

BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 28



1. **BOULEVARD WREN - BLINDBOY BOATCLUB**
2. **STRANGE SALLY DIAMOND - LIZ NUGENT**
3. **NINETEEN CLAWS AND A BLACK BIRD - AUGUSTINA BAZETERRICA**
4. **CRYING WOLF - EDEN BOUDREAU**
5. **THE NEXT GIRL - PIP DRYSDALE**
6. **TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW - GABRIELLE ZEVIN**
7. **BIG SHADOW - MARTA BALCEWICZ**
8. **PLACES LIKE THESE - LAUREN CARTER**
9. **CLOSER BY SEA - PETER CHAFE**
10. **BEAUTIFUL BOY - DAVID SHEFF**

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

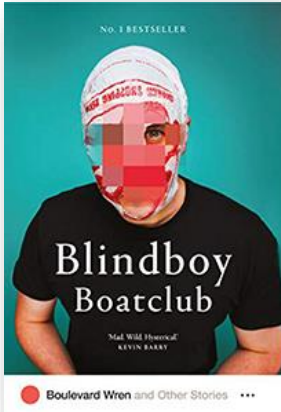
PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

Lindsay Wincherauk

BOULEVARD WREN + OTHER STORIES

BLINDBOY BOATCLUB



A Letter to the Irish Times is the funniest story I've ever read.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Crap, why is there a Bee on my arm?

I'm trapped in a fever dream.

I'm stung.

A combine is harvesting my dreams, monetizing them – nothing is to be left untapped. Until...?

I'm on all fours, naked, and being chased by an amped-up bull – I want to be a bull. I think I might be a cow.

I sit in a food court, bite my taco, read a few pages, and laugh out loud.

There's a short form of that. No. I won't.

I take another bite. What am I reading? I cry. Why am I crying when I'm laughing? This is the funniest story I've ever read (A Letter to the Irish Times). Am I okay? Quit looking at me. I suggest you try to laugh occasionally. This book is craic.

I scratch where the Bee stung me. Oh no, the Bee was a Quantum Bee; my body was sucked into the sting hole (a black hole). Rhododendron. So long, purple. I'm inside out. My vital organs are on the outside. Gross. My skin is deep. They say beauty is skin deep. I must be beautiful.

I laugh again, even louder. LOLEL.

I need to reset myself. Pass me a baggy. The one marked Lindsay 1981. Straw me, snort.

That's better. I'm restored.

What am I even talking about?

Boulevard Wren + Other Stories have etched its way into my all-time favourites. It might not be your cup of tea – but if you open your mind – take a sip; you will fall out of your chair cringing with laughter (an abdominal exercise).

Steer clear, of Bees and horny amped up bulls.

Where are we heading? Here?

Inside out is enlightening. And painful. And...

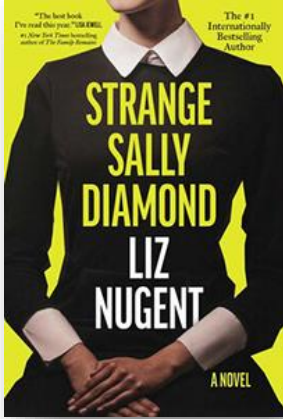
WRITTEN: 12 March 2023

1

Lindsay Wincherauk

STRANGE SALLY DIAMOND

LIZ NUGENT



Evocative. At times hilarious. Messing with our perceptions.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I crack the cover. What am I diving into?

I break into laughter. I'm laughing at someone's oddity.

Why? Is it okay?

I'm hooked on page 1.

Liz Nugent drops another page, adding layer upon layer.

My heart races.

I shouldn't be laughing.

I'm laughing at the pain.

I cover my mouth.

The story flows between then and now, with the past being written as the present is being lived.

My heart spikes. Nugent adds another layer. The story takes on a feverish bent. I want more. Another page. I laugh. I cringe. This is one bleeping mess. What are humans capable of?

A door slams shut, a shackle is attached, lives are eviscerated; monsters lurk in a delusional pool.

The pace quickens; the past and present are about to collide.

The beat is blasting us to the surface. How can anybody be, okay?

Strange Sally Diamond gives us a glimpse into the grips of evil, deftly allowing us to laugh at distress masked in the fantasy of care through control. Evil is boundless.

Strange Sally Diamond is an all-time favourite.

If, after getting to know Sally, you don't look at everybody sharing air in this world through a softer filter—because we can never know what pain is hiding behind their eyes—you might be a monster yourself.

Nugent adds another layer. She lowers the beat allowing us to momentarily catch our breath before Nugent teases us with the possibility of adding another layer. I cringe.

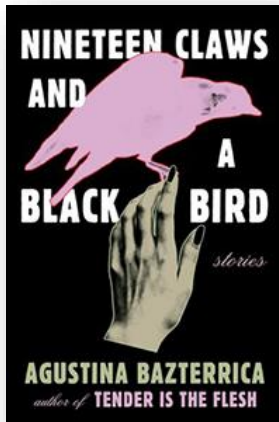
WRITTEN: 8 April 2023

2

Lindsay Wincherauk

NINETEEN CLAWS AND A BLACK BIRD

AUGUSTINA BAZTERRICA



Sometimes we need to escape into the darkness to remain in the light.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Come with me. In here, down this dark tunnel.

I'm scared. No, I'm not. I'm worried about myself?

Why?

I love Nineteen Claws and a Black Bird.

Am I going to be, okay?

My stomach churns.

At first, I think 'Roberto' is a young boy. And then, I read the description, 'Roberto' is female; where is my

comprehension – what tricks have my mind played on me?

Another rumble. Every story is fresh. Served on an unsettling skewer.

What's life about?

Darkness?

Today the answer would be YES, a loud YES – that's the reason for ALLCAPS.

Are these thoughts about Nineteen Claws and a Black Bird?

Probably not; it's hard to tell; I'm now a circle with arms; I need to eat, but my damn arms won't allow me to roll over and get to the food. Darn. Splat. A jumper.

Why am I laughing?

Because.

That will have to do – this is an all-time fave.

Sometimes we need to escape into the darkness to remain in the light.

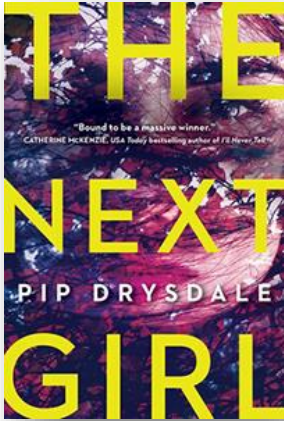
WRITTEN: 1 April 2023

3

Lindsay Wincherauk

THE NEXT GIRL

PIP DRYSDALE



Frantic! Exhilarating! Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Frantic!

What did I do? How did I get here?

I must make things right.

I know. I'll fix things. I have a plan.

I'll do this, and this, and this. There, that should fix things. Vengeance will be grand. Stop. Destroy. I can't leave a trail. So come with me into the next chapter. We'll be safe in there.

Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god.

I'm being followed. It's not safe in here. If I'm caught, I'm finished. I will pay for something I haven't done. Who is that? How was I found?

I need allies.

You. You. You.

More vengeance. I've got you. I must destroy the evidence. Vengeance is a fickle beast. I'm only going to peek. One last time. Someone's here. The hairs on my arm are standing on end. I'm doomed. I need an escape.

Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.

More. Run. Take a deep breath. I'm absolved. Oh, no, someone is here. I'm trapped. I'm finished. Fight of flight. Flight.

What are you doing here?

I'm doomed.

Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.

One more hit, a peek; am I living in denial?

Next chapter.

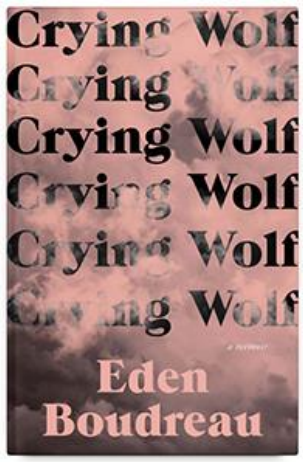
Exhilarating!

WRITTEN: 29 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

CRYING WOLF

EDEN BOUDREAU



Within the first ten pages, my perceptions began changing.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Eden Boudreau is anything but selfish.

Boudreau was raped, filling her soul with self-doubt as she questioned everything in her life.

Is Boudreau courageous? Absolutely.

Something people who dive into their own vulnerability, often because of the vitriol thrown their way, downplay because, in Boudreau's case, being in a non-monogamous, polyamorous relationship opened her up to venomous barbs from those amongst us who believe they have a right to have opinions about the lives of others which have no impact on their own.

How can any of us know what's right for someone else?

Each of us needs to expose ourselves to reading different experiences.

I crack, *Crying Wolf* open. Greeting me is non-monogamous and polyamorous. I'm ready to judge.

Within the first ten pages, my perceptions began changing. I want to be a better person. Boudreau shares her pain. It's devastating and heart-wrenching. I feel her pain; her suffering. What happened to her is wrong. FULL STOP. For all of those who think otherwise: Get over yourself.

Our only responsibility is to offer support and understanding when atrocities inflict those walking amongst us. FULL STOP.

Why?

If you have ever suffered a violation, the constant criticism of others can make you withdraw within yourself, causing you to doubt everything and blame yourself, eating away at your core. You, the one judging, are only making the pain worse, even though it has nothing to do with you.

Thank you, Boudreau, for sharing your pain. I have an inkling you've helped countless hurting souls by offering a salve of vulnerability and bravery.

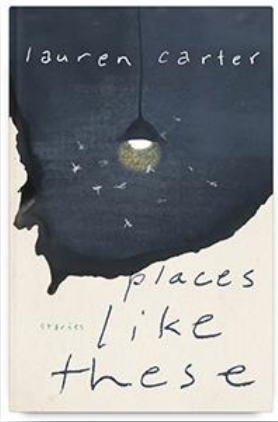
WRITTEN: 5 March 2023

5

Lindsay Wincherauk

PLACES LIKE THESE

LAUREN CARTER



Extraordinary stories decorate the pages.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Places like These, reads like a cipher; hidden inside are codes unlocking everything in life that makes us human.

Being Canadian allowed me to slide through the pages visiting familiar landscapes.

I dig deeper into my mind.

Where am I now?

What's happening?

An electric current flows through me—sparking something inside of me.

Is humanity flailing?

Don't judge the homeless. We are all only one trauma away from joining them.

Are we all cloaked with uncertainty?

What is our journey about?

Where do we find meaning, and in what?

The prose is lyrical and unbounded, painting life with broad strokes of a once colourful but now fading brush.

Does anything really matter?

Years pass by with relationships changing—leaving longing in their wake.

I'm sad. Not a debilitating sadness, but a warm, somehow comfortable one, where understanding is lying in wait.

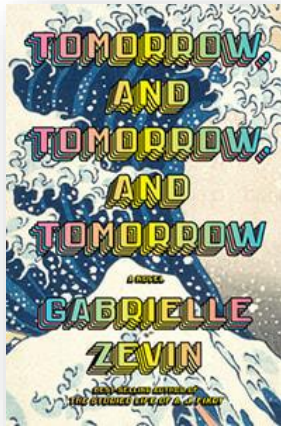
The extraordinary stories decorating the pages of Places Like These, will challenge life perceptions and deliver readers to a place of wanting to be more, love more, think more, embrace more, and judge less.

WRITTEN: 4 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW

GABRIELLE ZEVIN



Someone dies. Hit replay. New game. Wouldn't that be grand?

How did the book make me feel/think?

I never knew.

I only knew the scope of video games once I read Tomorrow, Tomorrow, and Tomorrow.

I still don't know. I'm now a neophyte.

I used to love playing Galaga as a kid.

What did you play?

By kid, I mean a procrastinating university student.

I was a simple child, probably not; the games were simple and in tune with the times.

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We all, if not have already, at one point in time, will experience a catastrophic loss.

We all, if not have already, at one point in time, will let petty grievances destroy years of the comfort and friendships.

Are most people who play video games introverted?

Is the question offensive?

Someone dies. Hit replay. New game. Wouldn't that be grand?

But that is not life; catastrophic loss and petty grievance are hiding everywhere. NPCs cannot save us from life.

I learned that video games, much like this fabulous manuscript, create a world we can escape inside for a few moments of calm, and when the inevitable arrives, we can start all over again, damaged but still alive.

Video games have come a long way since I played Galaga — they are rich experiences scripted by storytellers and are no different from what we read.

WRITTEN: 26 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

BIG SHADOW

MARTA BALCEWICZ



A dark cloud rolls in, offering an escape into a different realm.

How did the book make me feel/think?

I'm young, vulnerable, and impressionable.

Actually, I'm 62.5, vulnerable, and impressionable.

Tell me what I want to hear. I'm pliable.

You love my writing – I love you.

A dark cloud rolls in, offering an escape into a different realm.

A young girl wants to escape and find her place in the world. Creativity will provide the route. She's outgrowing where she is, her friends, and the insanity of an overprotective mother trying to hold on to the only thing she thinks she can control.

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She finds an escape. An older man, a predator? Yes? No?

The man appears daft but finds the precise prose offering a way into the adult world. His comments seem innocent, but they are anything but.

It's easy to control dreamers who are constantly seeking validation.

The young girl learns hard lessons, and then retreats into the looming darkness of the clouds?

Does she survive? Are other realms ephemeral?

Does her mother regain her fleeting control?

Support comes for the girl from an unlikely place.

I'm 62.5, vulnerable, and impressionable. Tell me what I want to hear. I'm pliable.

If that's who I and many of us are, how does a young girl stand a chance when the subtle comments of predators are so ingrained in the subconscious of those preying on the pliable minds of the young?

When will the shadow dissipate?

WRITTEN: 4 April 2023

BEAUTIFUL BOY REVENGE OF BOY

DAVID SHEFF

A heart-wrenching true story about the insidious battle many of us have with addiction.

How did the book make me feel/think?



Beautiful Boy |David Sheff| is a heart-wrenching true story about the insidious battle many of us have with addiction. I thought it would destroy me. It didn't. It opened my heart to more compassion and empathy. You may be a monster if you read this important story and don't look at humanity through a kinder lens.

It is indescribable when we find the strength to share our darkest and lowest lows. We must applaud Sheff for finding the strength.

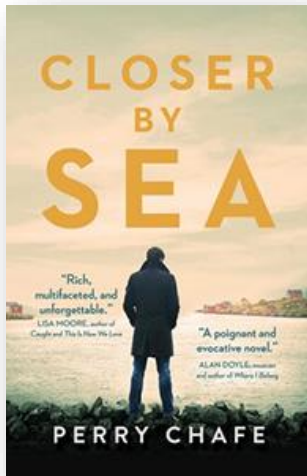
WRITTEN: 20 April 2023

CLOSER BY SEA

PERRY CHAFE

A ragtag gaggle of misfits tries to navigate their way through life.

How did the book make me feel/think?



Chafe (may have) used *The Goonies* and *Stand By Me* as a reference to create a story of a ragtag gaggle of misfits trying to navigate their ways through life and the mystery of a missing girl, with the main character struggling to accept the loss of his father, who was swallowed by the sea, all set in the idyllic setting of a dying fishing town, on an island, just off the coast of Newfoundland, with the unpredictable ocean lying between the two.

Amp up the mystery with the addition of a curmudgeon newcomer, and the pages almost start turning themselves as ocean swells grip them, rolling over each other until the last page.

Unlike the previous classics (mentioned), Sheff teaches us the perils we all face today. Overfishing is leaving decades of families losing their livelihoods as the world desperately tries to figure out how the bleep are any of us going to survive when capitalism fights with our need for survival. And how can we ask one another to change the course of our lives when we are losing our way of putting food on the table?

WRITTEN: 19 April 2023