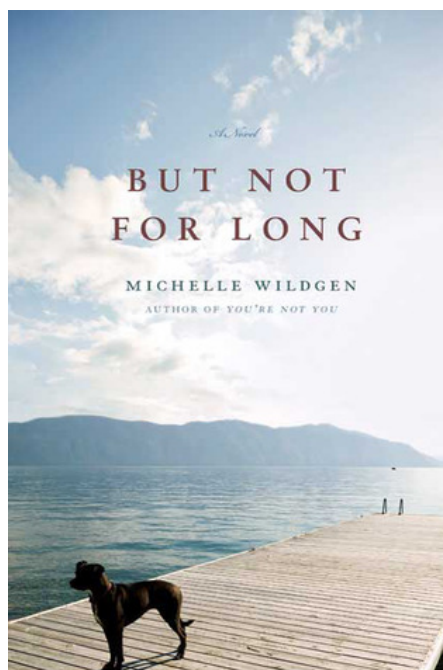




But Not for Long

Michelle Wildgen

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Hard-shelled, career-minded Greta is the newest and least likely member of a sustainable foods cooperative house in Madison, Wisconsin. Shortly after she joins Karin and Hal in their stately residence near campus, the husband Greta left appears on their porch, drunk, and the reason for her sudden appearance becomes clear. Yet the house members already have plenty to occupy them: a series of summer blackouts has unearthed a disquietude lurking just under the surface for each of the three residents. Gas is dwindling, electricity is unreliable, and the natural world around them is in upheaval. The uneasiness of the environment mirrors that of Greta, Hal, and Karin as they each make efforts to resolve their own personal crises. With subtle attunement to the hovering uncertainty affecting each of her characters, Wildgen crafts a story both terrifying and beautiful.

But Not for Long Details

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Author : Michelle Wildgen

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From Reader Review But Not for Long for online ebook

Pumpkinbear says

I've gotten out of the habit of reading fiction that is at all experimental, and so on the last page of this book, I was all, "But what happens NEXT? You're not FINISHED!!!" Many intriguing and ominous things happen throughout this book--Has our society finally tipped the balance back into the Dark Ages? Is our delicate ecological balance collapsing? Are the zombies about to invade?--none of which is at all explored, only mentioned or experienced or wondered at.

It's because, of course, our main characters can't get their heads out of their own asses long enough to look around them--remind you of anyone you know? The world could be collapsing around them, the bureaucracy's silence is outrageous, and yet??? Let's have some more introspection!!! What should I really be doing with my life? Where should my relationships lie? What is my place in my little community?

It's the dark side of the ecological-minded, the shallow side of sustainability--these characters have spent so much energy examining everything in the minute, looking for their local ingredients and debating the environmental impact of the cheese that they buy and living in co-op housing communities that they can't manage to just look up.

Even at the end of the world.

Rob says

A curious book about liberal do-gooders on the edge of the apocalypse. As a liberal do-gooder who is worried about being on the edge of the apocalypse, this is right up my alley. The best part of this book is the way it represents disaster in our lives: something we notice around the edges of our everyday existence, worry about when we get a spare minute, but ultimately am less concerned with than our own personal issues. Wildgen poses a question here that we need to consider: can all of our good intentions, our sustainable-foods co-ops and charity work, survive the destruction of the system they work within? This complicates the simplistic pro/anti-society divide, and suggests that efforts to change the world will be swept away along with the world itself.

Anyway, as far as technical quality of the novel goes Wildgen's not a perfect writer -- she has the irritating tendency to describe what everyone's wearing all the time -- but there are a lot of real moments of beauty here. The characters are well-drawn and realistic, and despite all of my prattling about the apocalypse they are the real core of the story. Our co-op dwellers can sometimes be aggravating, but in the way real people are aggravating, and it's fascinating to spend a couple days in their world.

Alex says

I was a little distracted by the fact that this book is set in Madison since I live in Madison, but that's not Michelle Wildgen's fault -- she lives in Madison, too. Distraction aside, I thought the characters were well drawn and the writing is VERY good. I'm looking forward to reading her other novel.

Laura says

The story takes place in Madison again, there's been gasoline shortages, power failures...sounds like it could be a pretty modern day story. The power goes out again and instead of it coming back on in a few hours, it's out for 3 days+ in the story.

After reading *You're Not You*, I was expecting a lot more. I didn't really care about any of the characters and their problems. There's too many unanswered questions when the book ends and it seems unfinished. I didn't like it.

Marvin says

This is one of those books that's probably better than my rating indicates. I admired it but it didn't really work for me. It's set in Madison, Wisconsin, over a period of just two days, with what seems to be a very promising premise. There are lots of apocalyptic novels that start after some vague event has resulted in primitive conditions for the novel's characters. This is a more likely premise. After a vaguely ominous opening scene that hovers in the background of the novel, the power goes out, as it apparently has been doing increasingly. But this time it doesn't come back on in a couple of hours, as it usually does, and the characters gradually try to come to terms with the possibility that this is the new normal. And this is a very introspective novel focused on the inner lives of four main characters: 3 residents of a co-op house (1 male & 2 females) and the estranged, alcoholic husband of one of them. What's odd is that the introspection rarely connects with the two ominous backdrops (the opening scene or the power crisis), giving the novel an oddly disjointed feel. And despite all the introspection, I never really felt like I got to know the characters very well. It is well written, however, and the vaguely hopeful ending nicely balances the vaguely ominous opening.

Amanda says

I loved her first book *You're Not You*, and so far this one is just as wonderful.

Connie says

The way a city works stops working. The way relationships work within this malfunctioning city is why I rated this book amazing. Place and people mirror each other. They patch up as similarly as they fall apart. Something strong holds it together, basic necessities and unspoken essentials of human spirit.

Michelle Carson says

Slow! Where did the plot go?

Anne Marie says

This book was pleasant until the last page. The ending BLOWS. It was one of those abrupt endings that makes you feel as if a few pages were torn out of the back of the book. I think the author was trying to carry some symbolism through the book and have it culminate with a realization at the end. It did not work. At. All.

Marcia says

Michelle Wildgen is a Madison author. The book has all the familiar streets, lakes and places. This brought more interest to the book for me. The story also brings in the long standing Eastside vs. Westside living debate that has long been a subject of conversation in Madison. The storyline follows three people living in a co-op during a prolonged power outage. Karin is the youngest in the house. She write for a dairy journal. Greta recently moved in the co-op after leaving her alcoholic husband Will. The third person is Hal. Hal finds himself at a time in his life where he is working at a food shelter/meal delivery place and realizing that he is not going anywhere and no longer young and idealistic about the world . He has not saved for retirement. He seems to not be sure he is satisfied with his life.

I would say the book started out very strong for me. The author gave me a sense of all the characters. The power outage effect on people seemed to be that it threw everyone off from normal every day life. This seemed to bring out questioning in each character. But, toward the end, the book was dragging for me. The alcoholic husband became more of a central focus. This did not keep my interest and I wished for more of the other characters to take center stage at the end.

I think most Madison readers and maybe others would enjoy reading the book. It is a different plot line and I always enjoy reading something a little different.

Joe says

Life Goes On As Society Falls Apart

I review Michelle Wildgen's "But Not For Long" today, Sunday, December 20th, in The News & Observer.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/entertain...>

Joe

Lorileinart says

I am always awestruck when somebody is able to write a book about absolutely NOTHING and it's still a very good book...it rarely happens anymore.

This is one of those books though.

With very few words Wildgen shares a story about the lives of four people over the span of a few days. The

entire book takes place during an extended black out, which even intensifies the languid tone of the book. Sounds boring. And actually, it is boring.

Yet, I came to know the characters and wanted to know what became of them. Their thoughts were a lot like the everyday thoughts we all have, and sometimes its comforting to know that you are like everyone else on some level.

Carol says

I really enjoyed this quirky book about a group of people that live in a coop on Madison's near east side. It could go along and be a perfectly good book about interesting people, but an added plot twist is a power outage that lasts for three days. In that time period you get to know the people that live in the coop and follow them to work. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the characters and how they dealt with perversity and people around them. Michelle Wildgen is the presenting author at this year's Book Club Cafe for the Madison Public Library. I think it will be great to hear her speak.

Darielle says

This book was ok. It took me a long time to get into it and then after I did, the book ended and I felt like I was exactly where I was when I started. It appears that they are making a movie out of this book and I'm very confused how that will work. Not something that I'd recommend.

Jen says

I couldn't finish this one and I'm not sure why. As a Madison native, I really wanted to like it. I think I had a hard time getting to know the characters.
