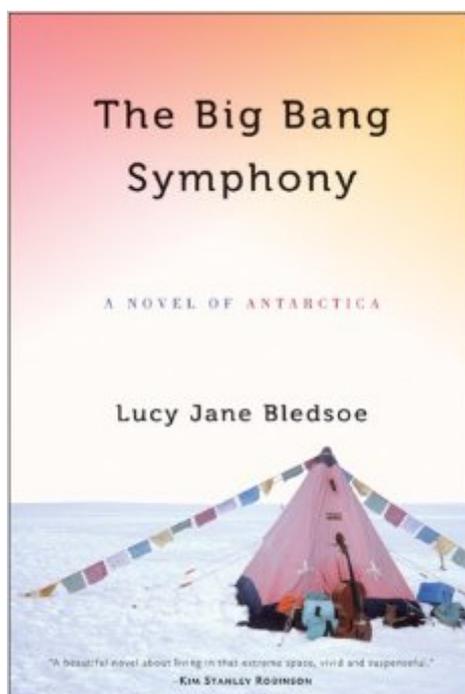


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The Big Bang Symphony: A Novel Of Antarctica



Synopsis

Antarctica is a vortex that draws you back, season after season. The place is so raw and pure, all seal hide and crystalline iceberg. The fishbowl communities at McMurdo Station, South Pole Station, and in the remote field camps intensify relationships, jack all emotion up to a 10. The trick is to get what you need and then get out fast. At least that's how thirty-year-old Rosie Moore views it as she flies in for her third season on the Ice. She plans to avoid all entanglements, romantic and otherwise, and do her work as a galley cook. But when her flight crash-lands, so do all her plans. Mikala Wilbo, a brilliant young composer whose heart and music have been frozen since the death of her partner, is also on that flight. She has come to the Ice as an artist-in-residence, to write music, but also to secretly check out the astrophysicist father she has never met. Arriving a few weeks later, Alice Neilson, a graduate student in geology who thinks in charts and equations, is thrilled to leave her dependent mother and begin her career at last. But from the start she is aware that her post-doc advisor, with whom she will work in Antarctica, expects much more from their relationship. As the three women become increasingly involved in each other's lives, they find themselves deeply transformed by their time on the Ice. Each falls in love. Each faces challenges she never thought she would meet. And ultimately, each finds redemption in a depth and quality of friendship that only the harsh beauty of Antarctica can engender. Finalist, Lambda Literary Awards Finalist, Ferro-Grumley Award for LGBT Fiction, awarded by the Publishing Triangle Finalist, Northern California Independent Booksellers Association Honorable Mention, Foreword Magazine's Gay/Lesbian Fiction Book of the Year Best Books for General Audiences, selected by the Public Library Association

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Customer Reviews

If you are trying to find yourself, what better place is there than Antarctica? All you see in any direction is a whole continent of ice, nothing to distract you. Or is there? The Big Bang Symphony is set at McMurdo Station, the major base at the South Pole, and the surrounding out camps where there is more going on than most people would suspect. People come and go seeking high paying jobs, adventure, or spiritual purification. Some are seeking all three. Into this environment come Rosie Moore, Mikala Wilbo and Alice Neilson. Rosie is the veteran, having spent previous seasons working on the station as a cook. Her interest is in making enough money to finally buy a ranch in Montana and then getting out without any entangling relationships. What you get is often not what you want. Mikala is running from and to something. A recognized musical genius, she wants to escape the memory of the lover she lost and find the father she never knew, while creating a symphonic representation of the Big Bang. Alice is looking for a life. She can have an illustrious career in geology if she can just get away from her mother. To Alice, who has never been away from home before, starting with a trip to Antarctica seems logical, but how to deal with her emotions is totally beyond her. As each one stumbles through her life at the station, she finds an answer, just not the one for which she was looking. Bledsoe uses the South Pole as a metaphor for the search that each person goes on to find meaning in a life. The ice desert is beautiful and frightening and magnetic. It also provides a sterile environment for the characters to work in, one where they can pare their lives down to the bare minimum and see what is important.

In *The Big Bang Symphony* by Lucy Jane Bledsoe, the reader is treated to a glimpse of life in one of the planet's least forgiving ecosystems, the frozen environs of Antarctica. From the first chapter, Bledsoe makes it clear that the Arctic is a place that is at once beautiful yet wonderful with unforeseen hazards and the unpredictability of nature. In this frozen wilderness, life of any kind is tolerated but never nurtured and can be extinguished in the flash of a sudden storm. The three main characters, Rosie Moore, Mikala Wilbo, and Alice Neilson travel to Antarctica seeking different forms of escape. And all three find unexpected connections, joined together by the ethereal music of the Big Bang. Rosie, seeks to find herself in the loneliness of the arctic wilderness, but she finds only isolation without solitude. She is alternately brooding and reckless as she flings herself headlong into relationships, like a woman plunging into a storm, seeking something neither seen nor sensed, but ardently desired: warmth, safety, and a sense of home. Mikala goes to Antarctica in an attempt

to transform the music of the earth's creation into a symphony. In the process, she seeks to develop a relationship with a father she has never known but against whom she has held a lifetime of resentment. She also seeks to transform her crush on Rosie, who is painfully straight, into something that will help her to move beyond the death of her former lover. Similarly, Alice, a graduate student in geology, seeks to escape from her dominating mother into a life of her own. Yet even after having travelled to end of the earth, she still finds it difficult to find her own space.

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