

★ The Diapause

Andrew Forbes

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The Diapause, Andrew Forbes's speculative fiction treatise on a postplague world, is both a grim look at the dark side of survivalist psychosis and a heartbreaking love letter to the disappearing worlds around us.

Gabe is an only child, mired in the complicated family dynamics that the first phases of an unnamed virus unearthed. His parents' decision to flee the city and take refuge at a remote family fishing cabin signals a seismic shift in the mundanity of survival and the beginning of a lasting family rift. Ensuing years find Gabe evolving through adolescent insubordination and the throes of first love, with his dissolving nuclear family backdropping his navigation through a world forced to tweak its problematic economical, geopolitical, or climate-based traditions. What results is a comprehensive novel about growing up, leaving behind what can't be changed, and moving forward despite the pain and confusion it can cause.

The force of the prose punctuates bleak prognostications on the not-too-distant future of the Western Hemisphere, here having endured systematic writhing due to earthquakes, an American migration, and a near-constant state of rain. The title references the dormancy that living things can settle into when their traditional environment is altered, with the Diapause placing the remnants of our recent pandemic in a theoretical light by spotlighting the tricky what-ifs that such occurrences can provoke on seemingly happy microcosms.

The Diapause could be read as a cautionary tale were it not for the beauty that Forbes manages to coax from beneath the unstoppable depression his speculative landscape serves. That the possibilities of the future he creates seem so achievable makes it something of a somber journey—its loneliness perhaps misconstrued as a bad thing. In fact, it's Gabe's unavoidable solitude that fuels his vigor and which Forbes writes into mesmerizing, unforgettable prose.

RYAN PRADO (September / October 2024)

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