

[PDF] Dirt Work: An Education In The Woods

Christine Byl - pdf download free book

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Author: Christine Byl
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Description:

From Recent college graduate Byl (in philosophy, no less) made an unusual choice for summer employment as a “traiidog” at Glacier National Park. What began as a lark becomes a transformative experience stretching into years spent wielding chainsaws and shovels doing “dirt work” in the back country for the National Park Service in Montana and Alaska. Framed with descriptions of the tools she learned to handle with aplomb, Byl shifts rapidly from thoughts on Thoreau to the sexual politics of women in a male-dominated field, to questions about the “wild” and pragmatic concerns over health insurance. Along the way she casts baleful glances in many directions, from tourists to Outside magazine to her employers and fellow federal employees. This is certainly an author with a literary chip on her shoulder, but the work is unique and Byl does such a good job of celebrating a colorful cast of characters that the occasional surges of attitude will be overlooked in light of her tale of an education earned in the woods that so deeply complements that of the classroom. --Colleen Mondor

Review

"[It] blends beauty and crudeness, grit and grace... With language that is lyrical despite the earthiness of its subject, Byl turns the words of work into found poetry ("brake on, choke on, pull, pull, fire"), offering a bridge for readers to those "who would not speak like this themselves"—a beautiful memoir of muscle and metal." —*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

"A beguiling journey of self-discovery." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Here is a love story that encompasses wild country, skillful labor, hand tools, crusty workmates, and lingo formal and foul. As a woman, and a small one at that, the author must persuade the males on her crews that she can more than hold her own at hiking, trail-building, and swearing. She begins by convincing the man who becomes her husband, and ends by convincing the reader. You'll find plenty to relish here, in a narrative that's gritty, witty, and wise." —Scott Russell Sanders, author of *A Conservationist Manifesto*

"Christine Byl has been summering on trail crews for more than a decade and a half. A first-rate storyteller, she details the techniques and tools, and the spirit of fellowship and feel of the woods. If you love getting into the back country, or even if you're an armchair backpacker as I am now at age eighty, you'll love *Dirt Work*." —William Kittredge, author of *Hole in the Sky* and *The Nature of Generosity*

"Every denizen of wild places from Lao Tse to St. Francis to Rachel Carson to black bears to field mice has depended upon trails. But rarely have we considered the people, tools, or toil that lay our favorite trails down. *Dirt Work* is a spectacular correction of this omission. Imbued with a tough-minded, ribald reverence for honest labor that brings to mind a female Gary Snyder or Wendell Berry (if you can imagine that!), Christine Byl does epic justice to the whole-bodied satisfactions that come of staying out in the weather, staying alert, and working one's ass off for others with love, tenacity and skill." —David James Duncan, author of *The River Why* and *Sun House*

"Byl's is not a world of groomed nature, inert tools, or nostalgic rituals, but a vibrant landscape inhabited by people and animals and layered by idea and history. She means this book as a love song, she writes, and it is, not only from her to her fellow laborers, but from the mind to the body, the hand to the tool, the human to the wild." —Sherry Simpson, author of *The Accidental Explorer: Wayfinding in Alaska*

"While Byl does not romanticize nature or her work, she skillfully uses poetic language, daring the reader to feel the grit, grim, and sore muscles of working ten hour shifts digging, chopping, clearing, and creating trails... *Dirt Work* is highly recommended for readers who love the outdoors, and especially those who have hiked in a national park or forest, and benefited from the hard work of trail crews." —*Women's Adventure Magazine*

"Our work speaks for us,' Byl writes, speaking on behalf of all traildogs, who seldom brag about what they do. And it speaks volumes for this woodswoman and wordsmith." —*High Country News*

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