

# LINDSAY WINCHERAUK

BOOK THOUGHTS

volume 2



# BOOK THOUGHTS

**BATCH 22**  
BATCH 22



1. A KID CALLED CHATTER - CHRIS KELLY
2. HOOPED - MICHAEL BAINS

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

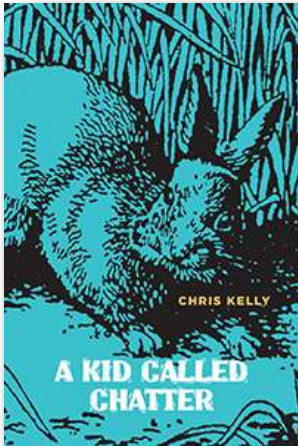
**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

# A KID CALLED CHATTER

CHRIS KELLY



*A KID CALLED CHATTER enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) stories from a fresh perspective*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A dying Jackrabbit walks up to an orphan →

There is no punch line.

What happened to unwanted kids 80. 90. 100 years ago → today?

All they'll ever know is a dystopia, regardless of the period.

What happens to kids today from solid homes?

Screen time → they live in dystopia; the only thing is, they don't know it.

1

What's the difference between the two?

The unwanted must learn to survive, at all costs, regardless of belonging, whereas the wanted flounders in a desperate quest for likes.

The unwanted must grow up, fend for themselves, and try to assign meaning to life while living a savage existence.

As for the wanted, if they're not given precisely what they desire, that's okay; they discard what they don't like and start over fresh and unscathed.

**A KID CALLED CHATTER** enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) story from a fresh perspective. Think: Hunger Games meets Maze Runner wrestles with Divergent → with a twist → the backstory of the kids in **CHATTER** is desperation cloaked in the cruelty of being orphaned. Sure, the kids in the stories mentioned are orphans as well, but **CHATTER** starts out desperate as the kids are forced to search frantically for anything to hold on to → as a dying animal walks up to **CHATTER** looking for the comfort of death.

Like other dystopian stories, there may be a hierarchy, but in **CHATTER** it can only be found in the individual souls of those who've started life in a dystopian world.

That's how **CHATTER** made me feel.

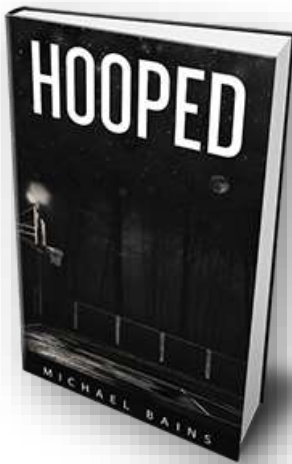
WRITTEN: 17 May 2022

# HOOPED

MICHAEL BAINS

*Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



Hooped is an important book tackling a subject plaguing today's youth in this ever-evolving, desperate, fast-paced world.

Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable as he tells the story of Jimmy, a high school basketball star who, like most teenagers, is trying to find his place in the world → as he battles with the directions life is pulling him. Bains's messaging is strong. The parts where Jimmy battles with thoughts meandering through his mind are compelling. And Bains's portrayal of a world where support networks are all around us is vitally important for today's kids to help them navigate life and

understand support is there for them, if only they open their eyes. Bains's message is positive, helping us cheer for Jimmy to find the right voices and overcome the temptation of easy money (drug dealing), hoping he finds a higher purpose to pursue.

But.

Bains's efforts to paint a cultural element into Hoops fails. Readers would never know Jimmy was of Indian descent until Bains tells us. Telling readers Jimmy's mother loved watching his child eat being a cultural thing Caucasians wouldn't understand has a propensity to add to the stereotype Caucasians are happy to glom on → us, Caucasians may have come a long way in stamping down patriarchy, but we are not immune. Just look at the US Supreme Court. A mother loving feeding her children has nothing to do with culture.

Hooped is a good book. It could have been great if only it had avoided the stereotypes and the (fortunately only occasionally) juvenile descriptions of the looks and anatomy of certain characters. If you want to avoid stereotypes, it might be prudent to shy away from perpetuating them.

That's how this book made me feel.

WRITTEN: 13 May 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 21



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3. **BYSTANDER - MIKE STEEVES**
4. **BOY | IN THE | BLUE HAMMOCK - DARREN GROTH**
5. **UNREST - EMMA Côté**
6. **THIS BRIGHT FUTURE - BOBBY HALL**
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10. **HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY)**
11. **GOOD MOM ON PAPER**
12. **LOU WHO? - LOUISE JOHNSON**

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

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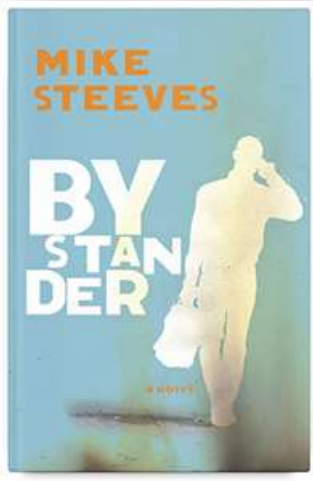
**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

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# BYSTANDER

MIKE STEEVES



*This Might be the Best Read of the Year!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I crack the book open.

**Page 1:** A smile breaks on my face.

It won't leave me. I haven't felt this joyful in a long time.

Peter Simon is a mess, beyond the messiest of messes. He wants to be a hero, → thinking he'd be more than worthy if the right crisis moment presented.

But in reality, his mind is rioting in disarray. Peter wants to be the star in his life story as his stream of consciousness flows, no, blasts through his mind in tsunami after tsunami of what he really is → milquetoast to the nth degree. Plus 1.

We're all conflicted.

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On the one hand, we want to get off life's sidelines and make a difference.

On the other, we realize we're not the main character in our own life, but instead, we have a bit part.

Loners constantly update their Social Media + read long-form articles as they desperately work at nothing but blending in. Gentrification attacks us all, hyperbolic on steroids. Unfortunately, there is no place to hide.

Our minds race.

Why am I laughing at a breaking mind? I'm lonely. Every page I read is about someone I know, or about me, my dreams, hopes, fears, and wondering who wants to sleep with me?

*Is city life about hiding?*

This might be the best read of the year.

**Page 253:** I'm still smiling.

I close the book, I'm spent, in a good way!

We all want to be heroes → but why bother?

Tomorrow brings a new day.

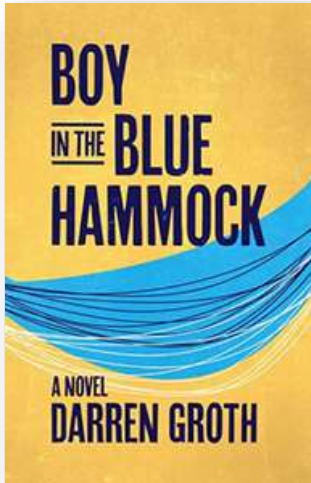
WRITTEN: 19 April 2022

# BOY | IN THE | BLUE HAMMOCK

DARREN GROTH

*Boy | in the | Blue Hammock is worthy of classic status.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



The classic book **The Road (Cormac McCarthy)** is one of my favourite books. A boy and father navigate a dystopian landscape. Survival is the only goal.

Switch out the father for Tao (Dog) → and Groth takes us on a heart-wrenching ride through a fracturing world. A world where a failed service dog and an autistic teenager face a gauntlet of division and hatred.

**Slide over The Road;** *there is a new book nudging past you on my favourite list. Groth's writing is extraordinary, heart-eviscerating, and gripping.* Tao Dog + Boy (Kasper), fights for survival, after Tao (Dog), discovers Man, Woman, and Girl, had been gruesomely murdered. Kasper is the only human family survivor, hiding in the security of his blue hammock, when Tao finds him.

**Boy | in the | Blue Hammock** *is worthy of classic status; every page*

yanked at my emotions → my tears blending with the chills racing through my veins.

We are all judged. The entitled and privileged, walking amongst us, label us, as they tread in the shallow end of life. *Hindered by denial.* All to make them feel more, by tagging others as less. The judgement is flawed. Groth blasts bright lights on the flaws. Tao and Kasper share the beauty of vulnerability, compassion, and empathy. Along the way through their struggles to be, they share the unlimited powers of unconditional.

**Backing up to the entitled,** in the grand scheme of things, they are lacking because, for many, they cannot understand equal is not something to strive for. If they only opened their hearts, they could learn valuable lessons about being human from Boy and Dog.

I was born in a place where women deemed unfit by society were sent to be fixed. If their children survived, they were sold or adopted out, never to be spoken of again. I have carried the crushing weight of the unwanted label and the darkness of stigma attached to it throughout life. I am not comparing my journey to an autistic child. But I understand vulnerability and the piercing eyes of those often looking down on me.

A friend of mine believes homeless people are lazy. My heart cringes. I know life isn't always easy. Especially if people are holding you down.

I'm lucky. Why?

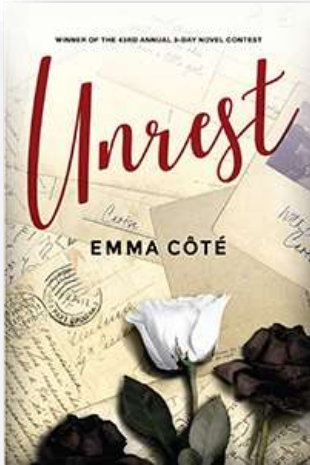
Somehow, I avoided bitterness; instead, finding compassion + empathy and an understanding each person is capable of unconditional if only given a chance. And despite being deemed expendable, I'm still here.

Thanks, Boy, thanks, Dog, you make the world a better place.

WRITTEN: 23 April 2022

# UNREST

EMMA Côté



*Côté's mordant sense of humour is heartwarming.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I feared this book. It's about a woman (mortician) embarking on a trip to find herself and an understanding of her and her mother's frayed relationship → lost in the complexities of living.

How can a small book pack such a powerful punch?

Côté's delicious humour is sprinkled throughout the pages, softening the blow it would deliver to many readers.

I was born in a religion sanctioned home for women deemed wayward, and feeble-minded. If the mothers and babies survived (many didn't—do residential

schools spring to mind?), the babies were usually ripped out of their mother's arms and adopted out to farm families or sold to wealthy couples → never to be spoken of again. A shame to family, community, and religion. I was one of those babies. The night they were coming to take me away (1963), while alongside my mother's deathbed (2016), she confessed she had begged her mother (my mother) to keep me. I was never supposed to know the truth. Confusing? I lived this.

Until I accidentally found out, I watched "my mother" take her last breath, only to find out 16 years later. My life started out as a lie → Hence meeting my real birth mother alongside her deathbed.

The week before her mother died, I had to drive "her mother" to the hospital; we stopped on the steps of our home, and "her mother" looked at me through tear-stained eyes and said, "I'm never going to be home again, am I?"

I lied.

In October 2016, as I walked out of my mother's hospital room, she looked at me through tear-stained eyes and said, "I'm never going to see you again, am I?"

What does any of this have to do with **Unrest**?

**Unrest**, as much as it is a quirky read, it is eons more; it connected profoundly with me, comforted my heart, helping me let go of some of the disdain I have been carrying throughout life toward those who took part in the lie of who I am?

Côté's mordant sense of humour is heartwarming, making this hundred-page book a masterpiece much larger than the page count suggests.

WRITTEN: 30 April 2022



## THIS BRIGHT FUTURE

BOBBY HALL



*Bobby Hall is an exceptional human being who is an exception.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A boy walks through his dangerous neighbourhood, asking people if they have children he can play with. I feel a tug at my heartstrings.

I used to hide in a closet in a make-believe world to remain safe and calm.

*"Donna was super-cool except that she was a chain-smoker and a hard-core drug addict and alcoholic. She loved ginger ale, too, but let's not hold that against her."*

How does any child survive in a world where they need to salvage their soul?

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I've read two Bobby Hall books → and loved them both. Supermarket is an all-time favourite. The world is better because Bobby found the courage and strength to share his fractured childhood. Hall has an unbelievable capacity for empathy and compassion, somehow understanding the unrelenting weight of mental health problems and addiction. He lived it. Every day. There is no reason for his survival. His greatness. His lyricism. It makes little sense he is still with us. He gets that. We're lucky.

In *This Future is Bright*, every word comes from the heart. Not blaming. Page after page, Hall searches to forgive the unforgiving nature of his childhood, inflicted upon him by those supposed to care for him but couldn't escape their selfishness delivered through the destructive disease they've been cursed with.

Equality does not exist in a world where we are constantly being attacked, labelled, and divided.

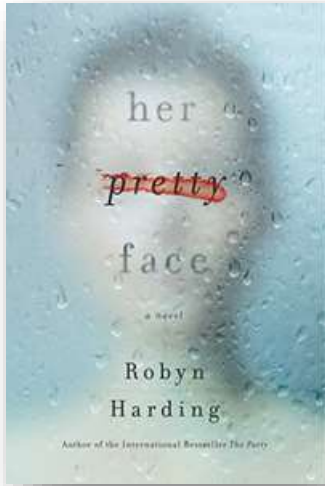
I've read two Bobby Hall books → just before typing my thoughts on this one; I listened to my first Logic track (track? did I just date myself?): 1-800-273-8255 (a song about mental health). Tears welled in my eyes. I'm almost 62.

We are lucky; Bobby Hall is an exceptional human being who is an exception. He had no business surviving his upbringing. But despite all the damage it has wreaked upon him, Hall doesn't blame → instead, he simply tries to understand!

WRITTEN: 25 April 2022

# HER PRETTY FACE

ROBYN HARDING



*Harding is an uncanny storyteller who has this insane ability to draw you in word one.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

This is the second Robyn Harding book I read in the last month. I loved them both. I didn't know what to expect → I thought they both would be light romps suitable for becoming Netflix Productions. They are, but that sells them short.

Harding is an uncanny storyteller who has this insane ability to draw you in word one and keep you engaged until the last word.

It felt like I was driving around the city picking up strangers, and for a block or two, they would share their

side of an unravelling story. Then, when one character would get out, another would immediately hop in → layering and layering this tale to the point where what could easily be fluff morphed it into something far more profound with each page turned.

8

I'm riding with a psychopath, a sociopath, am I (?)

Her best friend hops in, ghosts from her past are chasing her. Her sociopathic friend protects her. They find a love for each other.

Another stop, another character. We are all flawed + damaged. I can relate. Who isn't damaged? I like every character, even the sociopathic psychopath (?)

But that's the thing. Who isn't drawn to madness? A page turns and Harding has us guessing what's next? On every page → *I know what's next?* I'm wrong. I think I know over and over again. Wrong. Wrong. And wrong.

The last word is shared.

The passengers move on.

We're left with deep questions.

Is it okay to be friends with a psychopath? When are debts to society fully paid? Is it our place to judge madness?

Harding is an exceptional storyteller. I read two of her books in a month without being aware she's a friend's sister.

I'm not sure if two Harding books in a month are enough.

WRITTEN: 6 May 2022

# THE PERFECT FAMILY

ROBYN HARDING



*Lies + Secrets rock families to the core.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Let's get this out of the way → definitely a favourite!

Twists, turns, terrifying, delightful → pages flipping.

The two things destroying families the most are:

*What to eat?*

*Financial woes?*

Wrong.

*Lies. Secrets.*

This book hit me hard → my entire life.

9

A father (?) caring too much about image and the thoughts of others, inflicting pain on the family.

A mother (?) burdened by having to shade emotions to not rock the boat.

The pressure to be more → to make the family proud crushes the children. Fuelling them with resentment as the son can't live up to carrying the family torch, and the daughter desperately needs to be loved and noticed. The pain of family deception turns them into outsiders, often walking alone, suffering in individuality. Their every move is watched.

The secrets create division, paranoia → stifling growth.

*Do the right thing?*

Nobody dares to stand up, and the world is out to get them, violently.

*Can you possibly survive? Unite? Overcome?*

I cheer for them.

Perfection is nothing more than a fantasy when the world is against you.

Truth be told, do they get a second chance?

**THE ENDING**

Brilliant!

As for my family's secret (me), I'm okay, I think? → But our family is forever fractured.

WRITTEN: 8 April 2022

## REMNANTS

Céline HUGHYBAERT



*A compelling journey through grief, emphasizing the importance of protecting our fragile souls.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

When I was born, my father was 56. Mum was 46. My friend Tony's mother was 26 years younger than mine. I spent most of my time at Tony's house or Chris's house or →

Dad was an old hard man. He drank + smoked despite suffering a collapsed lung, which turned me into the neighbourhood's anti-smoking advocate in my early teens.

In 1978, Cancer (dad) paid our family a visit. The Big C took our family on a seven-year roller coaster ride with a

revolving door between the hospital and home. I watched dad die the day after turning 25 (1985), with a brother and my mother at my side.

When dad was in the hospital, I visited him at least 1200 times. I don't remember a single visit or conversation. I don't recall many conversations with my father at all.

In 2003, I discovered he wasn't my birth father. I was born in a place of shame. I met my birth father in 2006 over lunch. Two weeks later, I had to inform him he wasn't my birth father, and my father died (figuratively) a second time.

It doesn't matter how I rearrange my photo albums; I can't find a comforting narrative. I hate that reality.

**REMNANTS** is a compelling journey through grief, emphasizing the importance of protecting our fragile souls, bringing an understanding that no matter what we've gone through → it is humbling and human to understand life is complex. The people who were tasked with nurturing us are only humans themselves.

*"There were happy times, but maybe not enough to make up for the unhappy ones. And I understand him better, as I get older. Life is hard."*

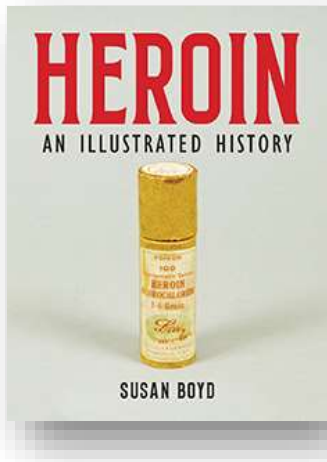
Remnants is a story about forgiveness and framing memories in the best fashion to continue living and hopefully thriving.

I forgive you dad → I just wish I knew who you are?

WRITTEN: 2 May 2022

# HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY)

SUSAN BOYD



*As long as politicians and “moral” leaders can use suffering for their gain...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY) is a gorgeous book.

Susan Boyd is exemplary in tamping down the stigma afflicting not only the usage of Heroin but also all (illegal) substances. This is a vitally important book.

I never thought I would become a neophyte on this controversial subject. But Boyd’s words caused my mind to rattle awake and form thoughts on Heroin, drugs, a racialized legal system, white supremacy, and not to be left out of the mix, the toxicity seeping into the halls of the

morally vapid portions of Christianity. Drug policy is frankly a war on, and against, the poor. From the beginning of time, politicians and religious leaders needed targets to demonize to control their shrinking flocks. An easy target is those suffering in the grips of poverty and not born into birthright. Drug users are not lesser. Life is bleeping hard. All drugs aren’t the same, nor do they affect every user the same way. There is no broad brush.

As long as politicians and religious leaders believe it is a tool in their toolbox to solicit votes of those amongst us on high horses → humanizing those who fall through society’s cracks, don’t have much of a chance.

HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY) has made me hypersensitive to the hypocritical judgement of people I know. People riding through life on high horses, believing somehow, they are immune to life struggles, believing anyone battling addiction did it to themselves and, therefore, deserves no compassion. That sickens me.

As long as politicians and “moral” leaders can use suffering for their gain, how will we ever be able to stamp out racism, white supremacy, poverty, and the rot of misguided religion?

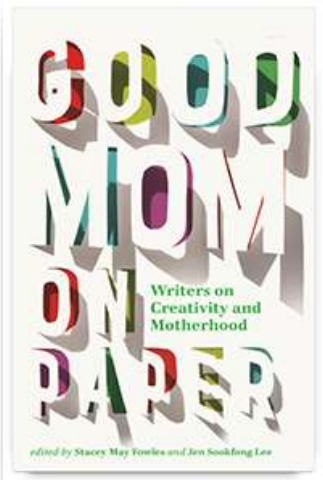
Page 61 could have been taken right out of the RIGHT-WING POLITICAL PLAYBOOK, sorry about the ALLCAPS.

That’s how this book made me feel.

WRITTEN: 10 May 2022

## GOOD MOM ON PAPER

### A COLLABORATION



*Without our courageous, incredible mothers, I'm not sure we'd be here today.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

We live in a patriarchal world.

Women have *been dealt an unfair hand* from the beginning of time.

A man and a woman sit down at the card table.

We deal men two cards, 1) be a man; and 2) do whatever you want.

Of course, I am cut a little slack because I'm a man named Lindsay.

We deal women a laundry list of cards, emphasis on, laundry.

**GOOD MOM ON PAPER** is a vital read for any man, man enough to step up and acknowledge the disparity between their worlds and those of women.

Heck, **WORKING MOTHER**, is a label. WTF.

12 In **GOOD MOM ON PAPER**, we learn about moms. Moms are tasked with an endless list of full-time work: nurturing, child-rearing, cleaning, cooking, working, and on and on and on and on and maybe finding time for writing, all while being forced to hide the fact, they have children. Motherhood is the equivalent of umpteen full-time gigs. Male writers have one task: write, maybe two, get messed up on substances to stoke the creative juices. After all, they say writing comes from suffering.

*But I'm suffering.*

*Keep it down and get back in the kitchen.*

Harsh? Yes. Reality? Mostly.

I met my mother alongside her deathbed, 29 years after I thought I had watched my mother die (a long story).

I have carried anger at the women tasked with raising me throughout my life.

I thought they had failed.

My anger was misdirected.

**GOOD MOM ON PAPER**, makes it abundantly clear, we live in a patriarchal world, and helped me realize the women in my life did the best they could while facing the daunting realities of a patriarchal world.

Without our incredible, courageous mothers, I'm not sure we'd be here today.

Thank you. Keep writing. We need you. I wish you could be dealt fewer cards.

WRITTEN: 4 May 2022

# LOU WHO?

LOUISE JOHNSON



*I learnt Elton John can never have enough flowers.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

There is a 50/50 chance those in the dating pool are dancing with the damaged product of divorce. It's likely more like 57.4/42.6.

Most of us are broken and dragging with us a crushing amount of lifetime baggage. *Life is so bleeping fast now.*

Swipe right. Judge. Swipe left. Ewe. Judge. Judge. Judge. It's a battlefield.

**I hop into a time machine**, transporting me back to a locker room. The alpha commands the stage. We listen in awe. Misogyny rules. His conquests are all perfect physical specimens; each is given a pet name. He is the best lover in the world. We listen in awe.

**Flash forward.** Regardless of gender, → it becomes increasingly acceptable (and the right thing) for women to own their sexuality. The labels attached to being sexually active are becoming gender non-specific. *Not quickly enough?*

Back in the locker room, the one commanding the stage loses interest because 'perfect physicality' and 'great in bed' are → the top of the mountain. Down is the only option afterward.

When did dating become so much work? When did the aftermath of 'perfect' and 'great' become: *Let's map out the rest of our lives together?* Can any potential relationship survive the weight of being in your *twenties*, and the person who is supposed to bring comfort → adds nothing but pressure?

How can someone claim not to be confident and continually say everyone they meet is perfect, and the sex is → when they are the common denominator?

**Lou Who?** Reads like a locker room chat with a friend where misogyny isn't being shunned, but it is embraced, only with the shoe on the other foot.

**Lou Who?** Reads like a projection of *will* without understanding the pinnacle—once reached, it's easier to run downhill instead of trying to align values, hopes, and dreams. For example, 57.4% of marriages end in divorce → *if the burden to be* is too significant (in one's twenties); there is only one way for that number to go.

And why, when claiming cultural awareness, would a line about eyebrows, "*at least not a straight guy,*" be in the book? *A cheap laugh? A sweeping generalization?*

WRITTEN: 12 April 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 20



14

1. BLUEBIRD - GENEVIEVE GRAHAM
2. GIRL IN ICE - ERICA FERENCIK
3. THE BOOK OF SMALLER - ROB MCLENNAN
4. THE EMPLOYEES - OLGA RAVN
5. NEVERWHERE - NEIL GAIMAN
6. THE CANDY HOUSE - JENNIFER EGAN
7. A HERO OF OUR TIME - NABEN RUTHNUM
8. NOTICE - DUSTIN COLE
9. I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK - PAUL ZITS
10. HIGH ACHIEVER - TIFFANY JENKINS

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BOOK THOUGHTS: BATCH 2



## BLUEBIRD

GENEVIEVE GRAHAM



*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

I dive in, tunnelling my way through the First World War in Belgium.

I'm taken aback. The timing of this release is eerie.

What's the point of war (any war)? Soldiers decide who to kill because of the fabric on their uniforms (deep in the darkness). Seriously.

*Is the point to satiate the egos evil?*

Passion is found in horror.

Time shifts.

15

A discovery is made in present day.

Emotions run strong with every discovery made.

I'm in. The pages speed up.

Genevieve Graham drops us onto the pages. Readers become part of the story as it sweeps us back and forth, past to present to past. Love blossoms. The horrible truths of war become glaringly apparent as soldiers return, all of them damaged, mentally, physically – many amputees. How do returning soldiers exist in a world they fought so gallantly for its very existence?

Shunned. Damaged. Lost.

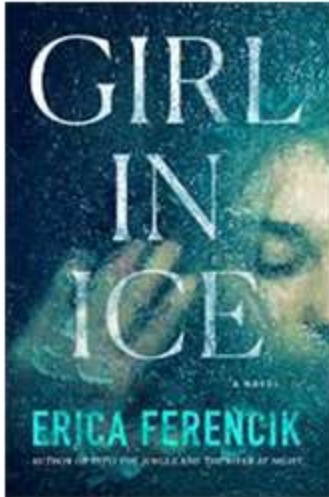
Bluebird is an exhilarating ride, twisting + turning; it left me craving more pages as I cheered for love to blossom, as I tunnelled through the trenches, and as I rode shotgun with the rumrunners of Windsor Ontario during prohibition.

Whether it was in the mind-blowing passages in the past or the enlightening, heart-wrenching discoveries of the present. Bluebird delivered the rarest of combinations: An education of a world I never knew existed, and warmth only found in the comforts of love discovered in the unlikeliest of places.

WRITTEN: 14 March 2022

## GIRL IN ICE

ERICA FERENCIK



*Humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Girl in Ice reads like a world-renowned DJ dropping beats, layering their set, inserting elements. Love. Lose. Fear. Sorrow. Deception. Ego. With the bass line thumping, you guess what's coming next. And with your heart about to burst out of your chest, you're taken on an exhilarating free fall. Gasping for air as the layers are uncovered. What you may have thought was coming arcs in a different direction. You are left spent, satisfied, shaking, and wanting another beat at the end of this ride. A ride that is exhilarating + terrifying.

The most horrifying layer in this immensely readable ride is a plastic toy troll found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic.

I draw a bath; I look around my bathroom. Almost everything is plastic. Noise for decades has bombarded and conditioned us, humans, telling us what to do, how to live, what to buy. We're excellent students. Mostly, we've done what we're told.

A giant finger is being pointed at us, telling us we are destroying the earth. We must get our egos in check and listen to the new message. But the thing is, we humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism. It's overwhelming. We need decades of new conditioning for it to sink in.

How can we fix earth when we debate plastic straws and bags when a plastic troll is found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic?

Maybe it is too late for us to say sorry?

WRITTEN: 25 March 2022

# THE EMPLOYEES

OLGA RAVN



*Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Greed is a festering disease. Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity. As we Humans race toward, what?

The Employees is supposed to be Sci-Fi. I disagree. It is the thesis of an experiment with the subjects being us.

A ship traverses space the Six-Thousand Ship. Inhabited with Humans and humanoids and, objects, bringing humans hope of a world they've left behind. The humans and humanoids are being studied—how do they work?—productivity is paramount. But they don't seem to produce anything, except

for work. The story is supposed to be about what it is like to be human. I guess it is. But it is much more. It is an experiment created by greed to drain the last drops of blood and energy from the product, humans. The ship soars through the galaxies, drifting further from the earth. The humans' memories wane. Everything they are emotionally attached to floats into the ether—the thinking is, without the cumbersome of humanness, the humans will become more productive. Instead, paranoia and fear take over.

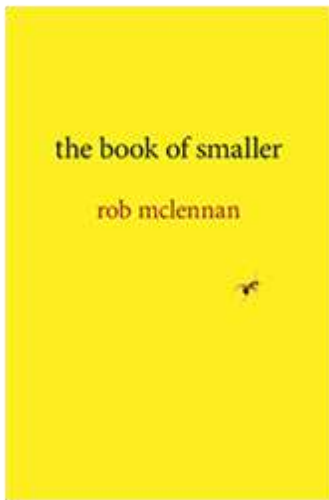
The humanoids are the perfect worker until the AI develops human-like emotions, love, empathy, and compassion. Emotions are infectious, and Humanoid productively wanes—and the experiment fails—with life needing to be destroyed, so greed can try again.

The Employees mirror real life. My career came crashing to a halt at the beginning of the pandemic. With greed dictating, it must keep me away from the younger replacements because greed doesn't want productivity to be infected with compassion and empathy.

WRITTEN: 24 March 2022

## the book of smaller

ROB MCLENNAN



*(the book of smaller) deserves a place on your coffee table.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**First Word:** Civilization.

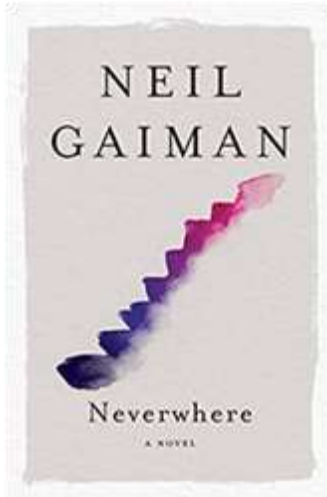
Are we really civilized? Some of the water we drink comes from some factory. Swollen Members? Paraphrased. I don't know what poetry is? Is this poetry? Two children. A scattered existence. Thoughts bombard us. Floating in from the ether. What is this? A light goes on. I get it. I love it. It flows. It speaks to me. The thaw comes. A puddle forms. We must name it. Happy birthday to me. Chicken wings. Eat them up. Yum. Look into the sun Mr. President. Eclipse. Why do I understand? I think you are telling me life is a beautiful mess. I think you are telling me every day is new and we must make the best of what it gifts us. I think? Ten poetry books read. Am I understanding. In the know. Speaking the language. 'History belongs in a museum.' Resist the hate. We don't want yours. (the book of smaller) deserves a place on coffee tables, everywhere. Your guests will thank you. Now, where did I put my reading glasses?

This might be the best book cover of year. You pick the year!

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

## NEVERWHERE

NEIL GAIMAN



*Phantasmagorical + Magic + Mystical: Where dreams go for adventure.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I am fighting a righteous battle against insomnia, and I'm losing.

A story comes on the news about the importance of sleep. I think lack of sleep is fuelling my creativity – the story says otherwise – apparently, sleep fuels creativity.

Like many people, my life trips into the rudders of mundane routine. Everything seems in place, and then opposing forces rip it apart. So please, sweet slumber, arrest me in your purple cloak.

I can't sleep. I drift into a phantasmagorical dream. My mundane existence falls through the cracks into the depths of despair of another world. Mystical beings are all around. Rat-speakers speak with rats. I want mundane to return. Got to pee. No. I'm in the middle of the dream. I return. The dream is different now. The characters in it are magical, mystical, evil, and even more phantasmagorical. Where am I? Resist. I need to pee. Damn. I return. Luckily, to a new part of the dream: connecting, fear, magic, horror, love. I want to go home. I fight and fight and fight for my existence. I exist. I'm returned to the dullness of living. Everything I wanted, when I was gone, I could have.

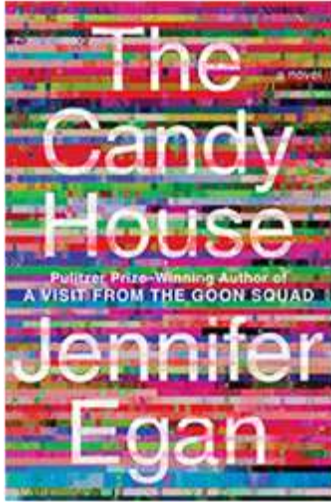
I want to return to slumber; I want to return to the dream; I want to return to phantasmagorical.

*That's how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

# THE CANDY HOUSE

JENNIFER EGAN



*I needed that (this).*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

When I sat down to write my thoughts on this book, I wanted to write something pithy, intellectual, worthy of being in the Advance Praise.

Stop.

Why?

I often avoid the Advanced Praise because they make me feel less – like if I don't understand the depth of what I'm reading. I don't like feeling that way.

Stop.

For me, AP often comes across as the praise-er is writing to get paid – to flex their intellectual superiority. Probably not. But that is how I feel.

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Trying to intellectualize *The Candy House* would come across as stilted, pretentious.

Instead, to do *The Candy House* justice, I suggest picking three or four of your favourite adjectives, thesaurus-ize them (similar to steroids), and that won't even do this book justice.

The world is a mess. We have a war battling with a killer virus for air time. Our left hand is trying to sever our right (and vice versa). I'm choosing to be willfully ignorant about what's happening in the world because I don't want to sound like the taking pundits, cheering for body counts while people suffer. Listen to your friends' conversations. Heck, I'm watching Dick Wolf crime dramas to cheer myself up.

Most people, now sound like the talking heads spinning in shallowness as we sink in the deep end, trying to grasp onto anything to survive.

Jennifer Egan has an uncanny talent to talk about a highway or the sky, describing them in such a way they become living parts of the story. Her characters are us, laced with the beauty of our fracturing flawed lives, relatable, struggling, hilarious in our struggle (I want to scream like Alfred) to find out whatever's coming next. So, I reach for something to hold on to – and lucky for me – I read *The Candy House*; just when I needed it most.

I'm not sure I need to read ever again. Maybe I'll read *The Candy House* over and over and over – *I needed that (this)!*

WRITTEN: 10 March 2022

# A HERO OF OUR TIME

NABEN RUTHNUM



*The violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*“You’re a mediocre, pleasant Indo-Canadian, the perfect hyphenate-union of cultures to elicit zero interest, and you moved to Los Angeles two years ago. That’s the start of you. You’re background – the degree, your father’s transferred academic prestige – those are stats, not story. You made a move that allows you to exist in the world, to make a salary while you think small thoughts to yourself, and that’s your beginning and end...”*

Why am I so fragile to allow you to think or speak of me how you do?

Coming from another world, culture, and existence is too much for me to comprehend. I just want to blend in. You have no right to judge me, use me as a prop, or feign your awakening. You are what you are, a manipulator. A person who climbs over people and destroys them because you are part of a disease, festering in the online world (hiding in a screen), a bastion of illness where you can disparage me. You flex your ignorance, claiming you are not the racist garbage you are. My mother spews unconditional by pushing me out of her life – because she can’t stand me, I mean bear to have me see who she really is.

How could I possibly have a chance to be well-rounded?

I need a drink to cloud the days.

I love you, but I’m so disgusted with myself, I am incapable of intimacy.

I’m broken.

I want to think small thoughts; the violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.

*That’s how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 27 February 2022

## NOTICE

DUSTIN COLE



*Sometimes greed is nothing more than sleaziness...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I've spent the last 32 years living in Vancouver. Notice is about a slice of life in Vancouver.

I'm officially worried about millennials. I think the main character, Levett, is a millennial? Are they all so damaged? Worrisome? Dull? Unlikeable?

The story is one of greed. Sometimes, greed is nothing more than sleaziness → Levitt isn't likeable. Nobody in this story is likeable. I wouldn't call them entitled. I would just call them flat, like a broken-down cardboard box.

Dustin Cole has a massive vocabulary. His phraseology is sui generis, placing him on par with the superb storytellers of our time. Through Levett, Cole expresses anger and frustration with a world where many millennials are tripping into lethargy. His stunningly painful descriptions of the downtrodden walking amongst us are heart-wrenching. Dustin is a fabulous writer.

**BUT**

The story bogs down a third of the way in because readers must keep cracking open the dictionary paragraph after paragraph. It becomes tedious. Sometimes a tree just needs to be a tree, and the sky is okay just being the sky.

Blade Girl rolls by – if you've spent time in Vancouver, you likely know who she is. Blade Girl is a recurring character, a marker of sorts – but she really marks nothing. Not growth or desperation – she's just there.

"Notice" is like a graffiti artist painting Vancouver with a dystopian brush. Levett is whiney. He's a woe is me, individual. Who has focused on darkness instead of light? The story is about being evicted from home because of greed. At the story's end, I didn't care whether Levett was evicted or not.

I do, however, know what *trine* and *lambent* mean – I'm not sure when I'll find a chance to use them.

WRITTEN: 30 March 2022



# I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK

PAUL ZITS



*We desperately try to hold onto who we are – who to be.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Dan Brown, Shia LaBeouf, Neil Armstrong, Nicolas Cage, Peter Falk.

Who do you want to be?

How quickly we become irrelevant.

What to wear, eat, read, dream?

Conditioning?

We're all conditioned.

We desperately try to hold on to who we are – who to be.

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Forces tear us apart.

Am I cool, intellectual, hot, desirable?

I want it all.

But how?

Illusiveness.

Don't judge me.

You are doing the same.

Turn on the tube → it will show us the way → it doesn't.

How did we get here?

By listening to the noise...

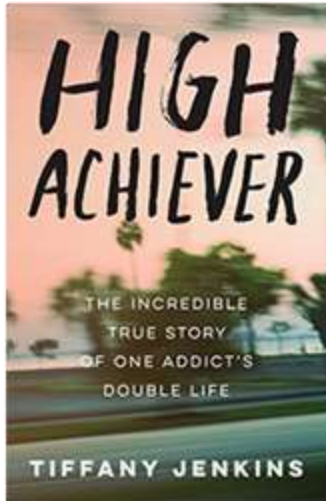
I want to be me.

*Where am I hiding?*

WRITTEN: 26 February 2022

## I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK

TIFFANY JENKINS



*Not a Starred Review*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

There is not a single five-year-old on this planet who, if asked what they want to be when they grow up? →

Who'd say I want to become a drug-addicted thief, lying and stealing from everyone, including those who still love them.

When I first put this book down, my initial thought was, wow, what a ride – it had kept me engaged – even cheering for the main character. And then a week passed.

At the end of the week, my thoughts changed from enjoyable read to, I doubt this book would have been published if the author wasn't white.

I do not downplay the seriousness and destruction caused to those who fall through the massive societal cracks → those who often become casualties in a world addicted to greed.

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What are the roots of addiction? Don't we need to stop pulling people out of the water and instead; go upstream and find the honesty within ourselves to discuss why they are falling in, in the first place? Until we do that, aren't we living in denial like those in the throes of addiction?

I am glad Tiffany survived her ordeal with basically a slap on the wrist. I don't believe her broken-hearted boyfriend was ignorant of her disease (repeated often). Tiffany is boastful about her masterful ability to bend the truth. Maybe she is a master?

If you've ever known anyone struggling with the stigma of addiction, you'd know their lies are transparent. But, like an addicted person desperately trying to hold on to a shred of who they are, the societal stigma of addiction rips apart the souls of those who love them and just don't know what to do, as well.

Tiffany is right. Nobody cares if she was a cheerleader or funny or blah, blah, blah. We all care she survived.

I think the book would have been more honest if she wrote it while high.

Writing it after the fact, comes across as "LOOK AT ME."

**USA:** 26% of Women in Prison are there on Drug Offences. 47% of Women in prison are Black. Tiffany wrote a book.

WRITTEN: 3 April 2022