

Abstract

As a former instructor of Philosophy and Religion at a local college and a married man, Wilberforce (Wilby) Inselberg spent his days reading student essays and dutifully going on date nights with his dear wife, Evelyn, but what he wanted most out of life was “deliberately *not* to live” it-- at least, not in that way. In the summer of 2009, during the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, Wilby divorces his wife, quits his job and escapes to the north Georgia mountains where he rents a cabin near Lake Winfield Scott to seek solace and solitude. Like a later-day Henry David Thoreau, Wilby intends to become an independent, self-sufficient man by cultivating a vegetable garden, perhaps, or teaching himself ancient Greek and recording his thoughts on all manner of subjects. Wilby’s idyllic plans soon give way to chaos after a series of chance encounters with a trio of locals: his landlord’s inquisitive son, Donnie; a volatile Iraq War veteran named Hamilton; and Victoria, an artistic young woman who makes journals from old hardback books and tends bar in a small town down the mountain. Wilby’s attraction to Victoria draws him down the mountain and into a one-way conflict with a successful, yet vain town councilman, who is having an affair with her.

It is through Wilby’s journaling that his younger brother Reeve -- himself on the verge of embracing the domestic tranquility that Wilby has just let go -- learns of these exploits, which become the basis of a thesis (a not so great work of American literature) for a creative writing degree years later. Stitching together the narrative of Wilby’s life in the mountains, Reeve ruminates on his brother’s malfunctioning yet not quite failed attempts at being a man. He is at once unimpressed by Wilby’s seeming inability to understand a thing about himself or the world around him, yet compelled to chronicle his haphazard heroism. Wilby dives drunkenly into a scheme to get even with the councilman by stealing his nameplate at the bar where Victoria

works. To complete the mission, Wilby must enlist Donnie and Hamilton's help and resurrect a college prank organization called the Animal Apostasy.

Inselberg is a comic novel that features ample proof of Wilby's faltering valor filtered through the thoughts and feelings of his inconspicuous younger brother as narrator. It is both a critical and compassionate account of one man's problems with the most rudimentary elements of manhood. However, by banding into a group of similarly-unsettled misfits, Wilby realizes that no man can be an island unto himself, that brotherhood might be the better option. Even Reeve can't help but play a part in his brother's revenge plot so it is four animals that descend from the mountain, infiltrate the bar to lift the councilman's nameplate and disappear. With the caper a success, Wilby takes his place among the brotherhood of man and finds the courage to live again.