



## Plum

### Andy Anderegg

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*Plum* is Andy Anderegg's wise and touching novel about a woman's struggle to heal from a childhood of neglect and abuse.

J grows up sad and lonely because of her parents' substance abuse, depression, and rage. To the outside world, her family looks like "normal people ... wearing shirts with all the buttons done up, wearing glasses, holding magazines." However, due to her parents' neglectful and often cruel behaviors, the "algorithm" in J's brain "does not stop calculating danger." Everyday events—a knot in her hair, a portable radio that needs new batteries, and preparations to attend a friend's birthday party—become all-consuming challenges as J navigates her parents' violent, erratic reactions. She retreats to the solitude of her bedroom and relies on the protection of her older brother: "It is like you are hiking on a muddy precarious trail and you put your feet in his boot prints."

J escapes her family in time. She finishes college and holds a job. Still, for years she remains numb, angry, and haunted by her early trauma. Slowly, with help from her kind, patient husband and a therapist, she learns to heal and to love. She also reconnects with her brother after being estranged from him for years.

Written entirely in the second person, the book captures J's sharp, brooding interior thoughts. She has a powerful command of details and startling discernment. She describes herself as a survivor and the hero of her story, not a victim. She learns to recognize the ways she becomes like her parents and finds a new "lightness" in imagining another version of her life.

Insightful, witty, and uplifting, the novel *Plum* is about abuse and redemption.

KRISTEN RABE (March / April 2025)

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