

Now We Shall Be Entirely Free by Andrew Miller

5 stars

A man runs away from his past...

This brilliant historical novel is set in 1809, a turbulent time in Europe with the Napoleonic wars at their height. The hero, John Lacroix, returns to England after the retreat from Corunna, a broken man both physically and mentally.

Once returned to health he decides he cannot face going back to the fight and instead sets out on a journey to the Scottish Isles where he hopes to pursue his love of music and poetry.

The opening atmospheric chapters have you gripped from the start with their harrowing account of the journey through a storm of this soldier, scarcely alive, as he is delivered back to his ancestral home. The housekeeper Nell nurses him back to physical health, but he has been mentally damaged by what he has been through. A terrible massacre committed by the retreating armies in which he was somehow involved is haunting him and has now put his life in further peril. An inquiry in Spain into this incident has been made, and a vicious English Corporal and a Spanish Officer are despatched with orders to track down and kill the Captain, John Lacroix. Unaware of this, he sets out on his travels, an adventure that takes him on a perilous sea trip to Glasgow and finally to a small commune on a remote Scottish island.

The plot is highly detailed, with all the settings, from the battles in Spain to an operating theatre in a Glasgow hospital, brought to life and written with great authenticity. This beautiful book is part thriller, and part love story and the tension of the chase is maintained to the very end.

The question always hangs over the narrative, will John Lacroix find redemption in his quest to be 'entirely free'?

This wonderful book was a joy to read, and I thoroughly recommend it.

Jane

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.