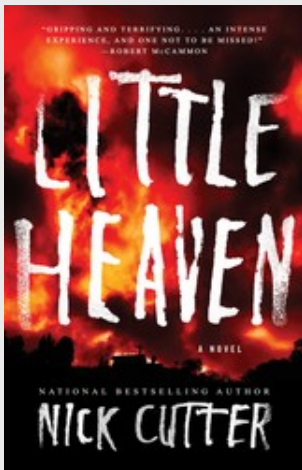


If David Cronenberg and TREMORS Had a Baby, They'd Name It LITTLE HEAVEN



Little Heaven

Written by Nick Cutter Illustrations by Adam Gorham

Published by Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster (January 2017)

400 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1-5011-0421-3

I wouldn't recommend Nick Cutter's latest novel as a light read for your lunch hour - unless you want to risk losing your lunch.

However, *Little Heaven* **is** a must-read novel if you -

A) Think Cormac McCarthy's novel (and/or the Coen brothers movie) *No Country for Old Men* needed more blood, some monsters, and a bit of Cronenbergian body horror to **really** qualify as a classic.

B) Are looking for a horror writer who consistently delivers books that combine tight plotting, interesting characters, and truly excruciating moments of "did I just read that?" gruesomeness.

Here's a sample from page four:

In the darkness, something shambled from the den. The moon touched upon its strange extrusions, its flesh shining wetly in the pale moonlight. It breathed through many mouths and gazed through a cluster of eyes lodged in a knot of fatted, blood-streaked fur.

Still with me?

Good.

The story in *Little Heaven* alternates between “present day” (1980) and events in 1965 that bring a trio of mismatched criminals together. Micah Shughrue, Minerva Atwater, and Ebenezer Elkins are joined together by circumstance and on the run from the law.

At Micah’s urging, the trio agrees to help Ellen Bellhaven in her quest to check on the wellbeing of her nephew Nate. Her sister’s ex took the boy to a remote religious community in New Mexico called Little Heaven, led by the weirdly charismatic Reverend Amos Flesher.

Once the group arrives at the ramshackle settlement, they discover Little Heaven resembles a fundamentalist Hotel California; you can check out any time you like, but something in the woods won’t let you leave. Reverend Flesher thought he heard the voice of God calling him to this corner of the Land of Enchantment. By the end of *Little Heaven*, it seems much more likely he heard the call of Cthulhu (or one of his relatives).

If there’s any issue I had as a reader with *Little Heaven*, it was more of pacing than quibbles with content or story. The initial sections introduce us to the 1980 versions of Micah, Minerva, and Ebenzer, and then flash back to the events that brought them together. While these sections are interesting, I found myself wondering - when are we getting to the main story?

The excerpt at the beginning of this review clues you in to where *Little Heaven* lies on the horror spectrum. But while it has plenty of gut churning moments, it is not “torture porn.” Like the best [splatterpunk](#) in this books’ [ancestry](#), the violence is not an end in itself, with forgettable characters dying in gruesome ways just to gross out the reader. Even the worst miscreant (cough *Reverend Amos* cough) remains a person, not a prop.

The National Post’s [review](#) of Cutter’s first horror novel *The Troop* mentioned a feature of that book that makes his books “must reads” for me. “It highlights the organic inevitability of the best horror fiction while never being predictable.”

Little Heaven - the little town you can’t forget, and a book worth any horror fan’s time.

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