



## The Music of What Happens

*John Straley*

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## **The Music of What Happens** John Straley

A defense investigator working out of Sitka, in the Alaskan coastal archipelago, Cecil Younger walks a narrow line between the truth and what his clients pay him to find... *The Music of What Happens*.

Younger's got the child custody case from hell, and a client to match. Shrill, confrontational, and obsessed, Priscilla DeAngelo is sure her ex is conspiring with a state senator to wrest her son from her. When she storms off to Juneau for a showdown, Younger's custody case swiftly turns into a murder. Fired from her defense team, Younger stays with the investigation. He's not sure what keeps him bulldogging the case—Priscilla's sister, his lost love; his regard for truth as a rare commodity; or the head injury Priscilla's ex gave him—but he won't let go until it's solved.

But this time, the truth is less likely to set him free than to get him killed...

## **The Music of What Happens Details**

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Author : John Straley

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# From Reader Review The Music of What Happens for online ebook

## Mike Sigler says

Strong local setting. Good characters.

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## Charles Kerns says

Straley's book tries to be music. One thing: it is not mystery. People die, get hit, blown up, fight, but there is only confusion, not anything truly hidden--well, one thing is pulled on the reader to end the book, but it doesn't really matter. The plot really gives Cecil, the inept but persistent investigator, reasons to listen to everyone, watch everything, and sometimes be helpful. He also gets to travel through Alaska and describe the geography, peoples, and creatures in great detail. The writing flows when he stops to talk about nature, which he often does in the middle of the action. The descriptions of everything natural or human is in close focus. You could draw the scenes after reading them. And the people are never completely bad--alcoholic, deranged, crazed, doped out, or woman-chasing, maybe, but not evil in the Sherlock Holmes tradition. The main thing to remember is this book worships Alaska first, dwells on the characters next, and finally has a plot. But as I have said about his other books, that's fine with me.

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## Michael Alan Grapin says

Cecil Younger was just released from the hospital psyche ward where he was recovering from a head injury and a history of substance abuse. His job as a private investigator for an attorney was about to bring him into contact with a woman on whom he'd had a crush back in high school, her sister was in jail for the murder of a crooked politician that may have factored into her divorce and the custody battle for her six year old son. A delightful story that takes place in Alaska, full of quirky characters and adventure.

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## Laurie says

Again Straley is a little weird but eventually I get into the story.

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## James says

I didn't enjoy this third entry in the series as much as the first two. Can't put my finger on a single cause for this feeling.

Part of it is that some of the characters I'd gotten to know didn't really come along for the ride. No Hannah. Did she and Cecil say goodbye in the second book and I missed it? There was no mention of her at all in this one. I had become used to Cecil's referring to her as "the woman who used to love me." No George Doggy. Maybe I just liked the name; I couldn't decide overall if I liked the character or not. Toddy's presence in

"Music" was a cameo at best. Dickie Stein came along for the ride, but I can't say that his character was developed any further in this one.

Another part is that the plot didn't grab me. Cecil basically chases after these bickering people and every time he catches up to them, they bicker some more and take off, trying to lose him, and the chase is on again. The big reveal didn't seem all that momentous.

You need a tolerance for vagueness and ambiguity to appreciate Straley. I think I got too much of it for too little payback in this one. But I liked it well enough to move on to the next in the series.

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### **Art says**

Cecil Younger may be the world's worst private investigator. But he sticks with it, asks questions and often finds his way to the truth.

The Sitka, Alaska, setting and John Straley's musical prose set this series apart. And Cecil, who does not fight or carry a weapon, begins to grow on you as he is beaten by others.

This time he is just out of the psych ward, assured he is not crazy but the victim of being hit in the head by his client's ex-husband.

The client is convinced her ex-husband and others are conspiring against her to win custody of her son. When the state senator she sees as the center of the conspiracy dies, she is the prime suspect.

Cecil is moving on from the woman who used to love him, which I see as a good thing. This book introduces new recurring characters and solidifies this as a series to read.

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### **Barbara says**

I spent the first half of this book marveling over Straley's language, metaphors, originality. I was in awe. The description of fear of flying combined with a collapsed canoe, the story of a dinner table run amok; they were exquisite. And I still feel that way. Unfortunately, at the end, the plot just unraveled. Things had to be explained with the after-the-end conversation. I'm going to read more because I am thoroughly hooked on his way of looking at the world, but this one fell apart for me at the end.

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### **Lfirish says**

Witty banter and immersion in the locale make up for a less than stellar plot.

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### **Matt Heavner says**

I remember Straley's other books were similar: starting out a bit slow, getting better, better, and still better,

then they are over. I love the story placed in the crazy side of Alaskan life (Southeast, specifically). I loved the description of Tenakee in this book -- just like I remember our visits out there. If you love Southeast, this crazy story is a fun romp through the area.

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### **Dion O'Reilly says**

The strongest part of this book is the setting, Sitka, which is lovingly described and whose features strongly influence the plot. I also became very interested whenever Cecil, the protagonist-detective received mystical signs from ravens that helped him undercover the truth — a cool injection of weirdness. I have to say that, despite my frustration at really "getting" the erstwhile yet bumbling main character, I found him likable because he solves cases by listening and not forming judgments. I had a hard time understanding the motivations of the characters, and I was not bowled over by the final reveal, but maybe I was disappointed by the detective genre, a style I haven't read in years. I might try another in this series; it have a feeling it takes a few tries to get a handle on this highly-flawed, drug-addicted private sleuth.

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### **Patrick Nolan says**

This was really fun. You start out with a lackluster main character and get thrown into a plot twisting exciting mystery. I loved the Alaska archipelago setting, the details of nautical navigation and small bush plane knowledge that made the adventure more entertaining. Of course the plot and it's twists were sometimes outrageous, but that was part of it. The 90s references comically dated the story and setting. I picked this book up from a free book exchange at the airport in paperback.

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### **Barb says**

I like the settings and the stories are full of twists, but I find it a little hard to connect with the main character. He's sort of a reformed drunk and Columbo sort of guy in the wilds of Alaska. Actually much more bumbling than Columbo. Had to characterize but rugged and wild.

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### **Brett Mclay says**

Goddam this book was fun. Wry wit throughout.

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### **Agent Annie says**

This is 3rd in a series so there would have been more introduction to the main character in those first two novels. When I started the novel, I felt a bit out of the loop because there were references that weren't completely clear. However, since the narrator isn't terribly reliable (lot's of drug induced memory loss and muddled thinking), it may have been written this way on purpose. It was fast paced and the rest of the characters were well written. I especially liked Harrison Teller since he was so outlandish. The mystery itself

wasn't as neat as I prefer. I felt the author wrapped things up too easily and used information outside of what the narrator knew that would have made it impossible for the reader to learn things to help resolve the mystery.

I liked this book because it had a different setting than most mysteries I've read. There isn't much out there that takes place in Alaska. The culture of Alaska is described in a way that makes the book very interesting and the main character spends a lot of time paying attention to the messages that different birds and animals give him: Crow plays a large part in guiding him and laughing when he makes a mistake. Native American culture has a much stronger connection to the animal world than mainstream America which is what makes this book entertaining. I give it a 3.5.

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### **Leslie says**

This is the first Straley book I've read. The plot went places I didn't expect and I liked that the location was someplace I didn't know anything about. It took me a chapter or two to get into but I like writers with an odd style, a la Kate Atkinson, so this was very enjoyable. Plan to go read the rest of this series in order.

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