

Why does everything have to last? . . . Just because something doesn't last doesn't mean it didn't work.

Woody and Leroi have been friends their whole lives. Then Leroi falls in with the crew that cooks every Sunday in the park, learning about traveler symbols and how to slice a cucumber, and Woody starts to snort the pills he'd only been selling. He makes art: beautiful protest signs and business cards for a woman he knows as Stasia and others know as a white nationalist leader trying to take over their town. Stasia bought the barn with an antique printing press in it, the Vandercook No. 4; she says Woody can use it anytime. What does she want in return?

This is the story of a small Appalachian town called Avalon, Ohio. It's the story of Leroi and Woody—an aspiring vagabond and a reluctant artist. Their moms, Sharon and Eloise—a wry social worker and an earnest town librarian. Emma and Amber—new mothers with very different parenting styles. Matt and Lewis—soldiers and newspapermen. Sylvester and the punks at Food Not Bombs. Angie and the bikers at the Lucky 13. Stasia and the true believers at Nation Awake.

This is the story of America and all the things that have been happening here since the Europeans arrived. It's about then and now, invasive species and stolen myths, the town square and the public library, Jo-Ann Fabrics and somewhere called the Discipline Café. It's about twelve-point Cheltenham Regular No. 64J and old symbols made new. It's about monsters and trucks and monster trucks, Nazis and antifascists and well-meaning activists. It's about brute force and slow pressure, holding hands and the way that separation isn't just inevitable, but the point. It's about how we're fighting the same battles, year after decade, caught up in cycles of violence, addiction, politics, and resistance. And it's about how we live with it all, live with ourselves, and try to keep it moving.

In *Avalon, Rise*, Madeline fitch calls together a novel rooted in the collective, a novel about the hard work of hope, the quiet light of agitation, and how things don't change, but maybe people do. Maybe. Let's see.

Madeline fitch is the author of the novel *Stay and Fight*, a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award, a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, and a Lambda Literary Prize, as well as the story collection *Valparaiso, Round the Horn*. She cofounded the punk theater company Missoula Oblongata and was part of the rural direct action collective Appalachia Resist, which took as its commitments environmental and racial justice. Her writing has appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Paris Review*, *Tin House*, *Granta*, and *n+1*, among other publications. She is the recipient of a Creative Capital State of the Art Prize and two O. Henry Prizes, and her writing was included in *The Best American Short Stories 2024*. She lives with her children in the hills of Appalachian Ohio.

Read by Brittany Bradford



Runtime: 11h. 3m. • Unabridged

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31999 Aurora Road, Solon, OH 44139 USA
Designed in Ohio. Made in China.
www.playaway.com

The Playaway format is recommended for children ages 5 and up.

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ISBN 978-1-250-50527-9



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Avalon, Rise
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Adult



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