

[PDF] The Last American Man

Elizabeth Gilbert, Patricia Kalember - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly "By the time Eustace Conway was seven years old he could throw a knife accurately enough to nail a chipmunk to a tree." Such behavior might qualify Eustace as a potential Columbine-style triggerman, but in Gilbert's startling and fascinating account of his life, he becomes a great American countercultural hero. At 17, Conway "headed into the mountains... and dressed in the skins of animals he had hunted and eaten." By his late 30s, Eustace owned "a thousand acres of pristine wilderness" and lived in a teepee in the woods full-time. He is, as Gilbert (*Stern Men*) implies with her literary and historical references, a cross between Davy Crockett and Henry David

Thoreau. Gilbert, who is friends with Conway and interviewed his family, evidences enormous enthusiasm for her subject, whether discussing Conway's need for alcohol to calm down; his relationship with a physically and emotionally abusive father; or his horrific hand-to-antler fight with a deer buck he was trying to kill yet she always keeps her reporter's distance. At times, Conway's story can be wonderfully moving (as when he buries kindergartners in a shallow trench with their faces turned skyward to help them understand that the forest floor is "alive") or disconcerting (as when, in 1995, he's uncertain about Bill Clinton's identity). Gilbert has a jaunty, breathless style, and she paints a complicated portrait of American maleness that is as original as it is surprising. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From *Starred Review* Eustace Conway discovered nature's wonders as a boy growing up in South Carolina during the 1960s. Miserable at home, a born perfectionist and fanatic, he took to the woods and developed wilderness skills unknown to most modern Americans. By the time he finished high school and moved into a teepee (his abode for 17 years), he was convinced that only encounters with "the high art and godliness of nature" could help save American society from its catastrophically wasteful habits and soul-deadening trivial pursuits. Conway is not alone in his beliefs, but he is unique in his maniacal drive to proselytize, and, ironically enough, he's taken his teaching mission to such extremes by attempting to create an Appalachian wilderness utopia that it's impossible for him to live the very life he champions. Tough, shrewd, gifted, vigorous, and contradictory, Conway, who set a world record crossing the continent on horseback in 103 days, both enlightens and confounds all who know him. Gilbert, a top-notch journalist and fiction writer, braids keen and provocative observations about the American frontier, the myth of the mountain man, and the peculiar state of contemporary America with its "profound alienation" from nature into her spirited and canny portrait, ultimately concluding that Conway's magnetism is due in part to his embodying society's most urgent conundrums. *Donna Seaman*

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