



Where I Live Now: A Journey through Love and Loss to Healing and Hope

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An intimate and uplifting book about finding renewal and hope through grief and loss.

“It was a terrible life; it was an enchanted life; it was a blessed life. And, of course, one day it ended.”

—Sharon Butala

In the tradition of Joan Didion’s *The Year of Magical Thinking*, Diana Athill’s *Somewhere Towards the End*, and Atul Gawande’s *Being Mortal* comes a revelatory new book from one of our beloved writers.

When Sharon Butala’s husband, Peter, died unexpectedly, she found herself with no place to call home. Torn by grief and loss, she fled the ranchlands of southwest Saskatchewan and moved to the city, leaving almost everything behind. A lifetime of possessions was reduced to a few boxes of books, clothes, and keepsakes. But a lifetime of experience went with her, and a limitless well of memory—of personal failures, of a marriage that everybody said would not last but did, of the unbreakable bonds of family.

Reinventing herself in an urban landscape was painful, and facing her new life as a widow tested her very being. Yet out of this hard-won new existence comes an astonishingly frank, compassionate and moving memoir that offers not only solace and hope but inspiration to those who endure profound loss.

Often called one of this country’s true visionaries, Sharon Butala shares her insights into the grieving process and reveals the small triumphs and funny moments that kept her going. *Where I Live Now* is profound in its understanding of the many homes women must build for themselves in a lifetime.

Where I Live Now: A Journey through Love and Loss to Healing and Hope Details

Date : Published April 4th 2017 by Simon Schuster

ISBN : 9781476790480

Author : Sharon Butala

Format : Hardcover 192 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir

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From Reader Review Where I Live Now: A Journey through Love and Loss to Healing and Hope for online ebook

Carolann says

Where I Live Now is a deeply rewarding book that explores the way in which our environment, our landscape, both confines and enlarges our humanity. But that's already too narrow--Sharon Butala writes movingly of a landscape still largely populated by coyotes, owls, wolves, cattle. I loved her description of cows in the herd on the Butala ranch waiting "patiently at the northeast gate" for the annual move, at the approach of the harsh Saskatchewan winter, to the shelter of the valley on the hay farm. When Butala married and moved to her husband's ranch, she felt compelled to experience the land intimately, and alone. Her writing is elegiac and beautiful and full of joy as well as sorrow. The reader is present as she unflinchingly recounts her husband, Peter's, last days, and I had to close the book and give myself time to recover. But of course I returned to this fascinating picture of a life that moves a little like the wind in the prairie grass from town to country and back again. "I became a rancher's wife, I became a writer, I lived a life in nature," Butala writes, and it meant a great deal to me, as I read, to share something of this life.

Magdalen Bowyer says

There are stories within Sharon's stories that are my stories and maybe your stories, too. Because this is what happens when one woman speaks the truth of her life — the world breaks open.

The world of light and love and knowing and connection and deeper understanding.

Back in 1985, I was driving through the Cypress Hills-Fort Walsh area with my parents. I was a "new" widow and taking refuge in Mom and Dad's company. And much like Sharon writes about, one of the deep pleasures of prairie life are the long drives in the landscape. And that's what my Dad felt his daughter needed on that day. (Thank you, Dad!) Along this particular journey, we came upon Sharon and Peter. My parents knew Peter and I knew Sharon because I'd read her work. So, on that day, these four adults, through our Sunday afternoon conversation, became a portal for me to travel into my own soul. I was so excited to meet Sharon! And probably because of my youthful enthusiasm, she generously invited me to visit her and Peter.

Fast forward a couple of weeks, and my beloved friend Cathie accompanied me to visit that wide expanse of land that Sharon writes about south of Eastend. I remember how excited I was to see Sharon's writing space in their home. Here was a prairie woman living the prairie life AND being her writerly self. I'd never seen such a thing. At that point, I had no idea who Sharon was or where she'd come from. I only knew her through the stories she'd written and who she appeared to be next to Peter in their shared life. Seeing her that day in the lifestyle she'd chosen, changed what was possible in my life forever.

You see, I had a sense that there was a book in me wanting to be written. And I had no clue who I needed to be to write it. Sharon reflected back to me what I needed to see about myself.

Our intended short visit turned into an all day affair. Peter cooked us pasta. Sharon set the table. A bottle of wine was opened. It was a delicious crossroads in my life.

Reading 'Where I Live Now' has filled in some missing pieces for me. And has me appreciating even more

how life instructs us through the connections we form with others. Neither Sharon or I knew then that she'd one day be widow and our stories would be intertwined in yet another way. The grace of her storytelling emanates from her willingness to go deep within herself. And she has the hard-earned wisdom that allows her to show us, through the subtle art of story, that when we know the nature of nature, we will know the nature of ourselves.

It's a book whose time has come. I know she doesn't intend this, but make no mistake, Sharon Butala is a Master Teacher. And dare I say, Peter continues to teach THROUGH her. I felt his presence in every word I read. What a delight!

I love these two people, more than they will ever know, for helping to light my path not only as Writer-Storyteller, but as Human Woman coming to realize who she is and what she is called to do through the Nature of Her Nature.

Read this story. It is a prayerful testament to All That Is. It'll work magic in your own soul.

Blessed BE

Vontel says

Wonderful book from a humble and renowned Canadian prairie author! When I picked it up, just intending to read a few pages before starting the other library book I had picked up yesterday, I read a quarter of the book before I could put it down.

I have read some of her previous non-fiction and fiction, including "The Perfection of the Morning", and found them all moving. I have visited the Cypress Hills AB and Sask areas and south of Maple Creek, the landscape and history about which she writes, as well as having lived and worked in southern Saskatchewan for a number of years in the 70's and 80's, so some of it I can relate to in a semblance of lived experience. Her personal and intimate journeys are her own, and only possibly fathomable in what she shares within the limits of the written word.

I returned to the book this morning and finished reading it for the first time in one sitting, although I had read the epilogue and acknowledgements once before during my first reading. Once again, I was held to read and reflect as I read over a period of several hours. This is a book to re-read, for the wisdom gained from her life which the author shares, after spending some time absorbing it and being sparked into reflecting and pondering on my own life and journeys.

The entire wrap around cover photo is one taken of the ranch yard after she left, at late summer evening/night against the vast prairie sky of stars with some aurora borealis. Butala mentions it the book, and it would be wonderful to see the original.

Barbara says

There's something unique about southwestern Saskatchewan, and it's not just the landscape, but the writers who've loved and written books about it, from Wallace Stegner's 'Wolf Willow' and Candace Savage's 'A

Geography of Blood' to Sharon Butala 1994 memoir 'Perfection of the Morning.' In this new memoir Butala writes of what it means to lose both that land and her husband of 31 years, the rancher who originally introduced her to the area. She draws us back into the story of how an urban academic came to gradually form a close spiritual connection to this place - and then many years later, alone, find herself back in a big city. There is much tenderness and wisdom in this book.

Diane says

This book nicely bookends Butala's acclaimed *The Perfection of the Morning* in which she tells the story of how a girl born and raised in northern Saskatchewan but educated and employed as an academic comes to live on a large ranch in the southwest of the province. She learns to love and appreciate the flora and fauna of the area as well as the land itself when relocating following her marriage. *Where I Live Now* deals with her leaving the area she has learned to love after thirty-three years and the death of her husband. Butala's style is a bit wordy and dense. Her paragraphs seem long and I find myself skimming to get to the bits that resonate with me. I found it very interesting that Butala's husband inherited the ranch from his father, an immigrant from Slovakia, that most of the land has been never broken and that she and her husband, lacking joint heirs, left the huge range to the Nature Conservancy of Canada which would have shocked and appalled many of the ranchers in that area. What I really liked about this book, however, was the Epilogue, in fact I photocopied it for future reference. In it Butala succinctly and beautifully describes the years following the initial grief upon losing a loved one and discusses how loss seems to accumulate in our lives as we age which is something I can relate to so well. Recommended for fans of *Perfection of the Morning* and Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

Catherine Coles says

The author tells of her late in life marriage to a Saskatchewan farmer (cut short by his cancer diagnosis), the ecology and history of the land he tended, how she grieved his death and moved on (literally) in the aftermath. This short, thoughtful memoir packs in a lot of content. A bit slow, but will have the reader thinking about their place in the world.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BTBkQEfdx...>

Janet Hutchinson says

What a lovely book - her story from the death of her husband to now, but with lots of diving back into her time with him, is a beautiful combination of poetry and lyrics. Great book, if I do say so.

Friederike Knabe says

Sharon Butala's **Where I live now** is categorized under biography/autobiography but that appears to me too

narrow a description. It is not only "a journey through love and loss to healing and hope" as the subtitle states, it is a profound meditation on life, love and the natural world which surrounded her and her husband of more than thirty years. Sharon Butala writes with honesty and tenderness and invites the reader into her private world while sharing many insights gained over the years that go far beyond the personal and specific.

Back in 1995 I was completely captivated by Sharon Butala's **The Perfection of the Morning**. It opened a new world for me as a newcomer to Canada, a world of natural beauty steeped in history that I knew nothing about. It led me to follow her nonfiction and fiction writing very closely over the many years since. You don't have to start with the earlier books to enjoy reading this reflection and journey - she refers to pertinent events and moments in time - but you might feel motivated to read the earlier books also.

Lesbianfunworld Online says

Why am I reading books written by widows about their husbands, their husband's deaths and how they manage to go on (or not)? I sure hope it isn't portending something horrible...

Anywho, this is a great piece of Canadiana, a look into the unsettled life of prairie settlers, and, eventually, what happens when the author loses her husband and the land. Spoiler: she acknowledges the important connection to nature for survival, and moves to the city anyway.

A little sentimental but no tear jerker, it's an enlightening look at life, spirit, loss, connection and continuance within a uniquely Canadian story.

Laina SpareTime says

Cross-posted from my blog where there's more information on where I got my copy and links and stuff.

don't read a lot of memoir or non-fiction in general besides research when I write books, and that's mostly mythology stuff, but I found this interesting. I live in Saskatchewan myself, and one of the places mentioned in the book is actually where I was born. Most of what she talks about is southwest Saskatchewan and I don't live exactly there, but it's a small province and I found it very interesting to read both about Butala's personal history and what she had learned and shared about Saskatchewan's history. Like did you know in 1991 a nearly complete T-Rex skeleton was found in Saskatchewan? We named him Scotty. I've seen his head! A few years ago he was touring, and our museum had him and I got to see him. (T-Rex heads are gigantic, by the way.)

I think my only complaint is just that the book can be a little disjointed. There's not really a strong narrative. I feel almost like it's a book meant to be read more as a chapter here and a chapter there than all in one sitting.

I'm also obviously not really the target audience for this either. I enjoyed it, but it's obviously aimed at

different people than me, and that's not the fault of the book, so no points off for that. I actually think I might send a copy to my aunt - my uncle's not dead or anything, knock on wood, but it's probably a similar history to his family, and I think she'd enjoy reading it. Maybe her mother-in-law, too. The photos that Butala shared are also really neat.

So, a little disjointed in the narrative, but enjoyable still and I enjoyed it. It's a fairly quick read, but the Saskatchewan history is very interesting and I think the grief aspect would be very relatable to many. Glad I read this. Three out of four roses.

Tammy Lee says

I won an ARC of this book in a Goodreads first-reads giveaway. I love reading Canadian authors, so I was so excited to be able to get an advance reader's copy. And from an author whose other novels I have enjoyed! In this memoir, Sharon Butala walks through her memories of her drastic life change in her 30's, choosing a new life with husband Peter, which took her from city life to a remote, somewhat secluded small community in southwest Saskatchewan, where he ran his family cattle and hay ranch. Her 33 years there, among nature and the land, shaped her as a person, and as an author.

Following Peter's death, she grapples with grief, loss and beginning the next stage of her life away from the land that has been her home for so long.

"I believe that once you find yourself - your real self - still there inside, and you begin to see yourself as alive, and indeed, as worthy of a life, a real life, that drabness will slowly disappear as the spirit flares up again.

Grief has its own timetable." pg 147

Thanks to Goodreads, Simon & Schuster Canada, and Ms Butala for the opportunity to read this ARC.

Enid Wray says

A beautiful evocation of a life, a love and a place... on a marriage, on making a new life for oneself while growing old, and finding one's true self in nature.

It reads like Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* meets Candace Savage's *The Geography of Blood*. Strikes a deep chord with the prairie girl in me, even though I never lived on the farm, it runs deep in the blood. When she speaks of the British inheritance system - that sees the women especially lose their ties to the land - that's my family story. Homesteading in 1862 in southern Manitoba, the farm is still in the family, but my grandparents were not the ones in line to stay on the land.

A little too close to home in other places as well, as in where she discusses coyote attacks (p99), in particular referencing an attack in Nova Scotia. That attack resulted in the death of Toronto folk singer Taylor Mitchell, who had been a student of mine. And just this week I catalogued both David Atwell's book on JM Coetzee and Paul Auster's (Booker Longlisted) *4,3,2,1* (ref p109).

Sarah Boon says

My sense is that Butala was hoping to write something along the lines of Didion's *Year of a Magical Thinking*, which recounts Didion's life in the year following the sudden death of her husband.

But Butala's situation is much different. Not only does her husband not die suddenly, she loses not only his company, but the landscape they lived in and that nourished her for over 30 yrs.

I felt like she tries so hard to describe what those dual losses were like and what they meant for her life as a widow, but she didn't quite get to the heart of it in this book. I found the writing was a bit clumsy and the thought processes, from one idea to the next, not as smooth as some of her other writing. I think this book could have benefitted from another round of edits, and maybe from sitting for a month or so and then being reworked.

Jill Robbertze says

I loved this book. Although its theme is that of the author's experience of the loss of her husband and how she endures and by necessity drastically changes her lifestyle, this is more a beautiful memoir of a wonderful marriage and their lives as farmers in Saskatchewan. Sharon Butala's writing comes over like a conversation with an old friend. Thought-provoking, beautifully written, amazing descriptions, interesting facts and much more all made this a real gem.

Cathryn Wellner says

When I moved to rural British Columbia, a friend gave me a copy of Butala's *The Perfection of the Morning*. The experience of a woman displaced from the urban, professional life where she was comfortable in her skin moved me to the core. I was heading for my first experience of rural living, ill-equipped for what I would find there.

Rural life never fit like a comfortable shoe, but I came to love the people and landscape and the Big Lessons of a life so different from anything I had known. Sharon Butala became something of a distant mentor to me in my new life. I had a chance to meet her when she came to my nearby town for a writers' workshop. Over lunch with her and a talented local writer, the three of us found we had much in common in our experience as rural writers.

I am no longer in rural B.C. so was keen to read what choices Butala had made after the death of her beloved husband. I anticipated her choice to return to an urban setting, but the book was so much more than a record of her path back to a kind of life she had set aside decades earlier. Butala is both lyrical and matter of fact in her exploration of the life and landscape of her years as a ranch wife and writer. Her grief made me ache, as what she had with Peter is forever lost. But her poetic writing and the clarity of her vision, coupled with her love of the natural world in which she spent so many years, made the book a joy to read.

Although the book can be enjoyed without first reading *The Perfection of the Morning*, it offers a richer experience to those acquainted with the earlier book. Sharon Butala has added richness to the Canadian literary landscape. This book is a good example of why she is an important figure among our writers.
