

The Summer That Melted Everything

TIFFANY MCDANIEL



BOOK DETAILS

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

An Ohio native, Tiffany McDaniel's writing is inspired by the rolling hills and buckeye woods of the land she knows. She is also a poet, playwright, screenwriter, and artist. *The Summer That Melted Everything* is her debut novel.

Fielding Bliss has never never forgotten the summer of 1984: the year a heatwave scorched the small town of Breathed, Ohio. The year he became friends with the devil.

When local prosecutor Autopsy Bliss publishes an invitation to the devil to come to the country town of Breathed, Ohio, nobody quite expects that he will turn up. They especially don't expect him to turn up as a tattered and bruised thirteen-year-old boy.

Fielding, the son of Autopsy, finds the boy outside the courthouse and brings him home, and he is welcomed into the Bliss family. The Blisses believe the boy, who calls himself Sal, is a runaway from a nearby farm town. Then, as a series of strange incidents implicate Sal — and riled by the feverish heatwave baking the town from the inside out — there are some around town who start to believe that maybe Sal is exactly who he claims to be.

But whether he's a traumatised child or the devil incarnate, Sal is certainly one strange fruit: he talks in riddles, his uncanny knowledge and understanding reaches far outside the realm of a normal child — and ultimately his eerily affecting stories of Heaven, Hell, and earth will mesmerise and enflame the entire town.

Devastatingly beautiful, *The Summer That Melted Everything* is a captivating story about community, redemption, and the dark places where evil really lies.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The first time we meet Sal he's a scrawny kid looking for ice-cream, but we soon see he has wisdom beyond his years, and frailties also. Who do you think Sal is? Where did he come from?
2. What do you think about the time-period in which the book is set? Why do you think McDaniel set it in the 1980s — a time of moral panic related to AIDS and race, and extreme consumerism?
3. The book talks a lot about good and evil. How do you think those ideas are presented? Do you think any of the characters are definitely good, or definitely bad?

REVIEWS

‘Sometimes a book comes along that is so good that it defies all descriptions, but I’ll give it a shot anyway:

Tiffany McDaniel’s astounding and heartbreaking *The Summer That Melted Everything* reads as if Carson McCullers and Shirley Jackson got together with Nathaniel Hawthorne in some celestial backwater and decided to write the first truly great gothic coming-of-age novel of the twenty-first century. There, I said it. Now read it.’

DONALD RAY POLLOCK, AUTHOR OF *KNOCKEMSTIFF* AND *THE DEVIL ALL THE TIME*

‘Sometimes there is a novel so strange and beguiling it makes you give up your world for another world, all the while that you are reading it ... It will frighten you, and charm you, and break your heart if you allow it ... and you will allow it, because once this world has hold of you, it won’t let you go.’

JACQUELYN MITCHARD, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE DEEP END OF THE OCEAN*

‘A blast of hellfire, humor, and heartbreak that’s part Flannery O’Connor, part Stephen King, and wholly original.’

LOU BERNEY, AUTHOR OF *THE LONG AND FARAWAY GONE*

4. Fielding narrates the story as an old man looking back on the events. What do you think about Fielding’s life in the present? Do you feel sorry for him?
5. When Autopsy is asked why he invited the devil to Breathed he says, “Because I wanted to see for myself.” What is it he wanted to see? Have you ever had a “wanted to see” moment yourself?
6. Every character in the book is wrestling with a demon. Talk about each character and how their personal tragedies intertwine with the story.
7. The ending of the book is steeped in sadness and loss. Emotions are laid bare and every character is changed forever. Were you hoping for a happy ending? Do you think that the ending reflects life more accurately than most fiction, in that happy endings are rare?
8. Did the ending come as a surprise, even though there is a warning in the title that all is lost?



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