

## Sleepaway: A Novel

**Kevin Prufer**

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An incurable, inexplicable condition brings humanity to the breaking point in Kevin Prufer's novel *Sleepaway*.

They call it "the sleeps." This strange phenomenon works its way across the world, forcing whole communities asleep for ever-increasing periods of time; more and more, some never wake. When the sleeps come to a small Midwestern town, a "troubled" boy and an anxious, guilt-ridden waitress help each other through the slow-motion apocalypse that takes away their loved ones and forces them to watch, eyes wide open, as their worst fears are realized.

The boy, Glass, is the only one who experiences dreams during the sleeps. Cora, the teacher-turned-waitress, avoids sleeping at all by taking a rare and dangerous drug. Thrown together by tragedy and circumstance, they struggle to find a new normal in a world that seems like it will never be normal again.

Government lies and media cover-ups isolate Glass and Cora further, leaving them unprepared for the severity of the challenges they face. The extent of these untruths is hinted at but remains shadowed, casting an ominous pall over fleeting moments of optimism and their efforts to improve their situation. And an undercurrent of racial tension bubbles beneath the story's surface: people of color are mostly immune to the worst effects of the sleeps; Glass's archaeologist father kept the remains of Indigenous people in his flood-prone basement.

With no escape and no help coming, Cora and Glass have no choice but to make peace with all that is happening. Their only solace is the bond, however temporary, that they forge through shared secrets, danger, and a selfless impulse to make each other's fraught lives a little easier to bear.

*Sleepaway* is a haunting story about how people deal with upheaval, loss, and the threat of imminent, unnatural death.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2024)

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