



## Shattered Wings

*Bryan Healey*

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John has a hold of the American dream: Love, a beautiful little girl, the perfect home and a well-paying job. But a sudden layoff brings it all into question, as he deals with the unexpected financial and emotional strain. As he struggles to find new work, a growing sense of despair triggers a return to alcohol and causes him to face his demons of addiction, discrimination, and regret as he tries desperately to recover his once happy life before it's too late...

## **Shattered Wings Details**

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## From Reader Review Shattered Wings for online ebook

### SenoraG says

Article first published as Book Review: *Shattered Wings* by Bryan Healey on Blogcritics.

Shattered Wings tells the story of a family, John, Charlie and their little girl Cassie. It tells how one change, the loss of John's job, can break the family into pieces and drive John to do things he never thought possible or that he was capable of.

This is a powerful book. It shows the power of love and how love is not always enough. It introduces us to a family who went from being so happy to slowly falling apart when John's depression over not having a job drives him back to drinking, which he tried to hide from Charlie with no success.

Charlie has seen him at the bottom before, has walked away from him until he got clean and sober and who now refuses to allow Cassie to grow up with a father who is drinking and coming home drunk. Charlie makes the choice to take their daughter and leave, which only drives John closer and closer to his edge.

My heart truly broke for John. He was a good guy who was dealt a bad card with getting laid off. He tried to find work but it just wasn't coming. He was a high paid manager and times are tough, while interview after interview led to nothing and he was ashamed of himself and embarrassed that he was not able to take care of his family the way he should. What I didn't understand is why he never told Charlie from the beginning about getting laid off. He chose instead to hide it from him and act like he was going to work until the money ran out and he had no choice but to tell him.

I could relate to Charlie as well. He was working from home to be able to take care of their daughter during the day and his income was not as good as John's. Charlie tried his best to be there for John in all ways but John pushed him away. As much as he loved John, his first priority had to be Cassie and her well being. I could feel his struggle when he made the decision to leave.

Read more: <http://blogcritics.org/books/article/...>

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### Kitty Austin says

#### BRYAN HEALEY'S "SHATTERED WINGS" (A REVIEW)

"Shattered Wings," is the story of a homosexual man with a family and his struggle with alcoholism. It shows how the stresses of daily life can drag you so far down that it's hard to claw your way back up. After losing his job with a company he's served since his graduation from college, he tries hard to find another in the meantime filling in what he feels are the missing pieces of his life with alcohol. He keeps his lay-off a secret from his fiance' Charlie, and begins a downward spiral into an all-consuming darkness. It is a riveting tale as you catch glimpses into John's past and begin to understand just how hard his life has been, where his only light moments have consisted of those shared with his fiance' and their adopted daughter, Cassie. The ending is shocking! The author, Bryan Healey, has done an excellent job on this story as you can't help but to empathize with his main character. A very worthy read.

### Ron Fritsch says

Bryan Healey's novel, *Shattered Wings*, won me over completely. The descent of his protagonist, John, from his delightfully gay heaven—with a good job, an attractive and almost saintly lover, and an adopted daughter they both adore—to the hell his bigoted and yet knowing father had predicted all along (thus "shattered wings") is believable, intense, and tragic.

John has a drinking problem. In order to keep his partner, Charlie, and his daughter, Cassie—his family—John stops drinking but struggles to remain abstinent. Then, apparently a victim of the recent economic crisis, he loses his job.

The bookends to Healey's story seem quite right to me. The beginning immediately arouses dread. The ending boldly goes, in the confessional first person no less, where many writers would lack the courage to go.

Reading *Shattered Wings* is like viewing an Ed Norton movie, where we're thinking, we love you, man; you don't need to do what you're doing to yourself. Does his character hear our plea? Of course not. He's on the screen in a magnificent fall. We're on our couch.

Those of us who read and admire thoughtful, serious fiction know a John. We sometimes see him when we look in our mirrors. I readily gave him the benefit of every doubt, even as he refused to do what I wanted him to do. His struggle, emanating from his father's rejection, is too familiar and true for him not to capture our sympathy as if it were prey.

Readers should know that Healey handles his "sex" scenes with admirable restraint. I found it good to know that, yeah, John and Charlie are very much in love with one another that way, too. But Healey wisely knows he doesn't have to provide a play-by-play account in this kind of story. He can let us imagine the details, or not, as we see fit.

I'm looking forward to what Bryan Healey next has to offer his readers. I hope he continues to write realistic fiction.

The horror in an honest and realistic depiction of the world as we know it, as in *Shattered Wings*, can far exceed the make-believe horror in the genre realms. Unlike the magical world, where anything horrific or beautiful can happen but invariably doesn't, since that world doesn't exist, the real world's horrors and beauties more thoroughly frighten or move us simply because they're real and can happen to us all.

I'm keeping my eye on Bryan Healey.

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### Valentina says

I'm still in a bit of a shock at the ending. I finished it a couple of hours ago after having spent yesterday reading the majority of the book, and let me tell you, this is one powerful book.

So, John is a recovered alcoholic who seems to have everything figured out: he has a wonderful partner, Charlie, and an adopted daughter Cassie, who love him very much, a house, a job that provides for all of them well. And suddenly, it all falls to pieces. He loses his job and the downward spiral begins. We follow him as he makes one wrong decision after another, gasping at his choices, all the while asking ourselves "what would I have done?" The plotline sounds relatively tame, but I can assure you it is anything but. Some scenes are so thick with tension I actually had to put the book down and watch some meaningless tv show. The author has managed to captured the oppressed atmosphere that John is living in, and the reader also begins to feel trapped, begins to wait for a cell phone to ring that never does.

The writing itself is good. There are some editing issues that could have easily been fixed, such as missing consonants, etc. but none of it should deter anyone from picking this book up. Just make sure you have something light to turn to when you start feeling overwhelmed.

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### **Jill says**

Love fails in light of job loss and depression.

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The real agony felt when one loses a job and its devastating effects on his or her family is too often a common story in these difficult times. Author Bryan Healey traces John's spiraling downfall from his job loss, drinking problem and failure to communicate with those he loves. This story shows the real life agony from the choices John made and his actions and interactions as a son, as a father to Cassie and as a spouse to Charlie. This story isn't just about being unemployed, gay, alcoholic, or suicidal; it is a clear, careful description that shows when people make choices in life, it affects those around them. In hindsight, there is always a way to step aside and make a different choice away from the destructive path, but a person may fail to see possibilities or simply choose not to take the first step.

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### **Sara Winters says**

I didn't review or rate this book immediately after I read it because I couldn't quite put into words how I felt about it. I found John, the main character, unlikeable. This is understandable given that he spends most of the book lying to his partner and hiding several destructive secrets when he could've sought support. But, mostly I felt there were a lack of moments to garner sympathy for the character, even if I didn't agree with his choices to continually lie. I wanted to feel sorry for him, chapter after chapter, and gradually found it impossible to do so. I also feel like the back and forth with he and his partner separating and making up was at times unclear because sections of the story were told out of sequence. It was sometimes difficult to tell what was happening in present day and what was history.

I think the writing style was unique and easily lended itself to getting into the character's head at some key moments. However, my lack of empathy for the character made it difficult for me to feel invested in how the

story ends (though I did enjoy the writing and character's perspective more through the last few chapters than I did for most of the first half). I think Healey deserves credit for writing an ending that wasn't easy or clean, instead opting to go with an appropriate end to the story for a character who sows the seeds of his own destruction from page one.

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### **The Rainbow Zebra says**

My deepest thanks to Bryan Healey for sending me an ARC of this book to review.

What do you do when your life is turned tragically upside down? In *Shattered Wings*, we are introduced to a family--John, his spouse Charlie, and their adopted daughter Cassie. While Charlie works at home to be with their daughter, John is a white collar worker with a secure job. Until it isn't. Laid off in the dwindling economy, John decides to not tell Charlie. In a series of flashbacks, we are thrust into feeling his desperation as job interviews come and go, the memories of his meeting Charlie, and welcoming their daughter. His fears thrust him back into a life that could end in tragedy.

I was struck by the stark cover of Healey's book--always a promising sign. I was not disappointed. Healey has written a very timely novel that literally moved me to tears--which is hard to do and to me, signifies a book that not only satisfies but lingers in my head. His style of writing is lyrical but not overdone.

One sign of his brilliant talent is that when I began reading, I envisioned the narrator to be a woman. It's only a few pages in do I realize that this is a gay couple. I went back to the beginning to re-read so that I had the right picture in my head. But truly, aside from a few places in the book, John and Charlie are "every family" and quite accessible to any reader. I find it wonderful, as a bisexual woman, to find a novel that is modern and mainstream and doesn't need to feel like it has to be different because it features a gay couple.

A bit of a tongue-in-cheek warning: there are no chapters. So if you're a voracious reader like I am, you may find yourself devouring this book far too quickly or staying up into the wee hours of the morning. It's nearly impossible to pace yourself with such a wonderful book in hand.

I heartily recommend *Shattered Wings*, \*need\* to find Healy's other work, and cannot wait for more to come. I think his literary voice will go far!

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### **Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says**

Despite the slow signs of recovery, the Global Financial Crisis continues to impact heavily on society. While unemployment and the subsequent financial pressure may be the immediate consequence of the credit crunch, it is the long term individual repercussions that continue to reverberate. In *Shattered Wings*, John's unexpected 'downsizing' triggers a spiraling descent into depression and alcoholism. The main breadwinner for his family that includes stay at home husband Charlie and daughter Cassie, John is initially confident he will find a new position quickly and hides his unemployment as he searches for work. As the days and then weeks pass, his optimism fades and as his stress levels mount John reverts to old patterns of coping - alcohol and denial. Eventually his secrets are revealed and John risks losing much more than his career.

*Shattered Wings* is an emotionally hard hitting novel, brutally demonstrating the destabilising effects of

unemployment in our financially troubled times. It is not just the the loss of income that affects the individual, the impact on self esteem, identity and sense of security is equally as devastating, particularly for the main breadwinner who has a family who relies on him as John does. I was very sympathetic to John's shock at being made redundant and his hurt and frustration as it became obvious that he was unlikely to find employment again quickly. The author skillfully illustrates John's devolving confidence and increasing desperation.

Twice my husband has been a victim of unemployment when businesses he worked for had filed for bankruptcy without warning so I have personal experience of the challenges men in John's position face. Both times it took a few months to regain full time employment and while my husband tried to maintain a positive outlook I know it ate as his soul.

As we are shown through a series of flashbacks, John was already vulnerable to stress, he had had issues with alcohol that had previously jeopardised his relationship with his husband and like many alcoholics was under the delusion he could control it. When he begins drinking again after being made redundant it contributes significantly to the disintegration of his relationship. The drinking also robs John of his motivation, his common sense and eventually his sense of self preservation resulting in a shocking climax. This is a well written novel, told in the first person through a series of flashbacks and the current agonies of his circumstance. While the division between the past and present is made clear in the narrative, the formatting in my e-version could be improved to define it more clearly.

Shattered Wings is a powerful story with timely relevance. Thought provoking and poignant this novel is sure to have an emotional impact.

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## Evie says

### **\*\* Originally published to: Bookish**

Every once in awhile, you find a book that is so compelling and penetrating that you can't put it down. Through its fiery emotional onslaught it tears at your soul and leaves a stain upon your heart. It's dark and disquieting, and yet you can't cast it away. It grabs hold of you from page one and doesn't let go till the end. Shattered Wings is one of those books.

In his book, Bryan Healey tackles the demons and obsessions challenging the alcoholic. He brings to vivid light the tragedy of the alcohol addiction. In a literary style that is both simple and masterful, his description of what true alcoholism is and what it does to people is deeply disturbing and unforgettable.

Shattered Wings is a tale of one man's descent into alcoholism. John seems to have everything going for him. He has a well-paying white-collar job, loving partner and beautiful daughter. Together with his family he lives a harmonious and prosperous life in a suburban house in upper New York. He's a successful man, content with what he has. Until one day it all comes tumbling down when John is released from his job due to the downsizing of the company he works for. Determined to salvage the situation on his own, he decides to keep the layoff a secret from his partner, until he finds a new job. But finding it isn't as easy as he first thought it would be. No one seems to be interested in hiring a laid-off worker who dedicated 13 years of his life to one company. Apparently his loyalty means nothing more than experience deficiency and not enough exposure to a broader range of skills. As days pass by and there's still very little prospect of getting hired, an overpowering sense of hopelessness sinks John to the bottom of the bottle.

Shattered Wings pulls the reader into a dark and scary world of alcohol abuse. A world filled with lies, delusions, anger, self-pity and fear. John is slowly losing everything he ever cared about and yet I find it very

hard to sympathize with him. After all, he made the decision to face the hardships on his own. If only he'd confide in Charlie, no matter how desperate the situation, I'm sure together they'd find a way out of it. I was really angry at John for making all the wrong decisions and succumbing to his addiction. There were many times when I seriously wanted to slap or shake him. I was frustrated that he gave up, that he didn't try harder, and that he didn't let people help him when he was unable to help himself. Deep inside he knew that he's an alcoholic, and yet he chose to pretend that it's only temporary, that he can –and will – stop drinking as soon as he can find a new job.

It's a very emotional story and I was totally engrossed in it. Healey's writing style is simple yet very captivating. The story is told in a way that will keep you turning the pages until you hit the back cover. This book deals with some heavy subjects yet it's not emotionally draining.

What I especially like about this book is that it does not aspire to create a greater sympathy for alcoholics, nor does it have any didactic feeling to it. Healey is not here to teach you what is wrong or right, he won't tell you to stay away from the alcohol, nor will he encourage you to have a drink. Shattered Wings has no agenda, good or bad, for its influence in the world. It simply tells a tragic story. It lays out the facts, leaving the reader to interpret them however he/she wants. Bryan Healey has perfectly captured the madness, hopelessness, compulsion, fear and degradation of addiction. Shattered Wings chronicles a truly heartbreak journey down the road to self-destruction. It's a powerful and thought-provoking read, a chronicle, a picture, a record of a dark way of life. All that makes it a great piece of literature, well worthy of the time invested into reading it.

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### **Karen says**

This book is written in an interesting way. You start practically at the end and then go back to the beginning in flashbacks, both in the distant and near past. It is about a troubled relationship that while it is a gay relationship, could just as easily be any two people who love one another. I don't want to give away too much, because I think you should read and find out yourself the entire break down of John, his relationship with his lover and his daughter. It will touch most people very deeply, and shock others with its ending. But whatever happens you will not regret reading this very well written and touching story, I am so thankful for the opportunity to receive this book through first read give aways.

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### **Jennifer Defoy says**

This one I thought would be a bit difficult for me to read. So many of us right now are struggling with losing our jobs, not having the money to make ends meet, and all the other stresses that come along for the ride. It's a difficult subject to talk about, let alone get emotionally attached to in a story (as I almost always get emotionally attached to the stories I read). My fear was that I would be emotionally drained after reading this. Healey masterfully pulled off a story that let me get attached, but didn't drain me, and actually let me wanting to keep reading.

The character development was so great in this book. John comes off as a bit of a jerk (sometimes a lot of a jerk) but he was still likeable. I really attached to him and even though I felt like he needed a swift kick in the you know what I still felt the pain and anguish that he was going through. I just wanted things to work out good for him. As the book progresses we are taken back through important moments in his life that give

us a little more insight into how his life has progressed. We get to meet Charlie with him, we get to see him when his daughter is born, we get to see all the important events that have gone on in his life. Being privy to these moments really helped to form the bond that I built with John.

I think it takes a great author to be able to pull off flashbacks in a story without making the story feel choppy. The flashbacks sometimes confused me, as I would get lost in the story and I wouldn't realize that I was in a flashback. I think that is my only criticism of this book, while the flashbacks didn't detract from the story I didn't always pick up on the fact that I had jumped into the flashback. But I think this is more due to my reading habits rather than an error on the author's part.

But overall it was a great book. I really liked the characters, even when I didn't want to. There were some great twists that really made John's situation that much more desperate. The ending was great, I had part of it pegged, but the last twist really threw me for a loop. I was left with a few questions, but I didn't feel like I was left with an unfinished story. Enough was answered to keep me satisfied, and enough was left unanswered to make the ending quite intriguing.

A review copy of this book was provided by the author. This is not a paid review and is a truthful and honest review.

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## **Alan says**

Publisher: CreateSpace (April 29, 2011)

Pages: 249

John is confident, a bit cocky, and happy with his life. He and his lover, Charlie, are proud parents of a darling little girl. Charlie is a stay-at-home daddy while John brings home the bacon with his mid-level management position in an IT department. John is living the dream in their lovely suburban home. The only thing missing is the sheepdog.

And then an unexpected layoff shows John just how fragile a foundation his perfect life is built on. John's search for a new job brings only emotional strain. He spirals into despair, which triggers a relapse into alcoholism, lies, and deceit. All it will take to recover his dream is a job—any job—but can he find one in this down economy before he loses everything?

I had a love/hate relationship with this novel. The story itself is simply terrific. It's like watching a train wreck from close up, and knowing that at any moment the whole damned thing could explode, but there is nothing you can do, not even pull your eyes away. It is a gripping story, and John is a compelling character. He's both sympathetic and pathetic at the same time, making all the wrong moves for comprehensible reasons.

This is a detailed study of a man slowly disintegrating. He keeps grasping for help, but at every turn, people turn their back on him until he is pushed beyond his endurance. It is a sad story, and bitterly real. I would love to award this tale a five-star rating, but I can't overlook the numerous issues that annoyed me.

This story desperately needs a competent editor with a large red pen. The writing—with numerous typos, misspellings, bad punctuation, switching from past tense to present and back, and repeated phrases—make

this one of the worst written books I've seen in print. The writing continually pulled me out of the story, and tainted an otherwise compelling read. It is the curse of self-publishing, and why I generally shy away from writers who publish their own work.

Although John's character has significant depth, the other characters in the story have little or no depth at all. I kept wanting them to show more of themselves, but that didn't happen. In defense of the author, this story is told by John in first person, and he is totally self absorbed through most of the story. Yet, I wanted more.

There is one other issue I'll mention. It seems that half of the book is told in flashbacks. There is a pattern where every four or five pages the author cuts from the current storyline to give several pages of backstory. Back and forth, back and forth. My issue is that too many flashbacks kept breaking the rhythm of the current story. Normally I could overlook that, except that in this case most of these flashbacks did little or nothing to advance the storyline. They seemed to slow the story down for no reason.

My opinion is that this book is not ready for prime time. With significant editing, the rounding out of some characters and the deletion of several flashbacks, this could be a fantastic read.

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### **Debbie says**

Overcoming so much in his life, John had finally found happiness with his partner Charlie and their adopted daughter Cassie. Having already put his life back together from drinking once, being laid off from his job, a job he loved and did well, led John to make bad decisions. Not telling Charlie that he was laid off, John was convinced that he could get another job before his severance pay ran out. Leaving everyday like he was heading out to work when in reality he was spending most of his time looking for a job. As option got less and job offers got even worse, John found other ways to spend his time. Even after Charlie found out what had been happening, John continued to make a string of poor choices that led to fewer options, for them all.

While I did have a difficult time getting into this story (don't really know why), I liked the character interaction and even the flashback type sections that gave the story of how his life had progressed and how he had come to be in a good place. To bad he couldn't realize that he had more options from the beginning. There wasn't' enough of Charlie for me, and some of the decisions that John made actually annoyed me but for a time the loving relationship was nice to see (I prefer the happy every after stories). The end was not shocking to me, it probably was suppose to have been, but I could kind of see it coming.

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### **Joanne says**

John is alone and wondering what has happened to his love, Charlie, and his little girl, Cassie. John has a very good job and lives with his lover, Charlie in a beautiful home in upper New York. John loves coming home every day to house-husband Charlie and the little girl that they worked so hard to adopt, Cassie.

John is at work one day and is released from his position because of down-sizing. He is unable to tell Charlie, so he dresses for work each day and he sits in teh park as he applies for positions from his phone. John feels that he can not tell Charlies, so he relies on his compensation to carry the family through until he

can get another job.

John has plenty of interviews, but nothing is going as John would like them to, he either doesn't have enough diversity or he has too much earning power for the positions he has applied for. He begins to feel desperate and reverts to an old vice that had caused a turmoil between he and Charlie in the past; drinking.

We learn about John's childhood and his early relationship with Charlie and others through flashbacks. These are quite interesting and make you see the John that people both loved and disliked in the past.

This story was well-written and the plot was great. My only problem was that John was not someone I felt inclined to like. He never came across to me as strong as he should have been, having been married to a man and having fought for the adoption of a baby girl as a gay couple. I did feel sorry for him and all of the trials that he goes through and wanted very much for things to turn around for him.

There was a problem grammatically with the word "passed" being used instead of the appropriate "past". Will definitely choose another book by Bryan Healey to read, as the writing was great. This book was definitely worth the read.

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### **Jennifer says**

I won this book on Goodreads and was really excited to find such a talented new author. This story was kind of depressing but very well written. When his world virtually collapses around him John continues to make poor choice after poor choice, compounding his sorrow and despair. Author Healy has a great talent for writing dialogue that you don't see very often. When Charlie and John are talking you feel as though you are in the room with them and cheering for things to get better.

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