



The Dog Runner

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Reviewer:

[Matthew Martin](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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With increasing numbers of children and young people taking part in climate change protests, Bren MacDibble's new thriller feels particularly topical and important. It is set in a near-future Australia in a world in which all grasses, including wheat and oats, have been destroyed by a fungus. The population is in virtual lock down, waiting for the army to distribute supplies. With food extremely scarce there's a horribly plausible sense of society on the brink of breakdown. Ella lives with her dad and half-brother Emery, plus their dogs Maroochy, Wolf and Bear, until her father goes out to look for her scientist mum and doesn't return. Emery decides the two of them will leave the town with the dogs and make their way to his own mother in the country. He's sure that his side of the family, a mix of Afghan and indigenous Australian, will have found a way to feed themselves and that his father and Ella's mother can follow them there.

The situation in the city was tense and claustrophobic but there are even more dangers on their journey across open countryside in a cart pulled by the dogs. The two children run into fellow countrymen driven to do terrible things and when Emery is injured, Ella has to make all the decisions herself. While MacDibble presents a terrifying vision of how precarious our society is, the love and loyalty of the dogs provide reassurance and comfort for readers as well as for Ella.

This is an excellent survivalist adventure story and makes thrilling reading, while also highlighting key environmental issues. There's a clear message about the importance of working together to find ways to reverse the damage we are causing to the natural world and while the book doesn't shy away from presenting the reality of what we are facing, the abiding message is still one of hope and humanity's resilience. Well-written, thought-provoking stuff.

Read our [Q&A interview with Bren MacDibble](#) [4].

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