



A Wounded Thing Must Hide: In Search of Libbie Custer

Jeremy Poolman

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A Wounded Thing Must Hide: In Search of Libbie Custer Jeremy Poolman

A vibrant, deeply personal portrait of the wife of General Custer.

Brilliant, inventive, but not in any conventional sense a biography, *A Wounded Thing Must Hide* is Jeremy Poolman's first foray into nonfiction, taking as its subject the fascinating wife of General Custer. He relates key scenes in Libbie's extraordinary life—her brushes with Empress Elizabeth of Austria, Tsar Alexander III, and Henry James, to name a few—each episode proving rich in relishably surreal detail. We see Libbie ferrying dung from Vienna to St. Petersburg (a present from empress to tsar, to ward off cholera and typhus); taking delivery of the present of a bear from Alex himself; stumbling into a soldier who might perhaps be the great-great-grandfather of Bob Dylan. Throughout it all, we catch glimpses of the glorious, wayward career of the General himself, culminating in the famous slaughter at Little Big Horn.

Far from an aridly factual outline of who did what where, Poolman offers us a vividly, tangibly real recreation of historical events. He gets to places other biographies can't reach, bleeding, at times, into autobiography. Haunted by the death of his own wife, the narrator follows Libbie's itinerary in search of something unnamed in himself. Through exploring a widow's determination to protect her husband's damaged reputation, he hopes to find a way to deal with his personal loss. By exploring Libbie's and Custer's enduring love and devotion, he finds a form for his own.

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