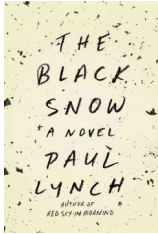


Information, Answers & Reviews

The Black Snow



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Irish writer Paul Lynch begins his second novel with a vivid barn burning scene--one of the most powerful novel openers I've read in a long time. It starts out calm, some farmhands working quietly in a field, the farm owner's wife, Eskra, baking, until the scent of smoke and a dark cloud rising suggest that something is very wrong.

The farmer, Barnabas Kane, races to the barn with a loyal worker, and Barnabas presses inside and nudges Matthew Peoples inside also. They try to rescue the fifty seven cattle that are banging their stalls in a frenzy of fear. A friend rescues the farmer, but the other man never gets out, nor do most of the cattle.

The book shows the aftermath of that fire. For months, the house stinks of smoke: the towels, the sheets, even the wallpaper. In one scene, Barnabas rips down curtains, slashes the wallpaper, even tears his clothes off after recognizing their smoky smell. Eskra comes home and believes he has lost his mind. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 23, 2015

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Summer reading for everyone!

It's summer, which means one thing: reading games at the Library! We have game boards, reading challenges, and prizes for all ages:

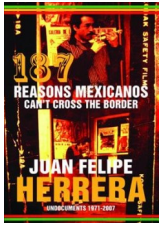
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Posted by Michael H. on June 11, 2015

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New United States Poet Laureate



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Just announced: the Library of Congress appointed Juan Felipe Herrera as our latest national poet laureate. The child of migrant farm workers, Herrera is the first Latino poet laureate. As a child, he traveled up and down the state of California with his parents, and later attended UCLA with the help of a grant for disadvantaged youth.

At the age of 21, Herrera was inspired by the debut book by Puerto Rican poet, Victor Hernandez Cruz.

He also writes children's books and those for young adults. Check out our [list of his titles](#). [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 10, 2015

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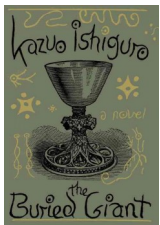
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The Buried Giant



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If you've read any of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, you know that not only can he write beautiful prose but that he also weaves interesting, compelling stories.

For an author who has written about widely divergent themes: life among the British gentry and serving classes (*The Remains of the Day*) and a group of schoolchildren being farmed for body parts (*Never Let Me Go*), his latest takes a leap into entirely new directions.

Call it an on the road/historical/Arthurian/ attempt-to-find-and-slay-a-giant-novel. This giant, who lives in Britain after the Anglo Saxon wars, spumes up dense clouds that cause people to lose their memories.

Beatrice and Axl, two very old Britons, find themselves denied candles in their village, forced to spend their nights in the cold dark, and are treated shabbily in other ways. They decide to leave and attempt a long arduous journey to see their only child, a son, who has not returned to the village for many years. Beatrice suffers from an unnamed illness that makes her very frail but she's determined to see their son again.

Because of the endless polluted mists, neither she nor Axl can remember why their son left, or

why he has not returned. Axl vaguely recalls an argument just before they parted, so the old couple want to make amends.

In one village where they spend the night, the residents mob a young boy who has a weird bite on his skin. They are so angry that Axl fears for the boy's life, and rushes to his rescue, but the mob attacks him instead. After leaving this village they find this boy again accompanied by a Saxon. Long ago, Axl fought against the Saxons, and the country is just starting to heal from the vicious wars.

Axl and Beatrice agree to travel with them, because the Saxon promises to help the couple reach their destination. They feel sorry for the boy too, but they are also leery of his bite.

While trying to cross a bridge, guards with swords detain them. When the Saxon sees them coming, he concocts a plan to play the fool. He also advises the couple to say that the boy has come with them. So the Saxon lolls his head, wags his tongue while the guards draw swords and prepare to spear him. But his disguise succeeds at least until the guard realizes later that the boy might be the boy bitten by the dragon, and chases them again.

The party also meets elderly Sir Gawain, one of the knights of Arthur's Round Table. The king has commanded him to slay the buried giant. At one point, the Saxon accuses him of not really trying to kill the beast. Why else would it still be alive?

The couple decide to visit a monastery even though it is out of the way and high on a mountain because they heard a monk there offers excellent counseling. But alas, the monastery was not what they thought. Around its windows and parapets, huge ravens swarm eager for bites of flesh. There is also a large tower that looks burnt, and has a suspicious platform on which it looks like battles have been fought, and enemies thrown off. Later the Saxon discovers a weird torture device in an out-building. And yes, those hungry ravens continue to batter the hatches. Ishiguro weaves history, Arthurian legend, and medieval fear of those different from us into a wonderful parable, but at heart, this is a story of a long marriage, how two people survive both the rough and calm seas of life, trying to bridge their differences, and caring for each other despite mistakes, arguments, hard feelings and the chaos of a world gone mad around them. For an entirely different take on England long ago, try Geraldine Brooks' *Year of Wonders: a novel of the plague*.

Posted by Dory L. on June 9, 2015

[The Buried Giant](#)

[Relationships](#)

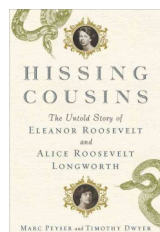
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Hissing Cousins



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This double biography of two famous first cousins, both belonging to the famous Roosevelt clan, brings the early 20th century to life in both Washington DC and New York and gives us a

fascinating peak into two strong women's lives, both of whom married or were born into politics. Eleanor Roosevelt and her first cousin Alice were born just eight months apart. Alice came from the Republican Oyster Bay branch of the family and Eleanor from the Democratic Hyde Park (NYC) branch. Not only did they differ in political and social outlooks, but they even pronounced their last name differently. Alice's family said Rose'evelt. And Eleanor's pronounced the same name as Ruse-evelt. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 1, 2015

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H is for Hawk

I almost became a falconer once. The ad promised you hands-on training for catching raptors, and you would be working with ones needing care, so it seemed like the perfect volunteer gig. However, our time in California was drawing to a close, so I never got to experience the drama and force of a raptor landing on my gloved hand. But, wow, did I love this book.

This memoir artfully intertwines three stories: Helen's experience training her first goshawk, her grieving for her father, and author T. H. White's mixed results raising falcons and hawks. All these stories are told powerfully, and the subject is so interesting that I found the book riveting. Training the small fierce goshawk Mable (the author chose the name as something opposite of what you'd expect) for a few hours every day away took Helen from her disabling grief over her father's sudden death on the street taking pictures for his job. At one point, Macdonald describes his last photograph--at street level, a line of blurs and a patch of sky as her father fell and died from a heart attack. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on May 13, 2015

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