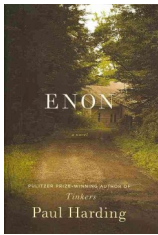


A Year of Loss



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Paul Harding's second novel after his Pulitzer-prize winning *Tinkers* is heartbreak of a novel. One Sunday in the lovely New England village of Enon, Charlie Crosby takes a solitary walk at a bird sanctuary. He had invited his 13 year-old daughter Kate but she chose to go swimming instead with her girlfriend. That afternoon while she is biking home from the lake, a distracted mother runs over her. Charlie's life changes forever.

The first casualty of Kate's death is Charlie's marriage to Susan. Apparently, Kate had been the glue holding their union together, and when he is so overcome with grief that he can do nothing but lie on the couch and cry, his wife first begs for his help then gets angry.

Then in an intense moment of grief, wanting to feel real physical pain, he pounds the stairway wall and breaks his wrist. Susan takes him to the emergency room but a few days later leaves for her parent's house in Minnesota.

The novel is essentially focused on two characters, the village of Enon's presence is almost human and palpable--and Charlie, who has long studied the village's history. Charlie, who starts to abuse prescription drugs and alcohol, wanders the village mostly under cover of night. Although it is a dark novel, all is not bleak. Harding provides many flashbacks to when the family was whole. Also, he describes Charlie's happy childhood, especially his visit to a rich widow's house where he was encouraged to turn the magical orrery, an old-fashioned 3D replica of the solar system. One wintry day, this same widow ran out into the snow to give Charlie and his buddy a lesson about how to sled not like a coward. She zoomed off and did not jump off the sled even when bushes and trees lined her path thus demonstrating true Yankee grit.

This book chronicles a year of grief but in writing that is so beautiful that you are enticed to keep reading. For another novel based upon a parent's grieving, read Anna Quindlen's excellent *Every Last One* ..

Posted by Dory L. on October 15, 2013

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