



Shouting at the Sky: Troubled Teens and the Promise of the Wild

Gary Ferguson

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Nature as few have imagined it: Utah, a windswept desert thick with spring, the flash of primrose, treeless hills, canyons shining in the sun. And in the distance, all but lost in these great sweeps of rock and sky, a group of teenagers, fresh out of suburban America, are struggling desperately to build new lives-beyond crack and crystal mete, beyond sadness, beyond a pain that has brought many to the brink of self-destruction.

In *Shouting at the Sky*, award-winning writer Gary Ferguson is once again bound for the back-country, this time to spend a season in one of the country's most remarkable programs for troubled teens. Here you'll share in the daily triumphs and heartaches of an unforgettable group of kids. Witness their shock at the wilderness, outrageous with its bluster and open spaces, its lack of bathrooms and cooked meals, its absence of television, malls and old friends. Huddle with them on moonlit nights around a juniper fire. Sit for an afternoon on a canyon rim in the middle of nowhere and listen to their stories and poems: tales of anorexia and amphetamines, of depression and workaholic parents, of the grating fear that will not let them be.

Shouting at the Sky is a story resplendent with glimpses into power of the human spirit and the healing that is possible when the beauty and challenges of the wild are linked to it. But along these trails can also be found issues of striking gravity: insights into how young lives can go terribly wrong and, in the end, how many of our fondest hopes for tomorrow and teetering on the brink, waiting for us to find the will, the courage to build more genuine connections to our children.

"I can't imagine being broken down without a wild place to fall apart in," Ferguson writes. So this is also a very personal account of his participation as an observer, leader, and storyteller in the rites of passage these teenagers undergo in the Utah desert. It is a story of individuals, counselors and participants alike, grown-ups and youths, sharing the struggle to find themselves.

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