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Eleanor



Synopsis

1962, Anchor Bend, Oregon. The sea calls to Eleanor. Like the turn of the waves it beckons her from the heart of the town she's always known, from her husband Hob and their young daughter, Agnes, to the unfathomable depths of the ocean. 1985 Agnes's daughter Eleanor is six years old. She shares her name with the grandmother she never knew and everything else with her identical twin, Esmerelda. But to Agnes, only Eleanor is a constant reminder of the past. 1993 After a dark event leaves her family in tatters, Eleanor, now fourteen, is left caring for her alcoholic mother, whose grief has torn her apart. But when Eleanor's reality begins to unravel, she starts to lose her grip on time itself, slipping from the present into strange otherlands where she's in danger of losing herself altogether. Eleanor is the story of choices that ripple through time far beyond the moment they're made. And what happens when, just sometimes, bonds are so powerful they reach beyond this world and into another.

Book Information

File Size: 1424 KB

Print Length: 385 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0008132917

Publisher: HarperVoyager (January 12, 2016)

Publication Date: January 12, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B011MB6OH8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,019,166 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #81

in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Literary #172 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Personal Health > Substance Abuse #191

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Multigenerational

Customer Reviews

Jason Gurley took thirteen years to write *Elanor* and about half-way through my first reading I understood why. This magnificent tale may have taken over a decade to be ready for print but it is the kind of story that is as timeless as its main character. Because the genre and plot of *Elanor* defies being pigeonholed by the suits in the marketing department of some New York publisher, it makes sense that this one had to be self-published. I have no doubt that *Elanor* will be snatched up somewhere along the way. Just like John Grisham's, *A Time to Kill*, and Ronald Balson's, *Once We Were Brothers*, Gurley has written something far too enduring and powerful to be ignored. Unlike most reviews I write, I haven't said much about the plot - and for good reason. To shamelessly borrow a cliché, this one defies description. Gurley gladly acknowledges much of what he writes has been called "weepy sci-fi". However, if you avoid *Elanor* either because you don't like time-travel stories or anything that smacks of romance you will surely miss out on one of the most mesmerizing reads in a while. *Elanor* is not a book you can hurry through. It is filled with mad rushes for answers, life-changing road blocks, and dark nights filled with hopes of a new dawn. At its core, Gurley offers a story that every reader has lived or sought to forget in one way or another. This author writes outside of the box much like Dean Koontz did in his recent *Innocence* and *The City*. The two writers have much in common - they write powerful prose and create memorable characters. Koontz wrote in his early years under a number of pen names before 400 million copies in print ensured it doesn't matter how hard it is to classify his latest work. It is more than refreshing to see a relatively new writer like Gurley skip the middle man and go straight to bold and creative before some acquisition editor condemned something as creative as *Elanor* to the slush pile.

There are many different reasons to read a book. Most times I tend to read to think about something in a new or different way. To spark my creativity and challenge my accepted ideas. This book, *Eleanor* by Jason Gurley, is not that kind of book. Not that it doesn't make you think. I had a lot of thoughts while I read this book. I thought about the similarities between it and two other books I've read. One was fairly recent and the other is Neil Gaiman's *Ocean at the End of the Lane*, while the other I read when I was just a child and it's *Madeline* and *A Wrinkle in Time*. Both had a profound influence on me, but all three of these books didn't do so much make me think. They made me feel. When I first began reading *Eleanor*, I was struck by the pictures Mr. Gurley paints for his readers. Spending a little time in Oregon and on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, I could readily accept the fog-shrouded town and seaside he presented as real. He worked

so hard to place his story in the real world that when the supernatural world opens up later in the book, it feels natural. It feels like an extension of the world Gurley has created and it feels better than the world in which his characters reside. I've followed Jason's journey of writing this book for the past year (although he's been writing it for the past 13 years) and I can feel the passion he had for it in every word I encountered. I saw the care he put into it and the work he put in to make it just right. How to describe this book? I'm not really sure. I literally finished less than five minutes after starting to write this review, so my thoughts are still swirling like the water in a tide pool off the shore of a small island near the beach in Oregon. I felt for the characters that Mr. Gurley painstakingly presented to the readers. How in just the first few pages, we were introduced to Hob, Eleanor and their daughter Agnes. I was getting settled in for a book about this Eleanor, until Gurley ripped the rug out from underneath me and I realized this was not really the titular character she was still to be discovered. Discovered is really a great word for this book. Eleanor discovers so much in her journeys throughout this book. You see the younger Eleanor taking care of her family as best she knows how, but then through other means, we see there are better ways she can take care of her family. She discovers who she is, who her parents really are, and her true purpose. This needs to be discovered. I could call Jason Gurley the American Neil Gaiman and I don't think many people would argue after reading this book. It is a phenomenal book and one I could not put down. Well done, Mr. Gurley.

This book is a work of art. Not art you glance at and move on, but the masterpiece you sit and stare at all day so you can soak up every detail, and, then, clear your schedule for the next week so you can go look at it some more. Eleanor is the story of a girl, and a family, functioning in pain. The book asks you to observe severe emotional pain being inflicted, then wants you to be sympathetic to those who cause it because of their own history of pain. Further, it makes you ask yourself what lengths you would go to in hope of easing that pain. This book is best read slowly to fully appreciate the layers of meaning Jason Gurley laid down in his beautiful prose.

The writing style matches the story--lyrical, dreamlike, and imbued with layers of loss, longing, and love. In spite of the emotional journey of the characters, the story is full of vivid bursts of action which take place in settings of altered reality. Even though the story is crafted to have only one necessary outcome, the plot twists build suspense. I recommend this story to older readers who have experienced loss and who are willing to engage with dreamscapes and time travel.

Man, this guy can write. I don't say that often. The last time was reading Wally Lamb's "I know this much is true." This book reminded me of Stephen King in many ways, especially in that it is a page turner. I was a little let down by the life after death nature of the story, but was captivated enough by the quality of the descriptive writing that I kept with it and enjoyed the book, even recommending it to my wife who usually only reads more hard core literature. She enjoyed the writing also. Very engaging. I have the feeling that when Jason Gurley finds the right story, he will be an "overnight" best selling author. He's that good.

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