

The Faraway Mountains

Radu Cornel Giu

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In Radu Cornel Giu's historical novel *The Faraway Mountains*, men discuss life under their harsh authoritarian government over the course of a perilous hike.

Gabriel disappeared weeks ago, prompting Victor, Alex, and Dan to gear up and follow his trail into the mountains that cast their shadow over their oppressed city. Along the way, they face the squalid discomfort of a flooded cave and the lumbering threat of a stalking bear. And beyond the hike, each man approaches the future in their own way: Victor hopes the country will heal itself in time; Dan throws himself into his work; Alex anchors his future on emigrating to Canada. As they trod through the mountains, they discuss the brutal rule of the dictator. A parallel narrative chronicles the events leading up to Gabriel's disappearance, including torture at the hands of the secret police and Gabriel's passion as a pianist.

In the stream-of-consciousness narration, events prompt memories. Gabriel's disappearance is less of a mystery than it is reflective of the harsh reality that Victor, Alex, and Dan must come to terms with. Their flashbacks overlap, deepening a sense of their passionate lives and filling in the details of Gabriel's final moments. His ruminations during torture are somber: "Were they really that afraid and was their belief in the strength of their absolute power really so fragile?" And in the end, all four men reveal the fragility of the regime in their thoughts and conversations. Together, they become representative of the strength of hope.

People living beneath a communist regime rebel in small ways in *The Faraway Mountains*, a provocative historical novel.

JOHN M. MURRAY (November / December 2023)

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