



Hard Twisted

C. Joseph Greaves

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In May of 1934, outside of Hugo, Oklahoma, a homeless man and his thirteen-year-old daughter are befriended by a charismatic drifter, newly released from the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. The drifter, Clint Palmer, lures father and daughter to Texas, where the father, Dillard Garrett, mysteriously disappears, and where his daughter Lucile begins a one-year ordeal as Palmer's captive on a crime spree—culminating in the notorious Greenville, Texas "skeleton murder" trial of 1935. C. Joseph Greaves weaves a chilling tale of survival and redemption, encompassing iconic landscapes, historic figures, America's last Indian uprising, and one of the most celebrated criminal trials of the Public Enemy era, all rooted in the intensely personal story of a young girl's coming of age in a world as cruel as it is beautiful.

Hard Twisted Details

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Author : C. Joseph Greaves

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From Reader Review Hard Twisted for online ebook

Jennifer Hooks says

Incredible prose and a breathtaking view into a time and event that is mindboggling, terrible, and intriguing all at once.

Anke says

oud Amerikaanse schrijfstijl en soms zeer onduidelijk door gebrek aan namen (he did this. maar wie "he" is). ook doordat er " ontbraken en nog andere redenen. verhaal opzich was wel zeer goed, maar moeilijk om te doorgronden.

Alexandra ?? says

2.5

Karen says

The Great Depression is one of those eras in history that has been depicted in books and movies over and over again. Perhaps it's the obvious case of the more dire the circumstances in which people must find a way to survive, the more opportunity there is to explore those extremes, to consider how it is that the best and worst in people can emerge at times of great distress. It's also a period that lends itself to a certain style of cinematic portrayal, dark, dirty, deprived, depressed, it's hard not to think grey and bleak.

There is something cinematic about HARD TWISTED which incorporates lyrical passages of writing and descriptions, creating a sense of that grey bleakness. It provides a very realistic feeling of a dire world in which lives are lived on the extremes of hardship and people struggle with the endless grind of hunger and homelessness with no obvious way out. It's a story that resonates through lots of hard economic times.

Winner of the Best Historical Novel of 2010 in the South West Writers International Writing Contest, there are strong echoes here of other classic depression and hard-times based fiction with dysfunctional worlds, people on the move, on the lookout constantly for a way out, some relief from the inevitability. Told mostly from the viewpoint of 13-year-old Garrett, HARD TWISTED is the story of an ex-con, hustler, charismatic charmer who is really a dangerous, murderous psychopath. It's also the story of a 13-year-old girl in an impossible situation.

The book employs a number of different viewpoints and timeframes. Much of it is the direct relating of current day events, mostly from Garrett's viewpoint, interspersed with the voices of other characters. Parts of the book are introduced by snippets of testimony at what is obviously a trial, the nature of which is revealed as the book progresses.

There is much to admire about this book, and yet, there were problems which meant that this reader often found herself lost and fighting a growing sense of disinterest. Which confounded me completely. Whilst there is absolutely no doubt that the word pictures being drawn were beautifully done, there was something indistinguishable about the character's voices, not helped at all by a total lack of quotation marks to indicate what was / wasn't dialogue. No idea why, all it did was make me toil backwards a lot - checking what / who / said / observed / saw / did / didn't. Confused... moi... frequently.

That confusion meant that whilst the multiple questions of why - why he did what he did / why she stayed - the interesting and instructive bits, especially as you knew who, and what wasn't that hard to work out, kept disappearing. It was disappearing into beautiful, dense, poetic, lyrical writing no doubt about that, but it was there, just out of reach, for so much of the book whilst this reader worked backwards and forwards through the text, trying to get focus.

Maybe it was ultimately that I came away from HARD TWISTED feeling like I'd been invited to a party where everybody else spoke in a different language. Beautiful to listen to, lovely to watch people interact, no idea why I was there. I got so bored with the constant tracking backwards and forwards, with the low-key, laid back glacial advancement, with the cleverness of the structure that I got frustrated with myself. It's doubtful that anybody else is going to have that reaction - the authority with which the time period is described, the way that the life is so beautifully drawn, undeniably mean it's going to be a book that other readers are just going to get. As much as I kept thinking I should be loving this book, I didn't loathe it, but I certainly obviously didn't get it.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/reviews/HardTwisted.html>...

Ellie says

Very enjoyable and easy read.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Hard Twisted by C. Joseph Greaves is an impressive fictional account of the real people Clint Palmer and Lottie Garrett. It is 1934 when 13 year old Lottie and her father, Dillard, meet Clint, a charming drifter, they both end up moving to Texas with him where Dillard suddenly disappears and Lottie is essentially kidnapped and left to depend on Clint, a psychopathic killer and sexual predator, during a year long ordeal. The narrative is told from Lottie's point of view as she and Clint end up traveling together across the southwest and subsequently covers what may have happened in the John's Canyon Murder and the "skeleton murder trial" of the Depression Era. Excerpts from a fictional trial are interspersed with Lottie's story.

In the Author's Note and Acknowledgements, Greaves notes: "Hard Twisted, although based upon real people and true events, is entirely a work of fiction. My first exposure to the saga of Clint Palmer and Lottie Garrett came in somewhat dramatic (Location 2770-2773)....That chance discovery began a personal odyssey that would play out in fits and starts over fifteen-odd years, setting me onto the trail of what I would come to regard as one of the great, untold stories of the American West. (Location 2776-2777).

When researching for the book, Greaves notes something that Lottie and her father didn't know: "Clint Palmer was a sexual predator and a career criminal who, when he first encountered young Lottie Garrett in May of 1934, was only four months removed from his latest incarceration, a three-year stint in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, for kidnapping, statutory rape, and violating the Mann Act. (Location 2854-2856)"

While still in manuscript, Hard Twisted was named Best Historical Novel in the Southwest Writers 2010 International Writing Contest, a well deserved honor. Hard Twisted is clearly a very atmospheric novel and the setting plays a role in Lucille's isolation and dependence on Clint. Although the reader knows from the beginning that something is going to go very wrong, the suspense grows as Lucille begins to figure out Clint's true nature while totally dependent upon him. Greaves does a great job with the historical setting and placing Lucille in the period.

Alas, there is nothing new under the sun. While we tend to think people are worse now, there were always those among us who are sociopaths and do not follow societal rules and norms. It is chilling to know that this is based on a true story. I also personally found the fictional trial questioning Lottie as some sort of femme fatale rather depressing. I would hope and pray that we have come a long way beyond blaming a victim.

Highly recommended - especially if you enjoy historical fiction set in the Depression.
<http://shetreadsoftly.blogspot.com/>

Disclosure: My Kindle edition was courtesy of Bloomsbury and Netgalley for review purposes.

Tuck says

very nice dust bowl noir, reminiscent of thompson Pop. 1280 and thompson and franklin Smonk among others. so desperately poor folks, looking for a solution or at least a square meal perhaps let their hunger twist right and wrong, and if you eat when you are hungry, what's wrong with that, even if you have to hoodwink, rob, murder, for your beans. so pyschopath, his 13 year old "wife", and on the lam, end up in evertt ruess country, herding sheep, of all things. Everett Ruess: His Short Life, Mysterious Death, and Astonishing Afterlife . so what do you do when you've run out of road? well, go cross-country! fun murders, chickenfights, decapitated skeleton murder trials, indian horse races, being on the road with the joads! this fast-reading and true-to-life novel has lots to enjoy. Waltzing With the Ghost of Tom Joad: Poverty, Myth, and Low-Wage labor in OklahomaBig Wheat: A Tale of Bindlestiffs and Blood (2nd thompson cite from above)

well, blast, my citations got all twinned up, here is another good evertt ruess book

Finding Everett Ruess: The Life and Unsolved Disappearance of a Legendary Wilderness Explorer

Jessica Walker - Stier says

I'm a descendant of the men who were killed in Utah. I read this book, knowing it was fiction but very interested to put some kind of face to my great, great grandfather's murderer. I think Greaves did a fine job of

creating that face. I enjoyed that the story surrounded Lottie's journey and that the story didn't really focus on Palmer's crimes.

After ruminating for a day about what I read, I've been wondering if this really was who Lottie was. It's nice to think of her as a naive, sweet, little girl who had her innocence stollen but I'm wondering if that really was the case. I don't know. I don't know that it matters.

The book was an interesting read. I enjoyed the dust bowl view and when the journey turned to Colorado and Utah, I found quite a few words I needed to look up. I always enjoy learning new words, so that was fun!

Rosie says

Dark.. edgy

Good

Jonathan says

It's 1934, and 13 year old Lottie Garrett and her father run into Clint Palmer, charismatic and seductive, but bad through and through. Palmer convinces them to join him as he travels to Texas, but after several misadventures he informs Lottie that her father has left town and that they should do likewise, in order to meet up with him.

Alongside this history is the evidence Lottie is giving in a case against Clint Palmer for murder.

These are the two main threads of the story, both heading towards each other further on in the book, but this is not all the book is about. To me it is the story of a naïve girl, brought up with limited education, no maternal influence, a bullying father who uses the bible to tell her what she shouldn't do in life, and no ability to defend herself against the men who continually take advantage of her, whether it be sexually, emotionally, or as an outlet for their aggression.

A sorry story indeed, but one that is told with a lyrical, authentic sounding voice, and in a style that gathers momentum as the fugitives find themselves travelling from state to state, as Clint would have it, like Bonnie and Clyde. A gripping read that is more than just a crime spree novel, or a thriller, a western or a social commentary.

Melissa Stacy says

This novel is advertised as "a chilling tale of survival and redemption" and as "the intensely personal story of a young girl's coming of age." Neither claim is true, and if you pick up this book assuming the jacket copy is accurately portraying what you'll find in this novel, you'll be sadly disappointed, or perhaps incredibly frustrated. But if you put aside the false advertising, and evaluate the story for what it is, the frustration and disappointment disappear.

"Hard Twisted" is an artistic rendering of the TRUE STORY of a thirteen-year-old girl who suffered through an INCREDIBLE amount of hardship, first at the hands of her homeless, violent, and alcoholic father, and

then at the hands of her father's murderer. The story begins in 1934, and follows the protagonist, the 13-year-old Lucile "Lottie" Garrett through a year of her life in captivity with a murdering ex-con who beheaded her father, kidnapped her, and for the next year of her life, the reader witnesses this man repeatedly rape her, beat her, impregnate her, leave her to the wolves when she miscarries her baby, eventually murder two men in front of her, and then land both of them in prison soon after.

In real life, Lottie Garrett was tried as a juvenile in the state of Texas and "convicted of associating with a known criminal." It was assumed she should have been aware that this murdering psychopath was already an ex-con, even though Lottie's father was a homeless man, and he and his daughter had been homeless for two years prior to meeting this killer. No one ever told Lottie that this man had spent years in prison, nor was she ever aware that he had killed her father before landing in jail. And yet, after her year as this pedophile's victim, Lottie was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Just take that in for a moment. A child who has known nothing but hardship and abuse, and spends a year living through all kinds of horrors with her father's murderer (the killer cut off her father's head with an ax, and then hid the body)-- this girl of 14 is put in prison for SEVEN YEARS. Why? Because she told the truth about what happened to her during her year with this killer, and, as stated, it was decided she "should have known" the psychopath who abducted her was a criminal, despite the fact that he lied to her and threatened her the entire time she was with him.

Throughout the novel, we are not privy to Lottie's thoughts or emotions, which is why this book cannot be classified as a "coming of age" tale. To advertise any story as such, the protagonist must grow up in some fashion. In this novel, while Lottie does miscarry a child in the story, very few details are given about the miscarriage, and almost no details are given about her changing body. Even less information is shared concerning her thoughts and emotions throughout the entire story, and by the time she gives her testimony in court, it is clear that Lottie Garrett is as confused and childish in her thinking as she was at the beginning of the book. She has gained no new clarity about herself or her relationship with her kidnapper. She has not grown up, or come of age, in any way that I could determine. And she doesn't reflect on her prison sentence at all, whether she views this as a terrible injustice or not.

Throughout the novel, Lottie Garrett possesses the intelligence and vivacity of a cow munching grain in a slaughterhouse, waiting for her turn to be bludgeoned, skinned, and rendered to pieces. Lottie is largely a vapid shell who serves the purpose of blinking stupidly out at the world, and through her eyes, an omniscient (and infinitely more intelligent) narrator provides the reader with beautiful sentences describing the scenery. Those beautiful sentences are the reason to read the book. This author, C. Joseph Greaves, is often compared to Cormac McCarthy, and here is an example of the prose in Hard Twisted, a scene involving Lottie and her kidnapper, many days before he murders her father: "They ate corn bread and Karo syrup straight from the pan, her head floating in the amber lamplight and the whiskey and the heat from the open firebox." (p. 30)

Here is another example, this time of the killer's father: "H.P. Palmer was a superannuated facsimile of his son, cord-thin and clear-eyed, his aquiline face fissured and deeply tanned."

Suffice it to say, Lottie Garrett could never describe anyone using the words "superannuated," "facsimile," "aquiline," or "fissured," as she would have NO IDEA what those words mean. She is 13 and homeless when the story begins, has been raised on the Bible, and expresses herself with the crude and stunted vocabulary and grammar of an unschooled southerner.

Lottie Garrett is a passive observer of her own story, and most of the action of the novel takes place away from her, where the narrator can't describe what is happening in scene.

It was a challenge to decide how many stars to give this book. My personal enjoyment of the tale made this novel a 2-star book for me, as vapid and passive protagonists do not inspire me to turn pages, and overall, I was frustrated by Lottie. I couldn't understand what she was thinking or what she was feeling, so her dull-witted passivity was hard to stomach.

But I think this is the very point the author was trying to communicate. Most children who are denied an education, beaten and abused throughout childhood, and then kidnapped by a pedophile rapist murderer and forced through a year of incredible cruelty, would probably react the same way Lottie does-- clinging to the lies being fed to her, and never even realizing she could run away.

I think sharing this story is a very noble intention, and the prose is beautifully written. So that is why I rounded up with my stars, and gave the book 4 stars total. I admire authors who attempt to make art from something as brutal and ugly and tragic as the life of this child.

That said, I would like to add one more comment concerning this book. On p.209, "the parson Sunshine Smith" pays a visit to Lottie, and I read in the author's note that Sunshine Smith was also a real person. In the novel, Sunshine Smith pays a visit to Lottie along with two "Navajo elders," and their weird and appalling visit prompts her miscarriage to begin. Lottie doesn't blame her miscarriage on the bizarre and frightening things these men do to her right before blood begins to pour from between her legs, but I sure did. The cause-and-effect seemed obvious, and these men seemed evil and sadistic as a result. I don't know if the author intended me to be so disgusted by these three men, but I was. They only occupy 4 pages in the book, so their presence is brief, but extremely shocking, and as horrifying to me as the fact that Lottie was sentenced to seven years in prison by the state of Texas.

Laura Zimmerman says

This book was recommended to me by my fiance, who won it in a Goodreads drawing. He highly recommended it and I will pay it forward by offering my review and recommendation here.

Hard Twisted is the story of 13-year-old Lottie and her father, two people just barely scraping by in the 1930's. They have a chance encounter with Clint, who unbeknownst to Lottie and her father, has a less-than-savory past. Initially, Clint appears to be able to offer Lottie experiences that her own father can't offer her, which is one reason her father allows her to spend time with Clint unchaperoned. In addition, Clint is a con man and thus able to gain Lottie's father's trust quickly.

I won't give away much in my review but I will say that although the book is a work of fiction based on a true story, the entire book rings true. It's told from Lottie's perspective, a perspective that is naive and wary at

the same time. Clint appeals to the young girl in her, the girl who wants to have another girl to play with and to ride horses with but quickly reveals himself to be not at all who he seems to be. Lottie's perspective is believeable, tragic, and sad. The reader is privy to more experience and knowledge and from the reader's perspective it's difficult to understand how she could fall into her situation so seamlessly. On one hand, the reader wonders how Lottie can so easily accept Clint's explanations for events and on the other hand the reader wonders what else Lottie could have done, given her isolation and inexperience. The author does a good job of getting in Lottie's head, for lack of a better phrase, and telling us the story from the perspective of someone who was once innocent but had her innocence shattered by a man who had dark motives in life.

The author provides description of the land that Lottie and Clint pass through and evokes images from an old Western movie. He also evokes some feeling of what a day-to-day existence might have felt like back in that time, hoboing and camping at will and never knowing where the next meal might come from.

Hard Twisted is a dark novel, one that reminds the reader that there are always people like Clint, people who will manipulate and lie for their own gain. Knowing that the novel is based on events that actually happened makes the story that much more chilling.

Jeri says

On vacation in Durango, CO, this summer. Any small town with a book store is a great small town, and I spent some time in Marie's Bookshop, talking to staff members. When I travel west I look for western literature. The staff member directed me to a number of authors and books unfamiliar to me, but she kept coming back to Hard Twisted by Joseph Greaves. I'm glad she twisted my arm. This is a fictionalized account of a true story of kidnapping and murder in the 1930's, ranging from New Mexico, to Colorado, Texas and Utah. Beautifully written but a tough subject of murder and mayhem. After researching the facts of the case, Greaves does a remarkable job of trying to describe the personalities and motivations of the characters. His descriptions of the landscapes are breathtaking.

Stephen Campbell says

Hard Twisted, by C. Joseph Greaves, is the riveting tale of a young girl and an amoral older man set during the depression era. The story takes place in desolate small towns, camps and outposts in the southwest and west and is told through a combination of trial transcripts and through the eyes of the different characters in the story.

The book is a work of fiction, but it's based on actual events. The author's haunting writing style lays out the story slowly and the horror of the events the book memorializes come more clearly into focus with each passing chapter.

Hard Twisted is an ambitious, beautifully written book that tells a chilling story. Highly recommended.

Rob Slaven says

As usual I received this book from GoodReads as part of a giveaway. Also as usual, despite the very kind

and generous consideration of getting a free book, I give my candid opinions below.

Hard Twisted is a wonderfully dark, gritty and true-to-life portrait of a young girl fallen in with the wrong crowd in the 1930s west. She is taken on a forced trip from town to town, one step ahead of the law until.... the ultimate resolution which I will not be so unkind as to reveal.

Greaves' novel combines several wonderful aspects of the historical novel. He is truthful as he draws from real events and paints with a brush which includes much local color and language. This all adds quite nicely to the keen and simmering hatred the reader builds for the antagonist over the book's 300 pages.

Our author's writing is, admittedly, at times very dense and I found myself starting over after 50 pages just to begin again and give the book more focused attention. This is not a novel to be read in tiny sessions. Give it two solid hours or don't bother until tomorrow. Greaves' prose is delicious, dense and satisfying but should be savored in large chunks that let you immerse yourself rather than in fits and starts.

Pondering to whom to pass this book next, I bumped it quickly to the top of the pile of books I designate as recommended to my fiancee to read next. Its delightful language and sympathetic characters are, I hope, a perfect choice for her literary tastes. Any reader who delights in deep and meaningful writing that takes a bit of effort will enjoy this work.

To summarize, Hard Twisted is a fictional account of a difficult time in American history that rings true in a way that few novels of the type do. While sometimes dense it is none the less a deeply satisfying and entertaining example of the genre.
