

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Imagine Wanting Only This.**

Radtke, Kristen (Author) , Radtke, Kristen (Illustrator)

Apr 2017. 288 p. Pantheon, hardcover, \$29.95. (9781101870839). 741.5.

When Radtke was in college, studying art in Chicago, the uncle she'd grown up adoring died of a heart condition. Around the same time, she visited Gary, Indiana, and began to cultivate a deep interest in the ruins of cities and decaying places. The idea of "how something that is can become, very suddenly, something that isn't" obsessed her. Radtke's neat, grayscale drawings are detailed and coloring-book precise, and her thoughtful, meticulous narration makes true visual essays of them. In grad school, she travels to the Philippines, Burma, Singapore, and Vietnam, seeking and studying international "ruin-porn," as she notes some call it. Her story cartwheels, too, exploring the science behind her uncle's defect and the probability that she has it, too. She tells the story of the infamous fire in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, her home state, which decimated the area and took thousands of victims but remains regional lore after occurring on the same day as the Great Chicago Fire. In her cerebral journey of a first book, Radtke, an illustrator, designer, and managing editor of a small press, asks and answers: Why do ruins fascinate, and why is this fascination considered perverse? Why are ruins there at all?

— *Annie Bostrom*