questions I would like people to contemplate after reading After the Snow.

How did Willo's unique voice come to you?

Willo's voice appeared in those crucial first few paragraphs. After that it just grew along with his world and the terrible situations that arise. I think his voice is in all of us. We don't understand, we try to make good?maybe we find ourselves.

How did you stay warm while writing this novel?

I banked up the fire?and was warmed by hopes of spring.

- Sales Rank: #1527614 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Square Fish
- Published on: 2013-09-03

- Released on: 2013-09-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.12" h x .84" w x 5.53" l, .61 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Most helpful customer reviews

14 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

S.D. Crockett has built a barren and cold world with an engaging and distinct voice.

By Wendy L. Hines

Polar conditions have engulfed the earth. Many have died, but there are those that have learned to survive. Willo's family lives off of the grid in a cabin up in the mountains. There, they hunt and survive on the most basic of levels. Willo is a master trapper but has an odd quirk. He has a dog's skull woven into his hat. He believes the spirit of the dog fills him and speaks to him.

When Willo comes home one day after a day of trapping, he is shocked to see his family gone. The hearth is cold and he isn't sure where they would have gone. He heard yelling earlier while out, but he didn't think anything of it. Determined to find them, he stocks his sled with the minimum he will need to survive and sets out on a journey to his sister's place. Maybe her husband will know where his family has gone.

On his journey though, a winter storm sets in. Willo sees a ramshackle building nearby and heads to it, hoping for shelter. But who answers are a young girl and her brother. They beg Willo for food and help, but he is determined to find his family and leaves them. Later, when Willo has created a shelter for himself in the carcass of an airplane, he has second thoughts. He travels back to help them, but will they inhibit his goal to find his family?

After The Snow is a page-turning chilling adventure! S.D. Crockett has built a barren and cold world with an engaging and distinct voice. Willo is such a diverse character; I never could guess what he was going to do next. From one adventure to the next, I was rooting for him and his family. From new friendships to inconsolable loss, After the Snow is a must-read for any dystopian lover!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

When Dialect works

By Kat

Before I start with my thoughts on After the Snow, there's a pretty big potential annoyance that I have to mention. This book is written in dialect/slang - so if you're a grammar Nazi, or have trouble 'giving voice' to this style of dialogue be aware that you might want to try a sample before buying. Having said that, this is something that I normally find more irritating than fingernails down a blackboard, but it wasn't an issue for me in After the Snow and personally I wouldn't have found the main character quite as fascinating if it had been written without the dialect/slang.

The world has become a place of ice, snow and blizzards, and humanity is scratching out a living on the very edges. The government has rounded up the remnants of society and put them to work for the greater good, trying to maintain the basics of infrastructure whilst throwing together 'settlements'. Willo and his family are stragglers, living off the grid in the mountains, trying to survive, but at least they are together. Until one day Willo returns to the farmhouse to find everyone gone.

Determined to find his family, Willo encounters a young girl named Mary, on the edge of starvation and hypothermia in an abandoned farmhouse. Despite his need to press on and find his family, after some inner turmoil, Willo decides to try and help her return to the settlements.

The storyline of After the Snow is classic post-apocalyptic/dystopic YA - a strong, determined main character with an unlikely partner (I won't say love interest as it definitely doesn't start out as that kind of relationship) on a journey across a devastated country.

Where After the Snow was a different experience for me was definitely Willo. At 15 years old, he seems at times younger than his years, and at others much older and wiser - an imaginable reflection of growing up in a world so very different to ours today. Mentally tough and determined, pushing himself through physical exertion, is brave enough to face whatever comes along without any unnecessary dramatics and has a deep sense of responsibility and caring for the people closest to him. I found him intriguing, endearing and I couldn't help but hope for the best for him all the way through until the end.

The world-building is excellent, and the writing is bleak, intense and free-flowing even during periods where the action isn't exactly rolling at breakneck speed and there is a perfect amount of explanation of the

environmental, political and socio-economic fallout of the new ice-age.

Ending with heart-stopping action and Willo realising some important things about himself, the world around him and his place in it, I highly recommend *After the Snow* to anyone!

12 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Hunger Games in a Cold Climate

By NyiNya

Our fifteen year old hero, Willo, lives in a dystopea that might be similar to the way most people lived during those dark years of European history. Scrabbling to survive, scraping a meager existence off of an unwilling land, with families forming their own little tribes united against all outsiders...and all outsiders posing a threat. Government is shadowy and threatening.

The story takes place in Wales, some time after a new ice age has decimated the population and turned cities into a horror show where survival of the fittest has devolved into survival of the most brutal. Religion has been reduced to totem worship (Willo wears a dog's skull to help him as a hunter), and goodness is pretty scarce on the ground. The harsh realities of life turn survivors into scavengers...upon the environment and one another.

Willo's family are "scragglers," who escaped from the city and its oppressive government and lawlessness to take their chances in a frozen and inhospitable wilderness. Apparently the oppressive government frowns on this and one day Willo comes home from tending his animal traps and find them gone. No explanation is offered and Willo doesn't seem all that curious. They could have been "disappeared" by the government, rounded up by those who trade in human flesh, who knows. Willo consults his totem...the dog in his head...and heads into the city where he hopes to find some alternative to the endless emptiness and loneliness of life in the wild.

Bad idea.

When civilization fell apart, it fell apart so completely that no vestiges were left. Even memories of how things were have been eradicated. No one is rebuilding, no one is combing the libraries for books on how to use solar power to warm things up, develop cold resistant crops, or remove an appendix. Humanity just scavenges whatever is handy for immediate needs, for food and shelter and clothing. We don't see many signs of the world that came before. There must be millions of vehicles rusting away on every street, but only the government makes use of them. Instead of developing alternate fuel sources, the citizenry just lug their bundles on their backs. Virtually none of our vast technology is available or of interest to the average survivor.

Compared to the ease with which books like the "Hunger Games" series allow us to suspend belief, *After the Snow* has several toe stubbing moments where we just shake our heads and say "No way." And the dialect spoken by Willo -- a kind of Dystopian Futuristic Welsh-Influenced English -- wears thin after a while. After all, translators of *Anna Karenina* didn't feel it necessary to make Vronsky and Anna sound like Boris and Natasha. Willo's colorful jargon is more annoying than illuminating, and a little would have been sufficient. After a while I was telling that dog in his head to sic him.

Still, the book deserves four stars. For young readers who may not be so analytical, it provides a very different experience from the usual end of the world as we knew it epic. It's challenging to read, somewhat thought-provoking, and provides an important glimmer of hope. Who wants kids thinking the future is hopeless? Let them believe we are not destroying it faster than we can fix it.

For what it's worth, *Far North* by Marcel Theroux is a much better book, his frozen dystopia is more realistic and interesting, his villains more believable, and his big, lumbering heroine -- whose cloddish appearance belies a very fine mind -- is one of the best and most original characters in young adult fiction. *Far North* is classified YA, but has enough substance to appeal to adults.

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