



# Young Widower: A Memoir (River Teeth Literary Nonfiction Prize)

*John W. Evans*

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John W. Evans was twenty-nine years old and his wife, Katie, was thirty. They had met in the Peace Corps in Bangladesh, taught in Chicago, studied in Miami, and were working for a year in Romania when they set off with friends to hike into the Carpathian Mountains. In an instant their life together was shattered. Katie became separated from the group. When Evans finally found her, he could only watch helplessly as she was mauled to death by a brown bear.

In such a love story, such a life story, how could a person ever move forward? That is the question Evans, traumatized and restless, confronts in this book as he learns the language of grief, the rhetoric of survival, and the contrary algorithms of holding fast and letting go. His memories of Katie and their time together, and the strangeness of his life with her family in the year after her death, create an unsentimental but deeply moving picture of loss, the brutality of nature, and the unfairness of needing to narrate a story that nothing can prepare a person to tell.

Told with unyielding witness, elegance, and care, *Young Widower* is a heartbreaking account of a senseless tragedy and the persistence of grief in a young person's life.

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