



Send Me

P.E. Ryan

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Patrick Ryan's first work of fiction is written with such authority, grace, and wisdom, it might be the capstone of a distinguished literary career.

In the Florida of NASA launches, ranch houses, and sudden hurricanes, Teresa Kerrigan, ungrounded by two divorces, tries to hold her life together. But her ex-husbands linger in the background while her four children spin away to their own separate futures, each carrying the baggage of a complex family history. Matt serves as caretaker to the ailing father who abandoned him as a child, while his wild teenage sister, Karen, hides herself in marriage to a born-again salesman. Joe, a perpetual outsider, struggles with a private sibling rivalry that nearly derails him. And then there's the youngest, Frankie, an endearing, eccentric sci-fi freak who's been searching since childhood for intelligent life in the universe—and finds it.

Written with wry affection, and with compassion for every character in its pages, *Send Me* is a wholly original, haunting evocation of family love, loss, and, ultimately, forgiveness.

From the Hardcover edition.

Send Me Details

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From Reader Review Send Me for online ebook

Djrmel says

This book is both Non-linear AND multi POV and yet it is one of the smoothest narratives I've read in years. This is a story of the craziness that holds a family together at the same time it tears it apart. At the heart is Theresa, twice married, twice abandoned. She tries to be the anchor for her four children, but they all have a need to go spinning off on their own. The question of nature vs. nurture came to my mind several times while reading this wonderful book - how did they all end up the way they did when they seemed to have a pretty average American childhood? And then I realize...it's maybe because they had the average American childhood that they ended up the way they did. If dysfunctional families are your reading pleasure, I strongly recommend this book.

Ed says

This is probably the best novel I've read in the last five years. If it seems a bit challenging at first, stick with it. None of the author's stylistic techniques are frivolous, as you'll see by the end, which is shattering. Like Lorrie Moore, old Margaret Atwood, Ethan Canin, and every author who's ever dazzled and moved you rolled into one. READ THIS BOOK!

Christy says

Despite my recent renunciation of the Best American Short Stories series, I do have to credit BASS with my introduction to Patrick Ryan. The year before last's edition featured his short story "So Much for Artemis," which I liked so much I read it twice.

Send Me is a short story collection, and all the stories are about the same family from "Artemis." The stories are set over a long span of time, between the sixties and the present-ish day. Every story is told by a different narrator. Some are told in first person and some in third. After the first story or two, it became a fun game to try and identify the narrator within the first page of the story. In general, Ryan is successful at giving each story a distinct feel; every character definitely lives in his or her own unique world.

I loved these stories, and the oblique references from one story to another provided continuity and character development with making the collections feel like it was reaching toward novel-dom. The development of Roy over several stories was especially well done; I did not think Teresa came off as well. The last story was supposed to be a sort of redemption for her, I suppose, but that was actually the one false note in the collection for me. It came too late for me to really start to like her. It may be that Ryan just had a harder time writing a complex and sympathetic woman, as Karen came off as a bit inscrutable as well.

Kilean says

A hard and sometimes bright look into an absurd, twisted and maybe even loving family. This novel gave me

some deep belly laughs that made the sad bits even sadder. This writer's got a great voice and the more I think about the last chapter/section the more I like the book as a whole. If you're curious about hearing from a busted-up and multi-dysfunctional American family, this is a good place to listen.

Dennis says

"If she isn't there when he gets home from work, if she pulls into the driveway long after she should have started preparing dinner, he asks where she's been, but he doesn't press for more information when she responds, 'On a drive. The sky was so beautiful today...'"

"And there'll be no arguing with that, because it's true."

Accessible-5

Must Read-1

Important-1

Kept my Attention-3

Well-written-5

Gregg says

Assigned my freshmen a chapter from this novel for their exam. They liked it; I liked it; figured I'd give the entire novel a try. Glad I did. Very readable prose, accessible themes and ideas of functionality and identity presented. Nice circularity. I highly recommend it.

Robin says

This book was recommended by my nephew, who had shared it with his English Lit class. They all enjoyed it. I can imagine that they felt some connection to the characters. I didn't, but that is perhaps because this novel is very contemporary. It's about a woman and her two husband's that eventually leave her. She has two children by each marriage. All are very different. The two younger boys are both gay, and the youngest one is a fanatic about U.F.O.'s and how things will be different when he is rescued. It was too contemporary for my tastes, but it was interesting to read a book intended for a more hip audience. It is hard to imagine, but many people could relate to this dysfunctional family.

Hansa Bergwall says

In this excellent novel, a NASA photographer loses his job and goes a little crazy. The repercussions to him and his family linger over decades as kids grow up and screw up. I found I loved each character in this novel no matter how flawed. I would call it a dark literary investigation of the dark side of the American Dream. It is the most enjoyable thing I've read since discovering Roberto Bolano last year. I highly recommend it.

Stephanie says

Recommended (not personally, but on the book jacket) by wonderful author Ann Patchett. A big disappointment. Read this if you like dysfunctional families with no soul.

Lesley Potts says

I almost didn't read this book because the first chapter/short story was so weird that I wasn't sure I was in the mood for it. Frankie visits a Howard Finstereque artist and it's all very strange. Aliens are mentioned. But, I plowed on and soon began to really enjoy this tale of a dysfunctional Floridian family. I vowed off short stories decades ago, but recently discovered that if the short stories are all related in some way, it makes for very satisfying reading. Some of the situations in this book are so ridiculous that I laughed out loud. It's hard to get an Outlander book out of your head. I heard Scottish accents for days after finishing "Voyager", but "Send Me" charmingly brought me back to the present day.

Beth says

These linked short stories are *also* linked to Ryan's amazing new collection, *The Dream Life of Astronauts*. Both books give a super realistic slice-of-life of one particular family starting in the '70's.

Chris says

Only so much (or little) can be said about the Kerrigans. Teresa, a young mother to Matt and Karen, is abandoned by her husband, Dermot, a local bad boy with mob family ties. Soon thereafter, she marries Roy, and they have two boys, Joseph and Frankie. Feeling suffocated, Roy eventually leaves Teresa (while Frankie is still a toddler) for Leona.

After Matt turns 18, he escapes to live with his cancer-stricken (biological) father in his final days. Karen follows in her mother's footsteps by dating all the wrong men, then eventually marries a Jesus-lover who condones his wife's philandering while yearning to start a family. Frankie develops a preoccupation with outer space and alien abduction before leaving for college and becoming an openly gay drug supplier and contracting HIV. Joe, meanwhile, hides his desire for the same sex and follows his brother away to college, only to realize they share little else in common than their sexual orientation.

This novel may sound like yet another depressing tale of family dysfunction and regret, but the author's storytelling ability and knack for dialogue is exceptional. Highly recommended.

Laura says

Send Me is an easy, interesting read, full of flawed, dysfunctional-yet-lovable characters. It manages to jump backward and forward through time (the first chapter is set in 1996, the second in 1965...) without being frustrating or confusing. Certain parts made me laugh out loud and others made me cringe.

I won't say it's great, but I will say I'd read it again.

Brandon Will says

This tear-your-heart-out novel-in-stories-of-sorts uses pinpointed moments over decades (each a short story that is strong enough on its own) to show a splattered portrait of a family, focusing on how the accumulating years are derived from all those before, perfectly displaying how people find themselves in lives they can't believe.

In the title story it is 1996 and Frankie is in his thirties and seeking information from a Preacher famed in art circles for his crudely rendered and completely sincere depictions of the messages he claims to have received from The Visitors who will come to our planet and make things right. The pictures have lots of spaceships, and men and women in various stages of courting, coupling, and coitus -- the Preacher has recently lost his cheating wife. The Preacher doesn't trust Frankie at first, but opens up to his quiet belief, and eventual sharing of his own messages received from the Visitors.

So the collection starts with a lot of questions, posed within a story that shows the oddness of life, the unique ways people deal with tragedy, hinting that Frankie is dealing with something huge. At the end of the story, he is going to see his mother Teresa, because "They were coming. And whether it was going to be beautiful or tragic, tomorrow or ten years from now, home was where he wanted to be when they arrived."

Then, in "Getting Heavy with Fate", in 1965, we meet Teresa, in her early twenties, a recently abandoned mother of two toddlers (Matt and Karen), broke to the point of electricity being turned off, who finds herself succumbing to the advances of a man in her office that she barely knows yet innately understands, knowing all the while that he is not a sure thing. And she sometimes thinks she is the re-incarnation of an eighteenth century model who posed for Watteau: she is the spitting image of this model, and likes to imagine herself in her shoes.

In "So Much for Artemis" in 1976, young Frankie is forbidden from playtime with the neighbor's dying daughter by his father, Roy, Teresa's second husband (not the man from the previous story).

In the ensuing nine stories, Patrick Ryan shows the humanity of each individual -- who you might hate in one story (seeing how they treat another family member) and then love in the next (seeing how they are doing all they can with what they know), each story revealing more of it's characters, showing the complex portrait of a family over the decades through meticulously crafted structure, with prose constantly playful and exploratory in its forms.

I'm afraid I'm not a good enough reviewer yet to fully encapsulate the beauty on these pages. These stories have a startling grasp that emanates from the truths revealed through their characters that connect to the common mystery and struggle we all endure in trying to figure out this life.

Tal Goretsky says

This is an amazing novel, told from the POV of several members of the same family over the course of years, much like Cunningham's *Flesh and Blood*. It differs by being much lighter and funnier, while tackling similarly dark problems of the modern American family. The novel takes place on Merritt Island in Florida, an island that is wholly run by and populated by NASA employees. The themes of flight, fantasy, and searching for and/or being extra-terrestrials play out metaphorically through the characters' lives. It's astounding how accurately Ryan paints the minds of the confused, neurotic Catholic mother, the husbands that keep deserting her, and her small menagerie of kooky children. It's ordinary life made extra-ordinary and delicious by Ryan's fabulous strokes.
