



In conversation with
LILY BRAUN-ARNOLD, author of

THE LAST BOOKSTORE ON EARTH

This is your YA debut. What inspired you to write a story for young readers?

I am a young reader! When I was writing *The Last Bookstore on Earth*, I was seventeen and couldn't imagine writing a novel for adults because I didn't consider myself one yet. And I wanted to write something that reflected the way I was feeling about the future and the world around me as a teenager. As a young adult, it made the most sense for me to write a story for other young adults.

You are an experienced bookseller. In what ways did your work at Watchung Booksellers influence this story?

This book wouldn't exist if I hadn't worked at Watchung Booksellers. When I was in high school, the bookstore was a constant in my life. No matter what was going on, whether it be math finals or college decisions, I could always count on the bookstore and the people in it to cheer me up or calm me down. Liz's bookstore functions the same way for her—despite what has happened to the world around her, she still can rely on her bookstore.

With the topic of climate change dominating headlines, *The Last Bookstore on Earth* is as much environmental suspense as it is contemporary apocalypse. What message do you hope readers will take from the story?

I hope that *The Last Bookstore on Earth* will help to shift the sense of numbness that some people feel in relation to climate change. It's hard to grapple with the large scope of the effects of the climate crisis and because of this, it sometimes feels as though

the only option we have is to pretend that it doesn't exist. Hopefully *The Last Bookstore on Earth* will remind readers of what's at stake: the destruction that climate change can cause—and has caused.

Where would we find you at the end of the world?

At home! Unlike Liz, I don't think I'd be able to leave my house. I need to be near my bookshelves, my Unbeatable Squirrel Girl collection, and my various musical instruments. I'm a highly sentimental person, so I don't think I'd be able to leave that all behind. Hopefully, I'd be able to turn it into something self-sustaining . . . although I might have to rip up my dad's prized garden in order to grow some food!

