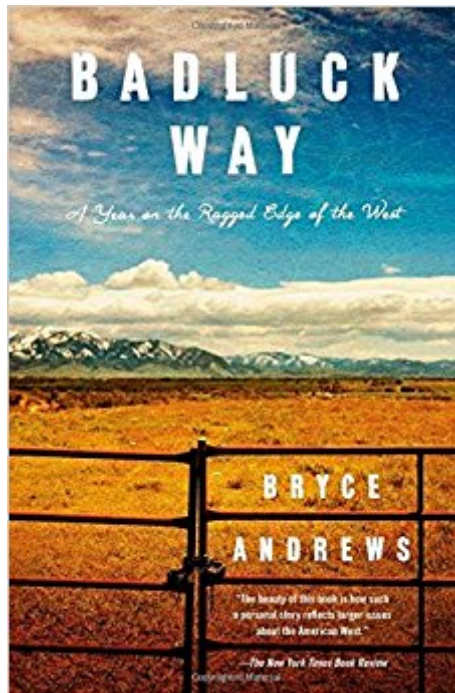


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Badluck Way: A Year On The Ragged Edge Of The West



Synopsis

“Much more than a coming-of-age story, > is an important meditation on what it means to share space and breathe the same air as truly wild animals, and the necessary damage that can occur when boundaries are crossed” (Tom Groneberg, author of *The Secret Life of Cowboys*). In this gripping memoir of a young man, a wolf, their parallel lives and ultimate collision, Bryce Andrews describes life on the remote, windswept Sun Ranch in southwest Montana. The Sun’s twenty thousand acres of rangeland occupy a still-wild corner of southwest Montana—a high valley surrounded by mountain ranges and steep creeks with portentous names like Grizzly and Bad Luck. Just over the border from Yellowstone National Park, the Sun holds giant herds of cattle and elk amid many predators—bears, mountain lions, and wolves. In lyrical, haunting language, Andrews recounts marathon days and nights of building fences, riding, roping, and otherwise learning the hard business of caring for cattle, an initiation that changes him from an idealistic city kid into a skilled ranch hand. But when wolves suddenly begin killing the ranch’s cattle, Andrews has to shoulder a rifle, chase the pack, and do what he’d hoped he would never have to do. Called “an elegant memoir” by the >, *Badluck Way* is about transformation and complications, about living with dirty hands every day. It is about the hard choices that wake us at night and take a lifetime to reconcile. Above all, > celebrates the breathtaking beauty of wilderness and the satisfaction of hard work on some of the harshest, most beautiful land in the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wolves and ranching will never co-exist. Despite government-overseen reintroduction, despite

reimbursement for predation, wolves are hunters and cattle are easy prey. As soon as I read the blurb, I knew this memoir wouldn't end without blood being spilled. Yet Bryce Andrews' easy voice and excellent writing drew me, and I was uncontrollably along for the collision when predator and unintended prey met. A first-hand account of life on a modern day cattle ranch, Andrews has a wonderful way with words and a voice that is strong and draws the reader in. His descriptions of the beauty of the ranch and the land in Montana read smoothly and are not bogged down in excessive detail. His concise yet poetic way of speaking truly makes this memoir. He can make you laugh with one sentence and have you yearning for the wild mountains of Montana in the next. His words paint a picture before your reading eyes until you feel as if you are standing knee-deep in a Montana winter with snow battering your face and the wind burning your skin. It's rare an author can capture such a scene without overtelling and dulling the sensation, but Andrews succeeds and excels at it. I appreciate the author's honesty. Nothing is sugar coated, not the description of the wolves' kills or the daily grind or the grim task of dealing with cows maimed by predators. This is what life on a ranch is truly like. It's a glimpse into a world and a life that most of us will never know, and Andrews made me both relieved and saddened by that fact as I read. I wasn't certain I wanted to read this book at first. I love wolves. I followed their reintroduction into Yellowstone and read every book on the subject I could get my hands on.

I received this memoir in galley form from the publisher with no strings attached. A novice ranch hand on a conservation cattle ranch in southwest Montana details his work and his intersection with the wolves that thrive and struggle on the same piece of land he's trying to "preserve." Andrews nods to many nuances--the irony of running a conservation ranch by killing the native predators, the disconnect of cattle on Western lands to begin with, a greenhorn looking at a life he is both drawn to and repelled by. I appreciated his willingness to write about a touchy and loaded subject in which there are no easy answers. Although I love wolves, alternating chapters told from their point of view bugged me, especially at the beginning. Without the grounding context of the rest of the book they felt mystical and romanticized in a way that made me predict an overly projecting human narrator. I put it down because of this, and almost didn't pick it back up. Eventually, I finished it (I hate quitting!) and I'm glad I did. Andrews makes good connections and writes some flat out lovely sentences, though occasional overwriting felt pretentious and detracted from immersion in the place's diction ("a chiaroscuro of barbwire scratches"--oof.) Upon completion, the book felt a bit...slight. While his youth & greenness were a useful vantage in some ways (providing an outsider lens that was still implicated), it felt like a big liability in others. His limited scope and experience were notable. (I'm

guessing he's not much more than a decade removed from the time he writes about.

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