



Winter Damage

Natasha Carthew

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On a frozen Cornish moor, a fifteen-year-old girl lives in a trailer with her dad and little brother. Ennor's mother left years ago, when things started to go wrong - and gradually their world has fallen apart. Now her father's gravely ill, school has closed, and Ennor knows they're going to take her brother away if things don't pick up soon. So three days before Christmas, when the wind is cold and her dad's health takes a turn for the worse, Ennor packs a blanket, a map, a saucepan and a gun into her rucksack, and sets off to find her mum and bring her home. Ennor thinks she knows where she's going. But this journey will change her life for ever - it becomes a battle for survival, a heartbreakingly moving story of love and friendship, and a fable about not finding what you were looking for, but finding something more important instead . . .

Winter Damage Details

Date : Published August 1st 2013 by Bloomsbury Children's

ISBN : 9781408835838

Author : Natasha Carthew

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Adventure, Survival, Death, Romance

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From Reader Review Winter Damage for online ebook

Carmen says

Actual rating: 1.5 stars.

There's nothing really wrong with the writing. It just felt like a whole lot of effort for not much in the end.

Ellie says

Ennor's father has never been the same since foot and mouth disease took away his prized Simmental cattle. Left with a few Friesians and living in a caravan, he is now sick and struggling to pay the bills. Ennor spends her time looking after him, what is left of their farm and her autistic little brother Trip. When the school informs her that social services are going to put Trip into an institution, she knows the only person that can help is her estranged mother. Leaving Trip with her only friend Butch, she sets off across the snow laden moors in search of her mother.

As the story starts, Ennor's life could easily be that of any family hit by hard times today. But you slowly start to discover that this is not today's Britain. The country has fallen apart, due to the bad decisions of the government. Unemployment is rife. The foot and mouth outbreak left farms crippled when otherwise they might have been able to weather the economic crisis. Society is starting to break up. This bleak vision of the not too distant future isn't at all unrealistic. In fact, some analysts have predicted this will happen if we continue on our current path. The last foot and mouth crisis wiped out so many farms and livelihoods, if it happened again now, many areas would be completely devastated on top of closures and redundancies.

As Ennor sets out across the moors, she struggles against the hostile winter conditions. It is no easy journey and the prose is wonderfully evocative of the emptiness and fierceness of the wilderness. Her greatest enemies are the cold and hunger. Yes, she must be wary of people who must now only think of themselves, but the danger always feels like it is coming from the elements.

Out of the blizzard comes a tale of friendship forged through circumstance. I was wary of Sonny at first, a girl from a gypsy camp who suspiciously befriends Ennor, wanting her to stay on for the winter solstice festivities. It's hard to remember both these girls are just fourteen, forced to grow up fast in a world which is no longer kind to children. Is there even space left for kindness amongst friends and family?

I won't say the book is without hope though. The ending left me full of thoughts to ponder and somewhere along the way, I got attached to these odd children and their clipped manner of speech.

Beverley Williams says

I just loved this book .The character of Ennor is so innocently filled with hope that we all do in later life even. She knew she had to change her and brothers situations quickly. living in a ramshackle caravan ,dad ill in bed . she sets off into cold cold whiteness of snow covered moors. Natasha held me trapped in this

coldness her innocence of character error who thinks finding her mum will be the end to all her problems. This book is about friendship, trust and dark moments that both that error and her new pal hold. Natasha is a great new fantastic writer her books are for young adults but I'm 49 and read a great genres of books. Hopefully she will bring another novel out soon. Bevs

Tasha Holmes says

It took me a while to finish the book even with it only being around 300 pages. It was a real heart breaker but I found myself invested with the characters and felt the rollercoaster Ennor was going through as if it were my own. Gorgeously written.

Marg says

Winter Damage is set in a dystopian Cornwall, ravaged by foot-and-mouth disease and the effects of environmental degradation. It is a bleak place, a modern day dark age where people just manage to survive.

Ennor, a fourteen year old girl, and her autistic brother, Trip, journey through a wintry wildness looking for their mother who abandoned them years before. The journey and its mission are a desperate one and full of hardships, but it is the friendships that are made on the way that gives the book a positive outcome.

Ennor is a strong, resilient female character and the reader is reminded of Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now*. It is well crafted, and there is warmth to the story despite its icy setting. Highly recommended for YA readers.

Drew Shiel says

Weird little 80s-style post-apocalyptic British thing. The kind of thing English teachers in the early 90s would have really liked.

Meredith says

This book is a fruitcake of metaphors and similes. Jam-packed. Actually, like many of those in this book, a fruitcake is an inadequate, inaccurate and just plain odd comparison. It's more like a lemon drizzle cake gone badly wrong -- ie instead of a pleasant lemon sharpness permeating the cake, you are actually chewing on chunks of lemon rind with every bite. I will try to persevere, but I'm not even half way through and my interest is fading away like the last rays of light as the sun sets behind clouds like thin, worn, nearly transparent duvets, dripping away with slow but insistent sadness, as you lose the precious milk through the bottom of a pail that has seen better days, drifting away like snow driven by a bullying wind, snow with no control over its destiny, sad, bullied, hopeless pushed around snow. It's as if I'm choking to death on those giant lemon chunks, sticking to the sides of my throat like homeless folk in the shelter of a door who have no intention of moving on any time soon, while the maker of the so-called lemon drizzle cake smiles an apparently harmless smile and asked if I'd like another slice of her famous lemon cake "the independent cake review at the county fair called it elegantly lyrical" well I think to myself, int that something, I bet I could

make an elegantly lyrical lemon drizzle cake if this is all it is, can't believe they haven't yet seen its potential as an instrument of torture, slightly more humane than waterboarding, and since most people will never have experienced how painful a lemon drizzle cake can be, like sharp icicles of acid angrily stabbing in resentment since they know that eventually your human warmth will triumph over their cold meanness, they will no doubt be incensed with righteous indignation at the thought of suspected terrorists being regaled on lemon cake. The newspapers will be full of comic images of turbaned and bearded men sitting down to damask covered tables laden with dainty finger foods from a fairy picnic, drinking tea from China cups as fragile as the thinnest layer of ice forming on the edges of a pond (yes that's right the obligatory simile timer went off) and being served by prison guards dressed sleekly and suavely as butlers to the wealthy in a bygone and more luxurious era. But little will the general populace know of the cruel pain being inflicted on these poor men. When released, after years of torture of this most inhuman kind, they will break into a sweat angry as a setting sun at the mere mention of a lemon, they will avoid markets and grocery stores, more than one family, having survived years of separation, will now be split like a banana over the remaining psychological trauma, broken like an egg, and then whipped into a froth of yolks and whites....all because of that elegantly lyrical lemon cake.

Wow, Int that something! I could go on and on. Writing is easy when every minor thought can be described at least three ways and the effort of planning a plot that holds together or creating more than one believable character is absent.

Are you feeling my pain yet! slogging through this book is more tortuous than its protagonist's journey through the snow.

Page 208 "One flash of emotion multiplied like spores gathering on the wind and her dad's voice drowned her ears and she could see his face clear as youth and it filled the square of fog like a painting and smiled and joked and whooshed with a thousand memories."

Verdict: I hold in favour of Metaphor and Simile, against N. Carthew, and I conclude that their request for a restraining order is fully justified. I also award them full compensation and legal costs in view of the severe damage to their feelings and reputations inflicted by their misuse, overuse, and outright abuse in the publication "Winter Damage." However, while I sympathise with Plot Planning and Believable Character Development in their claim for negligence, I am unable to find in their favour, since their lack of inclusion in this book does not seem to have affected them negatively in any real sense. If anything, readers of "Winter Damage" are more likely to turn to literature in which they are featured, since their absence from this publication only serves highlights how indispensable they are to a good novel. I therefore dismiss their claim in favour of N. Carthew. Additionally, I hereby caution the defendant that although no formal complaint has been made at this time, the reckless overuse of adjectives in "Winter Damage" has been noted by this court, and should a case be brought in the future, it would likely be heard favourably.

Melanie says

See more reviews at YA Midnight Reads

Mini review:

2.5 stars

Thank you Bloomsbury Australia for sending me this copy. No compensation was given or taken to alter this review.

There isn't anything particularly wrong with Winter Damage. However that doesn't go to say that this was downright fabulous. Told in a fairytale-like narrative, Natasha Carthew unravels the story about a 15 year old girl living in a trailer with her father and younger brother in the ice cold winter. In act of desperation, Ennor sets out to find her mother through the tough terrain and dragging wind.

One of the highlights of this novel was the characters. Each one of them have a bucket load of hope and strength, I guess that's what happens when the world is torn apart and all the horizon reaches out to is white. White snow. Ennor, the main character goes on a harsh journey in search for her lost mother, she's not only full of hope but her consideration for her struggling family is a touching aspect. While her decision to find her mother seemed rather absurd from the beginning, the way Natasha Carthew fleshed out the story was truly magnificent. I have a few qualms about Sonny though, I thought her character was oddly created. Nonetheless, Sonny and Ennor's friendship is nothing less than commendable.

While the synopsis states that the main plot could be a journey to find a girl's mother, the core messages drawn from Winter Damage are about friendship, loss and love. There's hope, but there's also the heavy darkness that can ruin it. Winter Damage is about persevering, facing the truth and making unexpected actions. Natasha Carthew addresses some topics never tackled before and accomplishes this brilliantly.

The major let down with Winter Damage was the pace. Many areas, I felt like DNFing this as I was bored to death. The start was a hard struggle as well as the abrupt ending. But all in all, an enjoyable read with the dialogue a bit reminiscent of Patrick Ness and Moira Young.

Vikki Peters says

Taken from my Review blog. To read more reviews: <http://readtheplanet.blogspot.ie/>

“The moor in winter is no place for a girl to be travelling alone...”

Somewhere, hidden amongst layers of snow and ice is an old beaten down trailer where 15 year old Ennor, lives with her dying Dad and younger brother. Since her Mother left some years back, our main character Ennor has been impoverished and burdened by responsibility unfit for her age. The schools close, her Dad weakens, and the threat of Social Services scares her more than anything. But before things get better, they can only get worse...

...With the world as she knows it unravelling at her fingertips, Ennor sets off with little but a determined mind to find her Mother and bring her home. Confident of her way through the moor, Ennor soon discovers that the journey is not as straight forward as it seems and things gradually begin to fall to pieces.

Bumping into STRANGE-rs and crashing both physically and mentally, Ennor's journey becomes a constant battle for survival both for her, and her family. But with the introduction of a flippant, rude and robust, but yet capable outsider...things begin to pick up for Ennor...

...for a while.

Winter Damage is a compelling and exciting read packed with suspense, humour and heartache. Due to be published on August 1st 2013, this first time YA novel from talented new writer Natasha Carthew is, in my opinion, perfect for fans of Stephanie Collins and Meg Rosoff...definitely one for your bedside locker.

Winter DamageNatasha Carthew

Erin says

"We gotta make the best of it, don't we? Whatever we got, one way or other."

See reviews first on my blog

Since her mother left them, Ennor has taken on the responsibility of helping her father with the farm and with her younger brother trip. But her father has problems as well and is now very unwell, leaving Ennor with all of the responsibilities from taking care of the few cattle they have that survived foot and mouth disease, to making sure that Trip is cared for. (Trip also has what appears to be a mild form of autism, but it never goes into detail about it.) With very little money, and a father that can't take care of them Ennor feels like she has to do something. But what she decides to do could end in a dead end and still leave them with nothing and no hope.

Along Ennor quest to find what she is looking for she meets several people. Some bad and some so good that they decided to help her out and make it possible to reach her destination. With the help of the others not only does Ennor get to where she needs to be, but she also learns a lot about life along the way.

"Ennor didn't want to forgive him. He was forever dumping on her dreams while she had to bolster him up when he talked about studying and university dreams."

One thing that did kind of bother me about this book though was, it never went into detail about how the world went crazy or how foot and mouth ends up affecting everyone. But I do understand why it doesn't because it is a YA book and most of the time young people don't pay attention to those type of things until they have to. It was just a little surprising because of how involved in things Ennor seemed to be after her mother left.

Overall I did find this book to be enjoyable. At times it was hard to read because things weren't looking so good for the characters. But you also wanted to keep reading to find out if they made it and if they found what they were looking for. Before this I didn't know much about the moor or what it even meant, but after knowing that it's just open field the trek across it made more sense to me. As for the whole world going crazy around them bit, I found very believable. We know people do things when they are desperate and that exactly what was happening in this world. We also know that sometimes young people have to do what they can to make a life for themselves when the parents checkout. Now I'm not saying that the main character was smart, just that she was doing what she thought was right for her and trip in order to be able to stay alive. This book was also filled with happy moments though, and imagination. It showed how even when things have gone completely crap that you can still find a light, and that while things might not completely turn out how you wanted them to, somehow they will still be okay.

"Thank you." "For what?" "For teachin' me stuff, bout life. You taught me to love life. I'll miss that, I'll

miss you."

Cara Tamlyn says

OMG I loved this book! It was heart-breaking and beautifully written, almost like poetry. Totally recommend!

Nara says

Review also found on Looking for the Panacea

To be quite honest, it's hard to put a finger on what exactly I liked about this book. I mean, obviously I liked it, seeing as though I gave it a 4 star rating, but for some reason, it's really quite difficult for me to articulate why. Partially this may be because while the book was an enjoyable read overall, there was no one thing that particularly stood out for me. The characters were well developed, but not amazing. The plot was pretty average. Although if I perhaps had to choose one thing that sets this book apart from others, it would be the narrative voice.

Winter Damage has quite an interesting narrative voice. It's written in third person perspective from Ennor's point of view, with quite a distinctive voice- think Blood Red Road or The Assassin's Curse or even The Knife of Never Letting Go. Carthew puts a weird twang on the characters' speech which aided in creating quite memorable characters- or at the very least their speech was memorable. After reading the book, I almost caught myself thinking "I int" to myself instead of "I'm not".

Ennor Carne was alone in the world and she would die alone. This was her truth, her destiny.

In terms of the characters: while I did like them, I didn't at any point feel any connection to them. I was simply observing them, not really feeling what they were feeling (as I feel should happen in a good book). The greatest evidence for this was probably the fact that I felt nothing whatsoever when one of the central characters dies (DUN DUN DUN!). I'm also quite unsure how I felt about how quickly the relationship between Ennor and Sonny (a gypsy girl Ennor meets on her "adventures") built up. It was really kind of an insta-friendship (does that term even exist? Well if it didn't before, it does now :P)

The book on the whole is pretty slow. And not a lot happens. Well, I suppose that actually isn't true. Quite a few things happen, but they're not really exciting things. No actually that's not true either, some things are exciting, but for some reason they just didn't impact me as profoundly as I would have expected. For example, one character kills another (keeping it vague and spoiler free hehe). My response: yeah, okay... I guess in a way, the plot just seemed a bit unrealistic to me. I do have to say, though, I thought the ending was perfect, and really tied together the story rather nicely.

It's a bit difficult to put a label on the genre of the novel. I guess it's technically a post-apocalyptic or dystopian, but there was actually a feel to it that made it seem like it was set in the past. If you like lyrically slow writing and memorable characters with weird-ass accents, then I'd definitely recommend this book to you.

John says

I'm always a sucker for post-apocalyptic novels; although this one only just fits into that category as we are given no details of the events or their cause. This is a young adult novel but I really enjoyed it. It is all a bit unlikely; a girl setting off to walk across Dartmoor in deep winter to find her mother, but the writing and the characters gradually drew me in. Well worth the reading time involved and I will look forward to more by this author.

Dark Matter says

Elizabeth Manthos reviewed this book; for more reviews by Liz, see Elizabeth Manthos on Dark Matter Zine. To see all reviews on Dark Matter Zine, go to Dark Matter Zine's reviews.

Rating: 2 1/2 out of 5 stars

Winter Damage, a debut novel from British author Natasha Carthew, delves into the world of fifteen-year-old Ennor. Ennor lives in a trailer on a frozen Cornish moor with her father and little brother. Years ago, her mother left them and since then her family's world has fallen into disarray.

With Ennor's father gravely ill, no school in the town and with the fear that social services will take her brother away from her, Ennor needs saving. Three days before Christmas she decides there is only thing she can do: go and find her mother.

Only equipped with a backpack filled with a few supplies and a gun, Ennor sets off into the frozen country side to try and find a mother who had long since abandoned them. She doesn't take into consideration the wilderness she is stepping into or the people she could meet.

Ennor meets with an old crone and her scary young nephew before happening on a band of gypsies, travelling wherever the season takes them. What started as a search and rescue mission becomes a battle with winter that will change her life forever.

I don't know where to begin with my thoughts on this novel; not all of them are positive. The pacing of Winter Damage hindered reading it, the start of the novel moving slowly and not improving throughout the novel. It took me a good while to be able to figure out how slowly time was moving both in the novel and out. The sudden ending did not help either, with plot points not tied up and the general story just ending.

The publisher's synopsis states that the main plot was a journey to find her mother and although that was the main reason she set out, it ultimately wasn't the story. The story was more about friendship and loss than Ennor finding the matriarch of her family.

Winter Damage did have redeeming qualities though. The characters themselves seemed driven on hope, hope that Ennor would find her mother, hope that somehow they would all manage to make it through. The dialogue was easily one of the best parts of the novel, with speech coming easily and conversations between characters flowing easily to a point where you felt part of the conversation.

Although I did struggle with this novel, I believe that, as the novel is targeted to a juvenile audience, they would find Winter Damage to be a story about hope and friendship. A story they could enjoy.

Charlie says

DNF

I'm a little meh on this, just overall.

The prose, while occasionally absolutely beautiful, is too intense and elaborate. It feels like purple prose even when it's not, because there are too many metaphorical rocks and snows and cairns shoved into a compact space.

The main character, Ennor, as much as I loved her for the first two chapters, becomes a bit of a wet blanket *when doing all the exciting adventures*. When she's at home, she is competent and awesome. She is a 14 year old carer for her father and brother and farm. She keeps the house and the animals, she worries about everyone else and their finances, but still has faith and trust in the ability to change her state. She's awesome.

As soon as she leaves home, she loses agency. Things start just happening to her. She is thrown (well, walks) from one incident of being out of her depth to another. It's like an entire hero's journey dedicated to showing her that she's ignorant of reality, too optimistic, and the world (and other people) will fuck her up.

(While also giving her a few moments of, oh, this is what childhood is meant to look like? I never have time or energy spare for fun, or not doing something productive and useful.)

The world building is nice. It's subtle and not explained. It feels like rural Wales or Northern England in Thatcher's 1970s, which is absolutely awesome, but it's the slow destruction of UK civilisation at some indeterminable near future. But the future is so near that everything is recognisable, just with less fuel, more snow, and less social services, and a tiny smidge more tyranny and anarchy. (So, David Cameron, George Osborne and Iain Duncan Smith's vision of 2020.)

But I'm **bored**. Her journey is dull. Huge things happen, and I sort of forget them. Nothing is really connected to anything else, so I don't really care. If she had spent the entire book close to home, dealing with everything within her home sphere, I probably would have loved this. The lack of agency adventure (and the excessive use of snow metaphors) brings *The Dark is Rising* to mind. Delightful, but I'm a little pissed as to taking an awesome girl and throwing things at her so she has An Adventure, and loses all her sense of self, and what made her interesting.

She's also rarely cold. The weather and environment is **always** a metaphor, because she rarely feels it in her bones. She doesn't feel hunger, and cold, and lethargy, and loneliness. They happen in an assumed way, but they don't affect how easily she will trust someone who has a fire, or food. It doesn't affect how long she can walk on a given day.

Even in the moment of Extreme Dystopian Action Leading to Drama, it's an accident, and it happens off screen. She doesn't do much deliberately, and she doesn't think things through (which is **fine**, but not combined with not acting deliberately or even reactively to what happens around her).

There's also a few characterisation gaps. Her younger brother is said to have autism, but he doesn't read that way at all (to my admittedly patchy knowledge). It's also pretty much the only thing which places this book in the future rather than the dreary 70s. Kid diagnosed with autism at school = relatively modern, therefore not the past, therefore it is futuristic. It's like a code to date the novel rather than add anything to the characters.

Ennor doesn't read as if she has a brother with autism. I can't imagine being a primary carer who could leave an autistic kid with a simple explanation which he accepted, without worrying constantly about how he's coping with their Dad, and change, and feeding himself, and whether he's accepted her best friend in her place. He reads like an enthusiastic, slightly fucked up 'normal' kid. Ennor reads as a competent child carer, but not one dealing with autism.
