

Writer's Craft 3

Book Review

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One Woman's Coming of Age Amidst Y2K Paranoia

Apocalypse Child: Surviving Doomsday and the Search for Identity at the End of the World

Carly Butler

Caitlin Press, March 29th, 2024

\$24.95

I remember the first time my pastor dad sat at the edge of my bed to read me a bedtime story—from the Book of Revelation. He opened the oversized, leather-bound Bible that sat in our living room and turned to the last pages. There, he recounted a terrifying tale of multi-headed beasts and apocalyptic wars, warning me that the only way to prepare was by “drawing close to God and knowing his word.” I did not sleep that night.

Flash forward, and I'm curled up reading my own bedtime story. *Apocalypse Child: Surviving Doomsday and the Search for Identity at the End of the World* is a bewildering memoir fueled by the same end-time paranoia I knew as a kid—but in full force.

Carly Butler transports her readers deep into the 90s Montana wilderness, where she and her mother, DJ, are preparing for what they believe will be the end of the world: Y2K. But they're doing more than just praying and reciting scripture—they're chopping wood, stocking up on supplies, and becoming accustomed to using their shotguns.

For years, conspiracy theories and religious doctrines are all Butler knows. She has no hopes for the future because she believes there won't be one. Life goes on—and Butler is left to pick up the pieces of her own apocalypse. She must now navigate life beyond survivalism. From finally claiming the Canadian residency that her mother denied her, to embracing her suppressed Indigeneity and queerness — at 23 years old, Butler is just starting to find who she is.

In *Apocalypse Child*, the author shares a story spanning over a quarter century, detailing the pivotal events of every year in each chapter. Her honest reflections and memories reveal a journey of resilience through repeated trauma, showing how her perceptions and beliefs gradually change with each page you turn.

In her debut, Butler is joining a larger conversation about the impacts of organized religion and faith-focused homeschooling on childhood development, as well as the social, financial and emotional struggles that manifest during adulthood. Her story is reminiscent of other testimonials, like Tara Westover's 2018 memoir: *Educated*, where the author finds the courage to escape her Mormon upbringing and pursue a PhD.

Butler's perspective brings attention and validation to an entire community of people who are deconstructing and exploring the world beyond their childhood belief systems, religious or not. She demonstrates an important message: it is possible to take the survival tactics we learn early on and allow them to help us through whatever we may face next.

“The only In Between I lived now was my rightful place: where Apocalypse may strike daily, but the world never ends.” (242)

Apocalypse Child is a celebration of self-acceptance and embracing circumstance. It's a work that will spark interest in any reader who may be curious about religious deconstruction,

intrigued by doomsday prepping, or who simply resonates with themes of rebuilding identity and developing personal beliefs. Butler's writing is stunning, candid, and charismatic, and is a testament to the people who supported her, apocalypse and beyond.