



Winterswim

Ryan W. Bradley

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Pastor Sheldon Long was born of the woods, raised in a secluded cabin by a mute mother and an abusive father who preached God's vengeance. Forced to take control of his own destiny, Pastor Long found God in his own way, melded with the mythologies of his mother's tribe. Now he's out to send the wicked, as he has judged them, to heaven.

Steven, Pastor Long's son, is simultaneously pining for his former babysitter who has moved to Hollywood and crushing on nearly every girl he goes to school with. Soon his preoccupation with the opposite sex lures him into investigating a string of drownings that local police are declaring accidents.

Ryan W. Bradley's novella weaves religiosity and mythology into a tale of drugs, sex, and murder set against the frozen backdrop of blue-collar Alaska.

Winterswim Details

Date : Published December 8th 2014 by Civil Coping Mechanisms

ISBN :

Author : Ryan W. Bradley

Format : Paperback 174 pages

Genre : Fiction, Audiobook, Novels

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From Reader Review Winterswim for online ebook

Benoit Lelièvre says

Short, but potent and precise.

Ryan W. Bradley is both one of the most unique and most readable new talents in literature. Using a handful of carefully selected words, Bradley tells the claustrophobic drama of Steven, a young, isolated and alienated young man caught in a timeless small town, lost in the snow. Bradley's prose has a kaleidoscopic meaning though and reflects on subjects that go from violence and drugs to cosmology and the origins of mankind.

There are a lot of people who try to write books like WINTERSWIM out there, but few succeed with the clarity of vision Ryan W. Bradley shows. It's not a particularly emotional novel (although it has its moments), but it's a dark and multifaceted tale that'll satisfy the more cerebral readers, such as myself.

Ben says

Still coating our brain.

More - <http://bentanzer.blogspot.com/2015/01...>

Brian Alan Ellis says

Winterswim is a wild, breezily-paced not-quite-crime thriller about a son who suspects his father, a meth-smoking preacher, of murdering young women. Couldn't put it down, read it in one whole sitting, and got creeped out, am still creeped out. Powerful.

John says

This was a quick read. However, that should not be the sign of a simple story. Too many readers fall into the trap judging a book by how many pages there are. The real thing to judge is did the author effectively tell the story. Ryan W. Bradley's writing is an example of efficient use of language to tell a story with precision. I find his use similar in a way to the late Robert B. Parker. They both avoid over description and additional adjectives to move their stories.

The Prologue of only three pages grabbed me, effectively establishing the tone and mood that will play out through the book. It made me wanted to read more of the story. Plus, it does not give away the plotline that is coming. Why is the preacher sending women to their death in the frozen lakes of Alaska?

Another thing on the writing is that many authors think you need multiple characters along with their subplots to tell a complex story. Here the writer proves that is not the case. This is the story of meth-addled preacher and his teenage son who are increasing distant from each other and how the return of a local actress falls into that. It is also a tale about the how a person's morals are formed. How desire can alter those morals in how they are acted upon and the consequences that come out them.

This is the second book from Ryan. I was surprised at how different this was from his first book Code for Failure. It is good sign he does not to write from a narrow subject area or approach. Thus, I am curious to see where goes in his next book. If there is one to come.

David says

I was just going to read a little of this before going to bed, but I read right through instead before I knew what was happening. In a very short space Bradley takes us somewhere incredibly brutal and dark, yet almost elegantly delicate in a way with a slight touch of the fable. It's quick, powerful, and shockingly vivid. Not a single word is out of place. It certainly isn't pleasant, but it's also certainly good.

Xian Xian says

Won in a TNBBC Giveaway. Thank you!

Here's the other Bradley in the small press world. I feel like both Bradleys are kind of underrated. And honestly, I've never read anything by the Ryan one. Here is my first and it won't be my last, because I freaking enjoyed the living hell out of it. I believe I read this in three days.

Winterswim is a thriller and this genre, along with noir, is something I don't read too often. I'm actually in the process of reading a noir by Pablo D'Stair and Chris Rhatigan, called you don't exist, a novella duo. So I guess this Bradley novel has opened me up into a world where there's some good stuff, because I honestly can't stand most mystery novels, I find them boring sometimes, and I've already figured who dun it, but the author slows it down so it could be publishable for the big four, make 400 or 500 pages, instead of 200 or 150. A perfect example of a mystery that I had mixed feelings with, bored and a bit of thrill, was Jane Casey's *The Burning*.

Bradley uses a sparse prose that makes you imagine things for yourself, that echoes a sort of narrator that tells it as it is with a sort confused feeling of should I bow down and cry or should I move on because this has all happened before. The narrator is some kid who lives in some odd little town in the middle of nowhere. The people there seem to be bored out of their minds, there is absolutely no crime there too, until a bunch of young girls are murdered. Each girl is connected to the narrator somehow, by sight, by classroom, or by hookup.

He is the detective of the novel, without actually being a detective. The police officers either don't care or they just didn't know, which makes me wonder now, if they knew all along and they just let it slide, since the one committing the murders was a charismatic, delusional, alcoholic, drug addicted priest, then why did they let it happen? They just didn't care is the answer? This whole thing kind of reminded me of the crime portion of the novel, 2666. Which I haven't finished yet. Much like Bolaño, this minimalistic prose kind of makes this all creepy, with it's "Oh hey, here's that dead body, now sweat and pant, because it's scary and it's there." I'm not really sure what I'm trying to convey here, but yeah.

Maybe music has finally taken it's toll on my thoughts. But anyway, the short chapters also made this suspense build up and increase with it's snow and it's darkness, sweat and dirt, and dead bodies. I really loved this. I have one problem with it though, and it's the women in the novel. I am sort of confused as to why every woman wanted to sleep with the priest. Was he that charismatic and handsome that even little teens

wanted a piece of him. Is everybody that bored in this little town that little teen girls get horny over smoke? Did I miss something? Replace "Fancy" in Iggy Azalea's song, "Fancy," with horny and there you go, every female in this novel. I'm not making a feminist thing, I was just confused, this is my first Bradley and apparently this isn't uncommon in some of his books?

Yeah, anyway, this novel is probably going to be on my faves of 2014. I didn't have too many faves this year, maybe earlier in the year, but throughout school, everything was sort of "meh." But this short novel is perfect in its form and genre. Light and fleeting, dark with soil and ice, and an ending that is oddly the most peaceful death for a villain I've ever read so far in a noir.

Rating: 4.5/5

Originally Posted here: <http://wordsnotesandfiction.blogspot....>

Dan Coxon says

Really enjoyed this icy slice of winter noir. Short, dark, and utterly gripping, like Jim Thompson meets Twin Peaks. Loved the setting and the atmosphere particularly, and the tension was nicely handled. A wintry treat.

Hosho says

Another dark, twisted offering from Bradley -- a David Lynch kind of vibe, in Alaska, with lots of snow and ice. The book reads at a break-neck pace -- and takes no prisoners as it does. If meth-addled sexually-criminal church leaders put you off, then this isn't your book. But if you like the Nihilistic edge of True Detective, chances are you'll like the same Nihilistic edges in WINTERSWIM. So jump in -- and when the sun goes down in Alaska, it stays down!

David Bridges says

This was a quick but great read for me, I read it in one sitting. Bradley created a very dark world in Alaska. The main premise being a young boy discovers his father is a meth smoking serial killer. Not only that, he is a Pastor that drugs and abuses young women from his congregation. There are some gruesome scenes in the book. I appreciated the fact that Bradley goes there. I think I would call it Transgressive Noir? Is that a thing? Anyways if your a fan of other hardcore rural novellas like I am then this is right up your alley. Matter of fact it has been a good era for hardcore rural novellas like Katherine Faw Morris' Young God, J David Osborne's Low Down Death Right Easy, or anything by Brian Allen Carr. If you are a fan of any that I listed then I suggest you give Winterswim a try. As I also said I think Winterswim has a transgressive streak because most of the book is the transposition of religion and sex and drugs. I think this would also appeal to fans of Dennis Cooper and Blake Butler as well. I will say that all the comparisons should not take away from Bradley's originality because Winterswim does stand on its own.

Steph Post says

A gorgeous, dark, twisted, brutal, well-crafted tale. Stark, yet lyrical, Winterswim packs a punch and will leaving you gasping. Not for the faint of heart, but certainly for anyone craving a read that takes it to the edge... and beyond.

Lori says

Read 9/30/14 - 10/7/14

4 Stars - Strongly Recommended to those who desire their indie lit dark and mysterious

Pages: 138

Publisher: Civil Coping Mechanisms

Releasing: December 2014

Ryan W Bradley's arrestingly designed upcoming novel Winterswim shocks the system in much the same way that being immersed under freezing cold waves would. Gasping and sputtering, his sparse language pulls you under from the very first page:

"There were a few inches of snow on the ground and more falling. The pastor walked to the edge of the lake cautiously, dragging the girl, naked but for a pair of white ankle socks, behind him."

Though incredibly different from anything he's written before, Winterswim still contains much of what we love about Ryan - gritty sex scenes, tons of underage drugs, that comfortable uncomfortableness we've come to know - and now, this... a new element of murder....

Within its pages, we are introduced to Pastor Sheldon, a man who has decided to take the Lord's work into his own hands; judging for himself those who are full of sin and in need of his intervention to become clean and worthy of heaven once more. His understanding of religion is unorthodox - a mix of his abusive father's sermons and his mute mother's tribal beliefs - and his method of cleansing, a sin itself. One that he is willing to commit. One that he believes to be incredibly necessary.

At the same time, we are introduced to Steven, Sheldon's son, and his pensive infatuations with every hot girl who attends his school. Though, suddenly, those girls begin turning up in the local mortuary, pulled from the frozen lakes that border the town. The word on the street is that they were accidental drownings, but Steven's not so sure. Enlisting the help of Kate, an old crush of his who's recently returned from Hollywood, they decide to investigate and the clues they uncover begin to lead them in a direction neither one could predict.

A lightening quick read that sobers you up as it drags you down, Winterswim showcases the psychotic side of religion and the lasting, devastating scars of familial abuse. Gone is the sweet, heart-wrenching, incredibly sexy poetry I first came to know Bradley through. Here instead he has birthed a monster, one who is called intensely by powers outside of (and within) himself, prowling his congregation for willing victims to whom he can play savior and saint.

If nothing else, it'll cause your lady parts to curl up and hide, and cause you to look at religious figures a tad bit differently in the future.

Amie's Book Reviews says

I received a free electronic copy of WINTERSWIM from the author in exchange for an honest review. I also agreed to take part in a group discussion about this book on Goodreads.

Pastor Sheldon Long knows better than anyone that there is evil in the world. He is the sole Pastor for his church which is located in the small town of Wasilla, Alaska. Pastor Long is looked up to by the members of the community, who are especially grateful for his dedication to helping troubled teenagers to choose a better path in life. He is so committed to helping these troubled teens that he even conducts one-on-one counselling sessions with a select few.

Pastor Long was raised in seclusion by an abusive religious fanatic father and a quiet Tlingit Indian mother who spent years being beaten by her husband. His father's obsession with religion shaped the young Sheldon's view of the world, and not in a good way.

The Pastor is now a widower with a teenage son, to whom he pays very little attention.

As the son of a Pastor, Steven was expected to act a certain way. He had never been the kind of child who got into trouble. At seventeen he still harbored a secret crush on a local girl named Kate who was a few years older and had once been his babysitter. Kate left Wasilla and became an actress, but Steven still thought about her.

When the bodies of two local girls are found in nearby lakes, no one seems to think anything of it. Of course, the town's residents mourn their passing and appeal to others to be careful around the water. But, Steven seems to think something else is going on.

By the time a third body is discovered, Steven has decided to take it upon himself to discover exactly what is happening in Wasilla. At the same time Kate returns for a visit to her hometown between movie shoots. When she runs into Steven he decides to let her in on his theory.

After that secrets are revealed, dark and horrific truths come to light and Steven is the middle of everything.

Just what is happening in Wasilla? Is there a serial killer on the loose? And if so, who is it? And can the killer be stopped before the death toll rises even higher?

WARNING – This book contains graphic sexual scenes, scenes with violence and instances of drug use. This book is recommended for mature readers only!

I rate this book as 4 out of 5 stars. It is a horror/noir/psychological thriller that will give you nightmares.

POTENTIAL SPOILER ALERT – Stop reading this review now if you do not want to read any spoilers about WINTERSWIM.

I found that this book was well written with short, concise sentences and in a no-nonsense style. The rape scenes definitely made me cringe, but I think if a reader does not cringe while reading a rape scene then there is something wrong.

I think the author did a terrific job of illustrating how living through abuse as a child (both mental and physical) can twist and warp an individual's Psyche. I think he also did a great job including the use of meth and the affects that drug can have on a person's behavior. Of course, not all abused children become multiple-murderers and not everyone who uses meth will go out and rape and kill women, but using meth will damage your brain and can cause all kinds of behaviors that could be seen as "crazy."

Until reading this book I had never heard of the Tlingit Indians and I was fascinated by the myth that was

used in this book. I would be interested in learning more about this tribe in the future and possibly even reading a book that includes more aspects of their culture, their beliefs and their mythology.

By choosing a Pastor as the killer, I am sure the author will anger some readers. However, my preemptive response to negative comments on that topic is that obviously Pastor Sheldon Long is not real. Even if we are to take his character at face value, he never did have a true calling to religion. He used religion as a way to feed his own dark desires. In fact, even Pastor Long does not really see himself as a true man of God.' He states "Say anything with enough confidence and people will fall for it hook, line, and sermon." That shows that he was using the Church as a means to an end. His position as Pastor gave him unprecedented access to vulnerable young women. Unfortunately this tactic has been used by predators for many years. Predators seek out positions that give them authority over their potential victims in real life just like Sheldon Long does in this book. The one part of this plot line that I disliked was how quickly he was able to coerce the girls into having sex and smoking meth with him. Generally predators groom their victims over a long period of time. I had a hard time believing that all these teenage girls were so quick to jump into bed with him. This might have been believable if it was a single girl, but multiple young teenage girls, all living in the same small town, all willing to get high and have sex with an 'old' man, it defies belief (and probability). However, I do see that it was a necessary plot point.

I did love the descriptions of Wasilla and the surrounding area. The author's descriptions of small-town Wasilla, Alaska comes across as so real because the author actually grew up in the town that this book is based on. I loved that Kate was always seen as a 'city girl' despite being raised in Wasilla due to the fact that she did not like ATVing, fishing, skiing or hunting. This is typical of attitudes in remote locales. Locals cannot fathom why anyone wouldn't love doing all those types of activities. This detail adds one more note of authenticity to the story.

In conclusion, this book is worth reading as long as you are not easily offended or easily shocked.

Favorite Quote From The Book: "He wondered if there was an 'Autopsies For Dummies book."

To read more of my reviews, visit <http://amiesbookreviews.WordPress.com>

Rusty says

Ryan W. Bradley's *Winterswim* is a cold shot any way you think about it. Set in Wasilla Alaska, the story alternates between ever-crazier methhead preacher Sheldon bringing people to the Lord in his own inimitable and terrifying way, and his teenage son Steven, who finds out that his father has, well, a few problems. The process by which Steven finds out about Sheldon is the bulk of this slim volume, and the ending is as inevitable as any you'll ever read. It's told in measured, careful prose, with horrific details rendered in minimalist technicolor. It's not a book for the Oprah set, but instead for fans of the quietly transgressive material made possible since Ellis's *American Psycho*.

Nate Carter says

Combine the spare prose of Carver, the somewhat obsessive sexual imagery of Bukowski, and the unforgiving narrative horror of Ketchum to create the feel you get from this quick read novella. Bradley ponders on one page and shocks on the next. I'll be reading more from him soon.

Alan Engstrom says

An excellent dark look into the sins of a small town preacher and his sins.

Definitely not for the faint of heart. However, Ryan Bradley takes a brave challenge to tell it how it is.

A great short book that will leave you amazed at the darkness that lingers among the characters. Every page is as important as the next.

When you are done, you are hoping for more!
