




# Goat: A Memoir

*Brad Land*

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## **Goat: A Memoir** Brad Land

Reeling from a terrifying assault that has left him physically injured and psychologically shattered, nineteen-year-old Brad Land must also contend with unsympathetic local police, parents who can barely discuss “the incident” (as they call it), a brother riddled with guilt but unable to slow down enough for Brad to keep up, and the feeling that he’ll never be normal again. When Brad’s brother enrolls at Clemson University and pledges a fraternity, Brad believes he’s being left behind once and for all. Desperate to belong, he follows. What happens there—in the name of “brotherhood,” and with the supposed goal of forging a scholar and a gentleman from the raw materials of boyhood—involves torturous late-night hazing, heartbreaking estrangement from his brother, and, finally, the death of a fellow pledge. Ultimately, Brad must weigh total alienation from his newfound community against accepting a form of brutality he already knows too well.

A searing memoir of masculinity, violence, and brotherhood, **Goat** provides an unprecedented window into the emotional landscape of young men and introduces a writer of uncommon grace and power.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Goat: A Memoir Details**

Date : Published March 1st 2005 by Random House Trade Paperbacks (first published 2004)

ISBN : 9780812969689

Author : Brad Land

Format : Paperback 224 pages

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## **From Reader Review Goat: A Memoir for online ebook**

### **David Fulmer says**

It starts off with a compelling and unique voice, written in spartan prose with considerable style. Brad Land's youth is scarred by an act of random violence but most of his memoir focuses on his experiences rushing a fraternity at Clemson, a succession of grim, violent, and humiliating trials which he undergoes in an attempt to fit in, afraid that if he fails he will amount to nothing and have nothing. The book deals thoughtfully with some interesting issues but the characters and incidents don't have enough detail and depth to draw you in. The ending is pretty sad but I just wish there was more humour and variety to balance some of the dreary and disgusting content. This is a book about masculinity and alienation on a modern college campus with some good insights into the many social pressures affecting young men on their path to adulthood.

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### **Clare says**

Well. What a lot of bad things happened to this guy. This is Brad Land's story of surviving a brutal carjacking and how it affected his life and in particular his relationship with his brother. The desire to stay close to said brother led Land to pledge a fraternity that, I don't know, maybe is typical but Jesus I hope not. I hope this particular fraternity is totally unique. It is made up entirely of sociaopaths. Are people seriously doing this stuff? To get into a fraternity? And if so, why?

Land tells his story well - the pacing is very good, including much of what is truly pertinent and none of what is not. His feelings about his experiences are made abundantly clear. The lanuguage is also good. My only problem with it was that Land used a hectic, run-on sentence laden style throughout. I understand why and it works for its intended purpose - to impart his sense of panic and dread - but it gets wearying. It would have been easier to read if he'd reserved that style for a few dramatic passages. Again, it does work - I felt like I was inside his head. I just didn't like it there. Also, I really, really, really, really hate it when writers fool around with punctuation. Since when do we not have to use quotation marks when someone is speaking? Since never, that's when. So use 'em. That's nitpicking, though - overall, it's a story that really deserves to be heard and Land told it successfully.

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### **Siarra Marchant says**

Goat: A Memoir by Brad Land, is a story told about two brothers and their journey heading off the collage together. It all starts at a party, Land gave two strangers a ride home from a college party, Land winds up in a ditch, brutally beaten and robbed. The next year, he transfers to Clemson, determined to follow his smart big brother in pledging to Kappa Sigma. They are desperate to get into this fraternity and hazing week arrives with crazy dangerous stunts. Some may be regretting joining.. I recommend this book to anyone. Its a interesting story since its a memoir and he was actually their so his details are fresh , while reading it he made you feel that you were also their with him.

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## **Chris says**

This was a really unpleasant book. I'm sorry that Land went through a brutal attack the way he did, but joining a sadistic fraternity and giving a ride to yet another stranger and spending the rest of the book smoking and moping was not a good way to deal with his trauma. There's no one really to like in this book, even the author is not very sympathetic or likable. And for the love of pete, how hard would it have been to give us poor readers quotation marks? I loathe books where the dialogue does not have quotation marks. It didn't even have dashes. Hate that.

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## **Shawn says**

### **Introduction**

This is a troublesome novel because it paints a vivid picture of the sort of quagmire that affects and constrains a great proportion of the young men in the United States. Large segments of American youth are reared up in environments that consider alcohol, tobacco, and drugs a normality, even though these substances can clearly deteriorate ones ability to grow spiritually and achieve educational goals. This book is about the particular adverse culture that can erupt in college fraternities.

Before college, the main character and narrator, Brad, suffers a traumatic criminal assault that exacerbates his preexisting depression. As a result, he becomes caught up in a sort of nihilism that stems from his lack of direction and the utter hopelessness he associates with most everything he does. He seems to invite death and abuse, as evidenced early in the novel by his willingness to pick up strangers in his car and his constant chain-smoking. When he reaches college and experiences the additional abuse of fraternity hazing, he breaks.

The hazing experienced by Brad (and probably most all forms of hazing) is clearly anti-religious. We see this when Brad's Pledge Trainer delivers the admonition that Brad's Pledge manual should replace his Bible. We also see this in the fraternities references to their pledges as "goats", which seems an ironic allusion to the separation of the "sheep from the goats" in the Bible. The constant profanity, alcohol abuse, and wanton sex described in the book characterizes the state of confusion that Brad finds himself in.

Certainly the Christian reader will wish to somehow comfort and rescue Brad from the sinking entanglement of deceit and alcohol abuse. Concern and love for one bound for death is at the heart of the Christian message.

### **The Relevance of Icons**

An incident occurs about a hundred pages in, as Brad randomly passes outside of a church, which helped me to better understand the importance of the church edifice and its icons. For so many, this edifice can be the sole representation of something more than the drifting hopelessness in their lives. When Brad's pledge brother admonishes him for throwing his cigarette butt on the church lawn, Brad gains an inkling of what constitutes real reverence: reverence for something more than social status, fame, and revelry. This is particularly obvious when Brad, observing the uplifted hands of Jesus in the image of the stained glass, looks in turn at his own hands and is inadvertently directed to self-reflection.

## *Stained Glass Depiction of Jesus*

This part of the book was particularly revelational for me because I have long failed to appreciate the importance of icons, frescoes, paintings, and architecture to Christianity. The passages in this book let me see that such iconic graphics and edifices can serve to penetrate the veil of deceit that so many, like Brad, are caught up in. A chance encounter at a church, a sudden unplanned glimpse at a painting, or the presence of statuary, can be a catalyst to make certain people examine their spirituality further. Instead of seeing it as a tendency toward idolatry, I have come to understand that such imagery is, so to speak, simply another way of spreading the Word.

Following my encounter with this passage in the book, I was motivated to explore religious paintings and happened upon Carl Heinrich Bloch's "*Gethsemane*", which is a depiction of an angel comforting Jesus, as shown below:

### *Carl Heinrich Bloch's: "Gethsemane"*

I found this painting particularly moving and representative of the sort of Christian love that transcends all hardship, even that of impending death. This painting helped me better grasp the role of art, imagery, and even ritual in spirituality.

However, about two-third's through this book, I discovered the movie rendition on Amazon Prime and watched it. The movie's character for Brad was much more out going than in the book. My perception of the character from the book was much darker, depressed, and inviting of disaster. The character in the movie was much more human. Like the book, the movie is full of profanity, sex, and substance abuse. The movie entirely neglects the incident outside of the church that I found most inspiring.

## **The Trauma Bond**

From reading some of the other reviews here, I see the significance of this novel isn't fully apparent to some and this is understandable because the novel provides mostly symptomatic expressions of evil, without delving into its cause. It is important to recognize the significance of this novel for demonstrating the way in which evil is perpetuated in people who suffer it.

The violence done to Brad during the assault and the subsequent hazing both co-mingle into the sort of enduring trauma that is well explained in a book by Lawrence Swaim entitled *Trauma Bond: An Inquiry Into the Nature of Evil*.

In this book, Swaim shows how hard it is for people who suffer evil to get rid of it. Because it is difficult for victims to get the evil done to them out of their subconscious, they tend to ultimately re-inflict it again, upon themselves or upon others. The trauma that Brad experienced during his kidnapping festers inside of him and his college struggles only aggravate it.

The incident where Brad and his friend Matt exchange blows without cause is indicative of the victim's quest to do anything to be rid of the trauma, even if it means injuring themselves. Brad offers his explanation for doing this: "*Because it makes me forget. Because the pain is real. Because it's in my gut and not behind my eyes.*"

It's near impossible for people to digest evil because of its sheer senseless absurdity. Evil contradicts logic

and reason. It makes no sense that someone would beat up another person for no reason, harm others for the mere fun of it, or, for that matter, threaten the entire globe over petty national disputes. Evil is the antithesis of reason, absurd, and reckless.

Swaim's book shows how evil perpetuates itself and grows, which is well illustrated by fraternity hazing, wherein previously passive individuals are indoctrinated with a capacity for inflicting abuse, ridicule, and sometimes physical harm upon lower classmates. Younger classmates endure such hardships because of their deep need for social acceptance and for being connected into group activities.

### **Moving Beyond Fear**

There is a confounding general reluctance for people to bear the initiative and risk of befriending others. Without this barrier of fear, it would be much easier for people to establish more autonomous friendships that bear the same sense of righteousness they detect within themselves. However, because of this fear, many people acquiesce to perverted relationships, out of fear they cannot establish other, more wholesome friendships.

Such abnormalities are not limited to college fraternities, but can also be represented in certain churches, civic clubs, secret societies, and even entire nation-states. Disconformity is restrained by homogeneity of dress, actions, and talk. Anyone not possessing these signs of allegiance is immediately ridiculed, ostracized, or at least held to a distance. It is amazing how this sort of persistent exclusiveness lingers with so many people, even into late adulthood. Such aloofness is a profaning of the diversity of the creation; and akin to an outrageous assertion that only certain components of God's creation are worthy of promotion.

It seems much easier for humans to endure the abnormalities of an existing group, even if they must tolerate its evil inclinations, than it is for them to stand against it or to take the risk of rejection. Brad knows what it's like to take a risk. Brad's offer of helpfulness to a stranger got him beat up badly and his car stolen. In attempting to avoid this sort of risk again, Brad follows the well trodden paths of established fraternity friendships, only to be surprised with more hatred and more abuse.

### **Conclusion**

I wouldn't recommend that anyone read this book and certainly not watch the movie. I don't think our modern society has yet fully comprehended what it means to ingest evil. To open yourself up for evil is to let it become a part of you, a part of your experience, a factor in how you think about things, and a component of your decisions. It doesn't matter whether it's pornography, a horror movie, or an actual terrifying experience such as rape, kidnapping, or war; once you witness evil, it becomes part of your experience and of your background. If allowed, evil can kindle and perpetuate itself into generational wickedness, fermented because it was witnessed or suffered by previous generations.

People somehow become afflicted with the disease of evil and carry it forward to others, as exemplified in fraternity hazing, sexual abuse, wife beaters, or even soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder. Whatever its form, evil seeks to sustain itself among us. We can defeat evil only by turning away from it, denying it a forum, and refusing to promulgate or participate in it.

So long as we are willing to go to war, haze lower classmates, batter wives, abuse children, or even greedily hoard the necessities of life, so evil will be perpetuated in the world. This is exemplified late in the book when Brad, whom we thought to be the victim, exhibits no empathy for a pledge he finds passed out in his dorm room, horribly stomping upon the pledge's hands and frightening him with a knife.

Quite simply, evil will persist until we confront and defeat it within ourselves; and this victory comes only through fostering concern for others, forgiving those who have wronged us, and undertaking actions intended to achieve the sort of society we can envision but not yet find. It is certainly a primitive state of humanity that would find it easier to sustain righteous social visions in mere paintings, statuary, or practiced ritual, instead of by implementation into everyday lives and actions.

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### **Karyn says**

In college, Land joined a fraternity, and they hazed him. The hazing traumatized him, and he wants us to feel bad about that. He writes nice sentences, but there's nothing compelling about this story.

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### **Franco Santos says**

Este libro es un desperdicio de papel. ¿Qué carajo es esto?

Relato autobiográfico de Brad Land, quien luego de ser asaltado de forma violenta debe lidiar con las secuelas psicológicas que ese hecho le dejó. Ahora bien, entiendo este trabajo del autor como un intento de ser profundo, algo que no le sale para nada. Ni siquiera logra transmitir lo que supuestamente estaba sintiendo en esa época. Y, para más inri, el libro no posee una trama definida, sino que esta es difusa, no tiene sustancia y carece de un curso sólido.

Otra cosa que me molestó fue que Land trata de que veamos en cada página lo miserable que era su vida en ese entonces (sin casi introspección, sin embargo). Y no, no era miserable. Sufrió un asalto bastante agresivo, y ese es el fin. Lo que sucede es que posteriormente cayó en un bucle de autocompasión y, cuando las oportunidades de ser feliz se le aparecían por arte de magia, no las aprovechaba y después se quejaba de su interminable tortura.

Y algo más: la escritura. Muy mal escrito. Diálogos sin comillas, faltan muchas comas y puntos, oraciones que se alargan tanto que terminan sin adquirir un sentido. Comprendo la intención del autor; lo que quiso hacer es una narración opresiva para que el lector se sintiera asfixiado por "su ofuscación mental". No obstante, ese recurso se le dio bien en la primera parte de la novela: el asalto. Luego, erróneamente, lo mantuvo cuando ya no era necesario.

Este es un libro ideal para el clásico *emo* que quiere llamar la atención diciendo que nadie lo quiere y que su vida es una pesadilla pero que a su vez tiene todo lo que alguien podría pedir. El típico pseudosuicida que le cuenta a cada uno de sus amigos lo horrible que es ser él para que le tengan lástima y se sienta querido pero al mismo tiempo siga diciendo que ese amor no es suficiente y que por eso se va suicidar.

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### **Nat Walton says**

This was a quick but difficult read. I picked it up because I vaguely recognized the title from the movie and was honestly just curious.

It's difficult to really sum this book up in any other way than it being just a series of awful early adulthood

experiences. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. It seems like no one gets it and everyone and awful and the whole world is just dark. Reading *Goat* is like getting sucked up into a black hole and floating through until the end, hoping that at some point things are better than this.

I do wish I had some sort of hint as to if things get better. That's what made reading this so difficult. It ends and you can only just hope that Brad Land gets some sort of resolution and that things end up okay for him.

One thing that mostly threw me off about the entire book was that there was never really an explanation as to why Land joined a fraternity. I never picked up on a clear reason why he went through the hazing and why he went along with the terrible things that were done to him by his brothers. But I guess I don't know what I would do in that situation so I can't really say anything.

I didn't dislike this book, but it also didn't stand out to me as anything exceptional. It's haunting and the writing style is perfect for the story but it just made me so ... sad.

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### **Jake says**

As a Kappa Sigma, I was intrigued by this memoir that allegedly dealt with the hazing-intensive pledging period of a young man in the mid-90's in South Carolina. What I ended up reading was more like a pathetic attempt at ripping off Dave Eggers.

Not only was the entire book pretty much void of cohesion or punctuation, the plot struggled to stay linear and relevant, with so many names of brothers and pledges dropped that it quickly became difficult to distinguish between tormentor and victim. But the style wasn't even the biggest problem. The main character/author sets himself up as supremely unlikable throughout the entire book, so when the hazing actually occurs (rather minor, to be honest, but still reprehensible on principal), you keep waiting for the real horror to begin. I've read this book twice, trying to give it a second chance in March of 2007. The entire book is basically ruined by the fact that you can't really stand the main character, and have little to no sympathy for his situation. He basically seems like an unstable, sad man, and while you pity him to a certain extent, all you really want is for him to stop whining.

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### **Lisa Manke says**

A mercifully short book about the struggles of a kid who pledges a fraternity at Clemson and lives to tell about it.

Thought it would be a good read for a mom who is about to send her son off to college - NO.

My problem with this book is not with the narrator, even though I didn't like him much and HATED the storytelling method.

My problem started very early with a traumatic event suffered by the narrator.

One, he takes absolutely no responsibility for ANY of his actions and won't participate in any recovery. He's seemingly just along for the ride.



Second- what parent in their right mind would send an obviously BROKEN kid off the college? I was pretty much pissed the entire reading of this book.

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## **Wynne Kontos says**

I loved this because it served all parts of of my life as a writer, a social worker and a former Sorority member. That being said, it has to be known that I am not an unbiased reader.

Brad Land's memoir about personal tragedy and the following fraternity hazing he endured has likely done immense damage to an organization that is near and dear to my heart. And that's okay.

I first heard about this memoir after reading about the recent film adaptation that debuted at Sundance 2016 to rave reviews. There is still no trailer and I'm dying to see one/see the film. That singer Nick Jonas stars and has been getting equally rave reviews makes me even more curious!

Land's memoir starts at the end of his dismal first year at college. He's depressed and insecure, feeling small next to his younger brother Brett who he describes as "better looking" and more capable socially. One night when Brett opts to stay behind at a party with some girls, Land drives home alone where he is car jacked and brutally assaulted.

This scene is wonderful. The horrific violence is written about head on but it moves so quickly, the pacing nearly takes your breath away. After the attack is over and Land is struggling to orient himself well enough to find help, he hallucinates a conversation with a fox that comes upon him on the deserted road. This tactic is wonderful not only in the beautiful way it reads, but as a sneaky way of addressing what so many of Land's critics lambaste in several reviews I've read: How could he remember the incident so clearly but then not remember his attackers well enough to tell police? The conversation with the fox helps to remind you what a disassociative state Land must've been in to survive the ordeal.

My writer side was inspired by his handling of this scene. Enter my social work self, who became more than annoyed at the feedback I've received about Land's treating of this incident. Technically Land let the carjackers into his car after they asked for a ride, so people feel he was "stupid" and "allowed" it to happen. That's stupid. That's akin to saying an acquaintance rape happened because the victim "allowed" the rapist into their room. Land knew these men were strange, but he's already established himself as a shy, non-assertive person. How could he have possibly predicted what happened to him? It's easy to judge someone from the outside. In fact, a judgmental or even lazy reader will hate "Goat" in its entirety.

I felt the assault was an interesting addition to the story and certainly how Land develops as a man. When I told one of my fraternity friends about the plot he asked why the assault was included. I answered that I felt it gives you an idea of the mindset and emotional place Land is in before he arrives at Clemson and why he might've participated in the fraternity hazing he was a part of. How has the assault affected his self-esteem? What does it tell him about what he's worth? How does it change the relationship with his brother? These are essential questions that Land asks through out the rest of the narrative, but in a variety of understated ways. A lazy reader who needs it spelled out won't understand this.

Or maybe I'm just a social worker who's hyper aware of how emotional and traumatic events in our lives are ALWAYS connected.

Since Brett has transferred to Clemson, Land decides to do so too. There he pledges the same fraternity that his brother did the year before. "Goat" is most famous for its intense focus on the fraternity hazing Land and his pledge brothers experienced and it is certainly intense reading. Clemson has been in the news several times for horrific hazing events including several deaths, even since the publishing of Land's book. You'd

think they'd get their act together. Unfortunately, as outlined in a 2014 article in "The Atlantic" many universities receive such substantial funding from Greek alumni they feel unable to put particular limits on these organizations giving them inordinate amounts of power. I am STAUNCHLY against this. My undergraduate university and National Organization had several methods in place to protect students, primarily from themselves. It's no surprise to anyone that college students are dumb, hormonal and often drunk. In fact, the most terrified I was during my four years at school was when I was called to the Student Life office to meet with the Greek administrator in regards to hazing my little brother in an event the week before.

You read that right. I hazed. I was hazed. In fact, while we're being honest, I was a pledge educator. I spent all but one semester in a serious relationship with a fraternity man who was also a pledge educator and I was lavaliered into this fraternity, which means I was inducted as an "honorary" associate of the frat through an official ceremony sponsored by my boyfriend. This is a high honor in Greek organizations. It gives me the ability to wear the frat's letters and identify myself in a formal way with them. In fact, if I went back to my fraternity or sorority's alumni chapters today and told them I was a lavaliered member of This Frat that would still hold weight. Seven years and a Master's degree later.

The hazing I experienced were nowhere near what Land experienced. I would not have wanted to go through what he went through. But I can speak to both the good and bad. Not only in my own experience as a pledge educator, being tasked with educating and mentoring thirty 18 and 19 year old women at a time and the challenges and stresses that come with that, but having an intimate view to what a college fraternity in the 2000s is really like.

Without a doubt, Greek hazing in the Southern universities is more serious. I can say that with absolute certainty. But it happens everywhere. I think it's safe to tell any potential participant or parent of a participant there will be hazing involving yelling, "line ups" and alcohol consumption. The lengths of those I can not speak too. Whether you feel like that's "worthwhile" I can't speak to either.

Several of the things Land experiences like asking brother's for interviews, going through gauntlets and line-ups are all things the fraternity men I knew and loved went through. In fact, I was someone pledges asked for interviews during my last semester. In my experience this was an important way to force pledges to get to know the fraternity as a whole and for brother's to get to know the pledges. Gauntlets and line-ups are less nice, but there was no hitting or spitting. Yelling and threatening and general asshole-ry? Absolutely.

Land gives a lot of weight to the idea of power and a need to fit in.

These are certainly factors in any decision to go Greek. I rushed as a sophomore. I had a friend base, but was interested in getting to know more people and be more active on campus. My biological sisters rushed at their school and had a good experience so I did it. I still don't feel like I "paid" for my friends. There were plenty of people in my sorority who I thought were idiots and I wasn't close to. Many of my friends in the fraternity and sorority I'd known my freshman year before pledging, back when we were friends "for free." The sorority did a lot of good for me: It allowed me to be an active volunteer in my community for three years. As a social work major this was invaluable. I was motivated to keep my GPA at the sorority's required minimum, which was taken seriously. Sisters whose GPA dropped to far below were put on "academic probation" and not permitted to attend functions under the pretense that time would be better spent studying. Most importantly, as pledge educator I saw two classes of women (at the time our biggest pledge classes to date) through to Initiation. This was immensely rewarding not only emotionally, but from a leadership perspective. I hired "staff" to assist me with meetings, hosted, organized and taught said meetings and communicated with our National department. To date it's the largest group of people I've ever managed, even when you factor in my seven year career. I still include it on resumes for this reason and am asked about it. But the power Land speaks too--there is a definite power that comes with Greek life. It can easily get abused. My senior year both my boyfriend and I had the educator positions (which are recognized university wide). I remember during being in his room while several younger girls came in to "party." My boyfriend and his

roommates had a "suite" on the first floor of the fraternity. As seniors and brother's with positions, they had a private bath and shower, a separate bedroom and a living room with a working bar and speakers right off the fraternity's first floor living room. These girls came into the room drunkenly spilling things, acting silly and I was immediately annoyed and kicked them out. My boyfriend was irritated by my display but no one questioned it. I was a high-ranking brother's girlfriend in a high-ranking position in my own sorority. People might've said I was a bitch behind my back, but they did what I said. And I expected them too.

Greek organizations are their own literal universes and that power can exist. Gone unchecked or given too much power on TOP of power, it can become the hazing situation that Land experienced.

I've talked a lot about my own experience because it filtered so much of how I read this memoir. I don't always feel Land made the connection between motivations for hazing and The Act. Because he hated the brothers so much he labeled them as these monsters or is quick to paint them that way, but we really don't know anything about them. And how can we? It's Land's story. But I was left wanting in this way. Having been Greek, as Land talks about how interviews are just another way for brothers to assault them I felt frustrated, since I know that isn't always true. But that's just par for the course at the subject matter.

The part I feel the memoir fails at? The death of one of Land's pledge brothers. This is stated on the back of the book, so it's no spoiler. But if you wish not to read further, than stop now.

Land makes no argument for how this pledge was "killed" by the frat. I think he tries. It just isn't there. The pledge dies of a heart attack in his room shortly after the pledgship ends. Did the stress and trauma he experienced as a pledge put unnecessary strain on his heart? Yes, probably. But he had a weak heart to begin with. Healthy eighteen-year-olds don't die of heart attacks. Land tries to explore the incident in an objective way. He falters.

It's a strong way to show the brother's hazing in context-how their behavior looks now that one of their own is DEAD. It puts everything into a different light. That's strong. But that light is filtered to indicate cause. The frat didn't help this pledge, but it didn't kill him. The blurb makes it sound like the two are connected and reading it you certainly think it's going that way until it doesn't.

Greek life is an important and rewarding part of any student's college experience if it's given the chance to be. An organization's National Council and the university MUST hold the organizations accountable for their behavior and create a set of checks and balances to protect students from themselves. Hazing will never go away, we know scientifically it's human nature. But how it occurs can always be prevented. I'm living proof. If the hazing got too intense or noticeable (in my case my drunken little brother knocked too many things around in his room awakening his RA), it shouldn't be able to survive.

How trauma affects us and how young men and women categorize their vulnerability, sexuality, relationships with peers and family are important explorations that Land beautifully addresses using two of the most traumatic times in his life. And he's a great writer. Maybe he lays on the stylistic form and artful metaphor a little thick. But who ever complained about a bagel with too much cream cheese?

Greek or not this is an important read. I'd be interested in hearing anyone else's reactions of experiences in Greek life.

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## **Men D. says**

A friend's friend was president of his frat in college. He freaks out every time you say "frat." He is a long-necked geek who laughs like Professor Frink on the Simpsons. He says, "You can't abbreviate that way. Would you call your 'country' a . . . ?"

This book was the first thing that came up when I Googled "frat memoir," so I bought it for a penny on Amazon. Well worth the money. Land has a strong, unique voice that expresses dread well. And what dread - the subjects of the memoir are his abduction and assault by car jackers, his attempt (and failure) to join a frat at Clemson, and the death of a fellow fraternity pledge. He does well with writing terse, "masculine" prose both at the sentence and the paragraph level. I took notes on technique.

"Masculine" is in scare quotes because it doesn't describe the character Land builds up. What I didn't expect was for a protagonist in a frat memoir to be a sensitive, romantic pussy who cries a lot and wants girls to save his life. I don't mean that in any insulting way, but I do think the author's voice isn't quite as masculine as its form declares it to be. For example, Land can't take the hazing, so he quits. He doesn't write very memoiristic. There isn't reflection nor a wiser, older perspective. He writes in present tense. So like a good man-writer like Hemingway or Cormac McCarthy, he sticks to the facts and lets the readers use the author's choice of facts to deduce the emotions behind the narrator. But I wanted a little more guidance from the author. Did he connect the violence of his car jacking to the violence of the frat hazing? Or could he just not stick out the hazing because he was too artsy fartsy? I think he means to imply the former, but my suspicion believed the latter. Especially because the violence of the frat hazing is voluntary and not even that violent. He gets called names, they slap him and punch his head, they throw footballs at his head, not much more than the stuff we've all heard about before. Cry me a river, pantywaist! It's weird how I've read a bunch of memoirs recently where I feel skeptical of the author's self-representation . . . I think there might be something wrong with me.

This glum Camus is the opposite extreme of an ecstatic asshole's celebration of college whoredom (like I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell), and now I am in the market for an ordinary person's frat memoir - not too chauvinist, not too morose, but just average and descriptive. I want somebody like my friend's friend to write a frat memoir; I would really like to know more about what an average boring joe thinks of his average boring frat.

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## **kelly says**

I wanted to like this book, but it's not very compelling at all. The story is interesting--a young man is a victim of a terrifying carjacking (which he hasn't quite healed from) and becomes a victim of the same kind of violence as a fraternity pledge shortly after. I feel bad for this guy, I really do, but I have to wonder exactly what he expected as a part of the pledging process. He talks about having to sit with his brothers for breakfast every morning as if he was being stretched on a torturing device. Did he think it would be a cake walk? It's sad but unfortunately hazing does go on and is a part of college life. Most people who enter Greek life expect some kind of hardship--even if it's as miniscule as eating with people or standing on your feet for the final ceremony.

And then there's the writing. Nothing to really write home about. Brad Land's stream of consciousness was so confusing that I had to go back and reread passages to decipher what exactly he was saying. By the time I got to the middle of the book I was bored out of my mind. At the end I'm still left with the question of what the whole point of the book really was. To get the experience off his chest? To educate us? I came away with nothing. I wish I knew...

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## **Peter Monn says**

This book is unreal. Beautifully written and yer tragically told. A modern day version of The Outsiders but true. Check out my full video review on my Booktube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/peterlikesbooks>

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## **Thomas says**

Maybe my reviewing is skewed a bit high for this let-down of a novel - because I was *in* a fraternity and I know my writing ability is not worthy of published material. And I say let-down because it starts off as compelling. I hate to say this because it is based on a true story and I wish abduction was nonexistent. The psychological repercussions are endless for all victims and friends/family of victims. The recollection told is perfectly vivid and absent of descriptive detail to be relentlessly haunting.

I say let-down because the closure is more 'this is life' rather than 'lesson learned' because there is not much dissection of the motivations for joining a fraternity nor the exploration of why one subjects themselves to abuse to join a community. I have, and I would have more to say on the subject - and this book did not fulfill what I wanted to hear. I accept the author's choice, but it leads me to believe he was unwilling to acknowledge or unaware of the distinction.

If anyone has any relatable personal experience to highjacking or mugging, this opening half is probably the most realistic I've come across.

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