



THE ECOWARRIORS
The Bluffs of Baraboo

Dreis, Sandra

iUniverse (190 pp.)

\$13.95 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Oct. 30, 2015

978-1-4917-7534-9

A YA contemporary fantasy follows four Wisconsin teenagers and their mission to save their community from ecological collapse.

Davie Wyatt is a 15-year-old freshman in high school who is a self-described “second-generation astronomy geekmeister who loves animals.” His best friend, Carl, and his two cousins Melissa and Sharon volunteer at a local animal shelter. They’re good friends and spend most of their free time together. But when Davie shares a seemingly unbelievable story—about seeing a pair of badgers outside in the middle of the night, finding four green stones, and discovering a strange blue-green badger paw print on his palm after he touched the gems—the quartet of young adults becomes entangled in a magical quest. The group needs to save the badgers’ habitat from not only unethical fracking companies that are destroying the environment, but also poachers who are using the beasts for illegal animal fighting. As the intrepid amateur sleuths race to make sense of the metaphysical clues before a looming apocalyptic event that could happen in a few days’ time, they begin to understand the connectivity of all living creatures—from the sick fish in the lake to the sudden appearances of deer and bear in suburban areas to the communities in the area whose water supplies are being poisoned. This debut novel is a simultaneously entertaining and enlightening environmental tale that is powered by brisk pacing, endearing characters, and a fluid and utterly readable narrative. A highly appealing fusion of mythic fantasy and eco-thriller, the book delivers a dedicated, resourceful protagonist (“I feel sure we will make a contribution; a difference,” Davie says at one point. “I know with certainty we are partners with the badgers in a powerful, unfolding drama. Directed by a force beyond ourselves, we will play our parts”). This tale also asks an important question: if the young people of the world don’t become involved in saving the planet, who will? YA readers should initially be hooked by the authentic and identifiable characters and remain enthralled by the timely subject matter.

An engaging, lighthearted read that offers a profoundly powerful message about the environment.



I AM ONE OF YOU

Eiden, Nicole

Mississippi Sound Publishing

In a new debut collection, Eiden writes of poems that “move me every time,” among other subjects.

In James Baldwin’s 1956 novel *Giovanni’s Room*, a character muses that “perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.” If Eiden’s poetry is about any one thing, it is that irrevocable condition. It’s about the old home we leave without ever quite leaving it and the new home we build out of some uneven mixture of coincidence and desire. It’s also about marriage—the unlikely effort to forge a home with another human—and about children and our hopeful wish to strengthen a home for those who come after us. The poet is originally from Ohio, and although she moved away from there more than a decade ago, it’s clear that the state remains a gravitational center with real pull for her. In “To Know the Smell of Ohio,” for example, she writes that “You don’t have to / walk in the country / just step where / the river meets mud / Unlocked leafy smell.” She remembers this smell while in her new home in New Orleans, where she’s settled with her husband and new child. That city appears to be the other pole of the ellipse of her life and the other main setting of her poetry, as in the opening lines of “Moving back to New Orleans”: “I sit on a cardboard box in another new place, my in-laws’ unspoiled / white house four days before the anniversary of Katrina / there is little blood flow in my body, I haven’t said much.” Eiden writes frank, beautiful verse about her relationship with her husband: “two people who love each other / maybe unevenly, maybe not enough / can we ever articulate where we / fit together how far we will go in / I can only go on answering yes.” And then there’s the newest resident of Eiden’s home, which she sings of softly in “To My Child, For My Parents”: “I look around my tender room and / think of all the things / I want you, my child, to know / of me, of life / poetry art kindness.” On this tour of all her homes, the poet writes with pride but without arrogance, with wit but without guile, and with grace but without unnecessary ornament.

Moving poetry that kindly welcomes readers in to sit down and rest awhile.



SATAN’S STRONGHOLD

Gallant, Robert

iUniverse (210 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Nov. 6, 2006

978-0-595-40467-4

The Drug Enforcement Administration sends a resourceful graduate student to locate a meth and Ecstasy factory hidden in the Atchafalaya Basin in Louisiana in Gallant’s debut thriller, the first in a series.