

Book Review: The Last American Man by Elizabeth Gilbert

I was at a garage sale a few weeks ago when I came across Elizabeth Gilbert's book—The Last American Man. For 99¢ I had the pleasure of reading this book. I could hardly put it down. It was a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist in 2002. This book was pre the Eat, Pray, Love phenomenalism.

The book centers around the life of Eustace Conway who as a young man leaves home to live in the woods. Unknowingly he has spent his short life getting ready for this moment. It's mostly his biography. The book also chronicles a friendship that Gilbert fosters with the Conway brothers. They both live a frontier life but the older one more so than the younger one.

Eustace is so inspiring by his "back to nature lifestyle" that others want to join him. That's why Gilbert calls him the last American man. There is something so alluring about a modern day man giving up all the comforts our modern life provides to prove and enjoy the life of the land.

Gilbert's research into the nuances of that kind of lifestyle is very thorough. And her writing is insightful. She writes about the "whys" of living this kind of life. She dabbles in it a bit herself but never fully embraces it. She delves into the Conway family dynamics. What is revealed is the answers to why Eustace chooses to embrace this lifestyle. If you are even a little fascinated by the back-to-nature lifestyle you will enjoy this book.