



Fauna by Alissa York

About the author:

Alissa York's internationally acclaimed novels include *Mercy, Effigy*, (short-listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize) and, most recently, *Fauna* (short-listed for the Toronto Book Award). She is also the author of the short fiction collection, *Any Given Power*, stories from which have won the Journey Prize and the Bronwen Wallace Award. Her essays and articles have appeared in such periodicals as *The Guardian*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Quill & Quire*, *Eighteen Bridges* and *Canadian House and Home*. York has lived all over Canada and now makes her home in Toronto with her husband, artist Clive Holden.

Source: Author's website (<http://alissayork.com/>)

About this book:

* One Book Nova Scotia's 2013 title*

Fauna is a contemporary human fable that taps into the great tenderness and drama at the heart of the animal world.

The wide ravine that bisects the city is home to countless species of urban wildlife, including human waifs and strays. When Edal Jones can't cope with the casual cruelty she encounters in her job as a federal wildlife officer, she finds herself drawn to a beacon of solace nestled in the valley under the unlikely banner of an auto-wrecker's yard. Guy Howell, the handsome proprietor, offers sanctuary to animals and people alike: a half-starved hawk and a brood of orphaned raccoon kits, a young soldier whose spirit failed him during his first tour of duty, a teenage runaway and her massive black dog. Guy is well versed in the delicate workings of damaged beings, and he might just stand a chance at mending Edal's heart.

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But before love can bloom, the little community must come to terms with a different breed of lost soul - a young man whose brutal backwoods childhood is catching up with him, causing him to persecute the creatures that call the valley home.

Source: Penguin Random House Canada (<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/>)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is troubling Edal? How does Guy help her?
2. Has **Fauna** changed your view of animals and city life? Does it reflect anything in your own experience?
3. How is the book structured, and why? Why does it cut between past and present and different points of view?
4. From story time at Howell Auto Wreckers to Letty's house, **Fauna** is (sometimes literally) full of books. What do these other books add to the novel?
5. If you've read Alissa York's previous novels, such as **Effigy** or **Mercy**, how do you compare **Fauna** with them?
6. How are the characters in **Fauna** linked? Consider the small coincidental connections between them (such as moments when one sees another from a subway train window) to the more profound emotional bonds.
7. How does the unusual family in **Fauna** provide the sanctuary that traditional families often cannot? What's the importance of the "modern family" in this book?
8. What role does death play in the novel? What do the characters say about death and how do they respond to it? You might consider how **Fauna** treats the deaths of animals and people differently (or similarly), and the importance of mourning and burial in the novel.
9. What is the significance of the title, **Fauna**? Can you think of any alternative titles you might give this book?

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10. Why did Alissa York include the sections in the novel written from the perspective of a raccoon or bat? Are they effective? What do they add to the overall narrative?
11. The novel features a large, well-rounded cast of characters. Who affects you most deeply, and why? Who do you find most interesting? Are there any characters you don't connect with, and if so why do you think that is?
12. What does love accomplish in **Fauna**? How do people demonstrate love? Do animals experience love?
13. How does York create sympathy for her characters? You might focus on the more troubled individuals, such as Darius.
14. In what sense is Toronto's Don Valley a character in the novel? How do the settings contribute to the story and to your sense of the characters?
15. What does Lily learn in **Fauna**?
16. Were you surprised by what happens to Darius at the close of the novel? How do you explain it?
17. How would you describe Alissa York's writing style in **Fauna**? (You may find it helpful to compare **Fauna** to her other work, or to that of other writers.) Would you call it lyrical, pared-down, lush, hypnotic . . . ? What effect does it have on you?
18. Will you recommend **Fauna** to your friends? Why or why not?

Source: Penguin Random House Canada (<http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/>)

Other formats available at Halifax Public Libraries:

- eBook