



Only the Strongest Survive

Ian Fox

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The novel opens with a hair-tingling scene, as two men kidnap Emely Donovan, one of the wealthiest women in America. She finds herself locked in the basement of a remote house in the middle of a forest, watched over by one of her captors who makes her buy and sell stocks for him so he can get rich. Her challenge to survive becomes even more complicated when Emely's captor falls in love with her.

Only the Strongest Survive Details

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From Reader Review Only the Strongest Survive for online ebook

Julie Read Our Lips! Book Review Blog says

Only The Strongest Survive by Ian Fox brings forth to my mind a popular saying: When you cast a play in hell, you can't expect to get angels as actors.

All of the characters in the book are inherently flawed – none of them are perfect and they swim in a gray area where one minute you see them as a villain and in the next as a victim. As the story unfolds, we get flashbacks into their lives and the events that brought them to the present, further complicating them being pegged as being all good or evil.

First we meet Emely Donovan who came from a humble background. Raised in an orphanage, she makes her mark on the world as an adult, when she discovers a love for the stock market and a knack to successfully predict outcomes that ensure a big profit for her clients. Fame and fortune quickly follows and everything Emely could ever dream of becomes a reality. However, as she acquires more, her moral values steadily decline, and it's not long before she employs some not-so-honest methods to ensure her success. With that kind of track record, it's not hard to believe she doesn't have much friends, and her love life is practically non-existent.

Next we meet Ronald Langdon, the son of a business man who owned a sporting goods store. When Ronald's father dies and he gains control of the company, unwise business decisions on Ronald's part bring his company to the brink. Emely sees an opportunity she can't resist and makes her move, becoming the majority shareholder and effectively taking his company from him. Hell bent on revenge, Ronald vows not to rest until he can put Emely in her place for taking what was his.

Then there's Ronald's younger brother John Langdon, who has lived in his brother's shadow all his life. Feeling inadequate and inferior to his brother, he always does what Ronald asks of him – without question. Desperate and lonely, he struggles to find a passion for life and often turns to alcohol to soothe the pain of his reality.

All three characters' destinies collide on a roadway where the brothers pull Emily over and kidnap her. Emely, thinking she can talk her way out her predicament, offers them money to let her go. Little does she know Ronald is not there for money; he is there to take her life. As Ronald sets to prepare Emely's fate, he leaves John in charge of her.

John is drunk, and being alone with a beautiful woman ignites his primal desires and he caves into his urges. But before John can come to grips on what is happening around him, his brother returns, ready to exact his revenge on Emely. Before anyone can think things clearly, the brothers drive Emely deep into the woods and bury her alive in a coffin, leaving her for dead.

The brothers go their separate ways, though John stays behind in a cabin his family owns in the woods nearby where Emely was buried. Now alone with his thoughts, Emely's beauty and promise of a new life with her money, make John experience an overwhelming sense of guilt and remorse. After debating things with himself, he sets out to try to rescue Emely, hoping to take her up on her offer of monetary compensation – \$2 million worth.

Barely clinging to life, John unearths Emely and brings her back to his cabin where he cares for her until she

recovers. Suddenly having someone to take care of fills John with a sense of purpose, and it's not long before he starts to have feelings for Emely.

Emely, finding herself trapped in basement, obeys John's every command – even working the stock market to increase the capital she handed over to him for her release. Determined this is her wake up call, she vows to do whatever it takes to survive. But when John confesses his love for her, Emely is put to the ultimate test of what she'll do to make it out alive.

Only The Strongest Survive will make you reflect on what you would do in a similar situation, and its gripping action will have you on the edge of your seat. Though the ending caught me entirely by surprise, and the non-consensual sex subject matter was tough at times to read, the story is compelling and will stay with you long after you read.

Rating: 3.5 Kisses

Visit my blog for your chance to win your own copy of Only the Strongest Survive by Ian Fox.

<http://readourlipsblog.blogspot.com/2...>

Newbee (JoAnn) Brown says

Best book I've tead in a long time! Highly recomend, if you like surprise endings you'll love this one! Not your usuall kidnapping story.... Well worth the read!

Tracy Beth says

<http://freshcoffeespot.blogspot.com/2...>

Dianne says

I actually finished this.... But why? A good premise, but the language and dialogue were child-like. Not well-written. So very disappointing. I guess this is the reason free books on Amazon, are free. Sad.

Kathleen Yoshida says

(This novel was provided to me by the author for review.)

The novel opens with a hair-tingling scene, as two men kidnap Emely Donovan, one of the wealthiest women in America, and bury her alive. What is behind this horrific crime?

Raised in a strict religious institution, Emely never knew her parents. Fearing a life of poverty, she starts up a small business that deals mainly with buying and selling stocks. Thanks to her extreme dedication and knowledge, the company grows over time into a major conglomerate. In her desire for ever greater financial

security, this beautiful, ambitious CEO has accumulated a number of enemies.

But now she finds herself locked in the basement of a remote house in the middle of a forest, watched over by one of her captors who makes her buy and sell stocks for him so he can get rich. Her challenge to survive becomes even more complicated when Emely's captor falls in love with her ...

My Review:

As the title suggests the heroine of the novel, Emely Donovan, must be strong to survive the ordeal she is to go through. A tough-as-nails business woman who is used to getting her way in all things in regards to her business and personal life, she is about to undergo a horrific experience being kidnapped not for money, which she has plenty of, but for revenge involving being buried and left to die.

Mr. Fox amply delivers on the action in this novel. However, for me personally, the novel falls short because frankly I just didn't care about the main character Emely Donovan. Though trying to make the character more sympathetic to his readers by introducing glimpses into her past via conversations between a reporter and her friends/business associates, I found most of these not revealing enough or good enough to justify her behavior.

Further in the novel Mr. Fox begins to incorporate a romance between Emely Donovan and one of the kidnappers. This smacks of Stockholm Syndrome, an apparently paradoxical psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy and have positive feelings towards their captors, sometimes to the point of defending them. These feelings are generally considered irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, who essentially mistake a lack of abuse from their captors for an act of kindness. Unfortunately because I did not care for Emely Donovan nor for her kidnapper, the introduction of a romance aspect to this novel did not work for me.

This might have had a chance with me if it was written as a murder mystery novel where she was killed off and they had to solve the crime. But as it stands just not my cup of tea.

keith garford says

Only the strong

This is one of those thrillers that once you start reading it you just can't put it down, I would highly recommend it 100%

Lynn says

This book is about Emely, a ruthless and determined and often unethical businesswoman being kidnapped by two brothers whose lives she destroyed by buying out their family business. Ronald and John have plans to kill Emely, but John has second thoughts. John decides to use Emely's stock market expertise to make himself rich. In the months they are together their relationship dynamic changes, and both of them struggle with that.

I enjoyed the overall theme of the book, but the writing style made it difficult to fully enjoy. There was a lot

of jumping back and forth between the main plot and characters that were inconsequential. I had a hard time caring about Emely even though she was experiencing horrific circumstances. I would've liked to have seen her share some revelations and make some life changes in the end. The whole time she is being held captive she talks about the things she is going to change if she ever escapes. When she finally gets her freedom back it appears she is living the same lifestyle she was prior to her kidnapping.

I would've liked less side story, a more desirable heroine, and not as much plot jumping.

Brittiany says

This book starts off with a bang when corporate head honcho Emely Donovan is kidnapped. Initially it's unclear what their motives are, though she suspects they want her money. These kidnappers hold a grudge though and money is not what they're after... at least not at first. It seems one has a change of heart, in more ways than one.

Unfortunately, that little synopsis does more justice than I feel the book is worth. While the storyline could have been exciting, I believe it was poorly executed. Like I said, it started off with a bang, which I generally appreciate, but after that it was quick to fall apart.

There were many inconsistencies, not only in the reality of things, but in the story itself. In the opening chapter it states Emely is 49, but later in the book it says she's 29. After she's kidnapped it goes from saying "hours" to "days" when referring to the same stretch of time. When others talk of how long they've known her, one person tells the police only a couple of years but then later says he's known her from when she was in an orphanage, then goes on to tell how he met her at a party.

Normally I can read a book in a matter of a couple days. With the poor writing, I just couldn't get into this book. I feel like the author spent too much time on areas that weren't really relevant to the story or worth that much time and then grazed by on areas where more details should have been given. There were a few really good lines in there, but I often felt like the story was being told to a child (though the content would have been much too harsh). The dialogue was very weak and unrealistic given the situation and circumstances presented in the story. It sometimes made me wonder if it had been written by two different people or if someone helped out with certain sections. Some parts would be okay and I'd think I could get past it, then wham, all the placating nonsense would be back. Maybe it's due to the author being from a different country and possibly some emotions, dynamics, and drama got lost in translation. I don't know, but the writing style just wasn't up to par for my taste.

Some people had a problem with the idea of Stockholm's Syndrome in this book. I think written properly it could have worked very well with this story. As it was though, the proper time wasn't invested into showing how the dynamic between the two changed. It showed a poorly developed male character going from wanting to kill her to being hopelessly in love with her. She seems strong at first, but then suddenly her strength dissolves against him. It just doesn't work like this...

I'll be honest, I read some reviews to see if others felt the same way I did after having read this book. It appears people did not feel the same, or they were a little nicer than maybe they should have been since the book had been provided to them for review. Writing false reviews does not help anyone... it doesn't help the customers looking for something good to read, and it certainly doesn't help the author, that is, if he wants a truly helpful critique. I hope I don't seem too harsh and that the author understands I'm just being honest.

hopefully he can take the criticism and learn from it for any future books.

The author reached out to me for a review of his book. While I would love to always have nice things to say, especially when having been given the product for free in exchange for the review, sadly, it doesn't always work out that way. I wish Mr. Fox lots of luck in his future writing

Dianne Faktor says

I actually finished this...

But why? A good premise, but the language and dialogue were child-like. So very disappointing. I guess this is the reason free books on Amazon, are free. Sad.

Barb VanderWel says

I love this & I can't wait for more.

I will be also leaving a review on Goodreads @ Amazon.

And letting everyone know about it.

So i gave it a 5 Stars.

Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

"2.5 stars" I'm not entirely sure where to start with expressing my feelings about this book. *Only the Strongest Survive* was by far one of the most unusual books I've ever read, but I'm not entirely sure that's a good thing. First, I've never read a book where I didn't really like any of the characters. Since I primarily read for pleasure, I much prefer having at least one or two characters that I feel compelled to root for, because without that, it's all but impossible for me to truly enjoy it. The supporting players are all rather one-dimensional and unrelatable, never moving me in any way except perhaps to feel like smacking a few of them for their selfish, opportunistic attitudes. When Emely disappears, most of them spend the remainder of the story thinking about how they can use this to their advantage, rather than actually being concerned for her safety and trying to find her, which doesn't speak much to her character either. The only one who isn't really like this is Blake, Emely's right-hand man and the one who takes over the management of her company in her absence. He was the only semi-likable character in the whole story which is ironic, considering that he's a lawyer, but he was still too dull to really stand out. Everyone else is quite simply self-absorbed and/or obsessed with money, lust, power, prestige and how they can get more of these things, rather than anyone truly caring about their fellow human beings in any capacity.

I sympathized with Emely to the extent that I don't think anyone deserves to be kidnapped, raped, buried alive, and then held captive for four months. We gradually learn about her past in flashbacks as a reporter interviews various people while trying to piece together a story following her disappearance. Emely spent her entire childhood in an orphanage and during her early adult life seemed to be a fairly admirable person. She knew what it was like to be poor, but pulled herself up by her bootstraps to follow her dream of

becoming a stockbroker and eventually, started her own company. However, somewhere along the way (and to be honest I'm not sure where), she seemed to lose sight of her humble roots and became a greedy, conniving, workaholic businesswoman who formed few attachments and literally would do anything to make her next million. She didn't seem to care how her actions affected the people who owned or worked for the companies she took over through underhanded means as long as she was making a profit from it. Her experience with John made her think a little more deeply about her work, at least from the standpoint of never taking a break from it, but even after she finally returns, I was not in any way led to believe that she actually changed the way in which she does business. After Emely was abducted by the Langdon brothers, the tough, take-no-prisoners businesswoman seemed to fly out the window. She goes on some fairly long crying jags, and although I can't blame her under the circumstances, it seemed somewhat inconsistent with her character. She makes some attempts to find a way of escape, but as she grows more and more sympathetic toward John, she simply stops all together until the very end. At that point, the strong fighter returns as she battles Ronald tooth and nail like a madwoman whose life depends on it (and it did), but it just left me feeling confused as to why she never unleashed her fury with the same fervor on John. Since she could obviously do it when she wanted to, it seemed like a weak excuse for creating a "romance" between Emely and John.

When the story begins, John is not a nice person at all. He conspired with his brother to kidnap and murder Emely for taking their company from them which seemed a bit extreme to me. There are lots of people in the world who lose everything, and yet don't set out to torture and kill the person they feel was responsible. This leads me to believe that they were simply mentally unstable to begin with. In an inebriated state, John also rapes Emely before he and his brother bury her alive. If this hadn't happened, or if John had shown more compassion earlier in the story, I might have been able to buy into the "romance" angle a little more. As is, I think he "rescued" Emely only because he had developed an obsession with her and the money she offered him, rather than feeling guilty or for any altruistic reasons. During the early weeks as John holds Emely captive, his behavior is just weird and creepy. He has severe passive/aggressive tendencies, sometimes acting nice and at others being a real brute. As John grows more and more fond of Emely, he begins to lighten up, and if it were in any other context, I could honestly say he began to exhibit the characteristics of an ideal lover: he was gentle with her, he cooked Emely fabulous meals, he took her on relaxing walks in the woods, and even bought her a puppy. However, all of that still wasn't enough to make me forget that this man participated in kidnapping, rape, attempted murder, and had been holding Emely captive for four months, forcing her to make investments for him, not to mention the harsh manner in which he treated several prostitutes during the first half of the book. I'm all for a good redemption story, and this appears to be what the author was aiming for, the idea that John's love for Emely changed him. Still, I just couldn't quite bring myself to fully buy it. I do believe that John's actions on Emely's behalf at the end of the book were from the heart, but the notion that he had changed so drastically in such a short time was not entirely credible to me.

Under any other circumstances, I might have actually liked John and Emely as a couple, but as written, I felt their supposed "romance" reeked of Stockholm Syndrome. Initially, I think Emely started being nice to John in order to gain his trust in hopes that he might let his guard down, but it didn't take long for her to become physically attracted to him and feel sympathetic toward him. In fact, their first friendly talks seem to come from out of nowhere. She does go through a period of confusion and disgust over her feelings for him, but again, in fairly short order, she seems to come to terms with it and things progress even further between them. Oddly, at this point, Emely seems to suffer few, if any, ill effects from nearly being murdered by burying alive, not to mention the earlier rape. Stockholm Syndrome is certainly a valid psychological condition, and if the author had played it that way, I might have been more accepting of this part of the story as well. However, as there is no indication of this phenomena in the narrative, it appears that the reader is simply expected to accept John and Emely's relationship as a true love match.

In addition to my issues with the characters, there were a number of poorly explained plot points. I mentioned earlier Emely's resistance of Ronald, but not John. During that fight, she had a couple of what we in the romance world call TSTL (too stupid to live) moments. Not once, but twice, she managed to get a gun away from him, and yet rather than using it to shoot him or at least try to fend him off, she instead carelessly throws it away. It seemed like a weak attempt to draw out the climax longer than necessary. Also Emely supposedly has a boyfriend, but he never turns up as a character in the story. This didn't make sense to me, because it seems to me that if he cared for her, he would be even more concerned about her whereabouts than her employees or a random reporter. Lastly, I don't think there was a single male character in this story, from the doorman at Emely's office building on up to John himself, who didn't lust after her in some capacity. I'm not quite sure what to make of that. Emely didn't seem that magnetically attractive to me, but it certainly plays right into the stereotype of men never thinking about anything but sex.

The final issue I had with this book is the writing. I began it completely baffled by the perspective. It flips around from one character to another (including minor bit players) so rapidly I was about to get whiplash, and then there are parts that are more from the narrator's (author's) viewpoint. After doing a little research, I believe this is what is known as third person omniscient point of view. I have very little experience with this writing style, but can say unequivocally that it isn't a favorite of mine. Without the deep POV that I crave in my reading, there is just too much distance between the characters and the reader, leaving me not really caring a great deal what happens to any of them. Even still, this perspective might have been OK except that a large part of the narrative is also written in a passive voice which only served to make me feel further distanced from the story. The stockbroking details are a little dry and not woven into the narrative as seamlessly as they could be, and the dialog doesn't always have the natural flow of normal conversation either. My overall sense of the writing style is of a story that is being told to me in a news reporting style rather than one that I could really sink my teeth into and experience on a deep emotional level.

And yet, in spite of all my criticisms and the story itself not really being my cup of tea, I still kept reading, but this is one of those unusual cases where I'm not entirely sure why. There were times when it was so dull I felt like I was slogging through a swamp and other times when it was more interesting and suspenseful. I kept getting the nagging feeling that there might be some deeper hidden meaning here like one often finds in literary fiction, but as anything of that nature managed to elude me, perhaps it was merely my analytical brain trying to make sense out of an otherwise bizarre story. For me, this book was like the car wreck by the side of the road that draws your gaze despite your best efforts to look away. Even when I was bored with it or despising the characters, I still had a morbid fascination with wanting to know how it ended. Even as I sit here writing the final words of this review, I am still rather undecided as to how to rate it, so I think I am going to settle on the exact middle of the road rating of 2.5 stars. Mr. Fox made me want to like John and Emely in spite of mostly not liking them. The story itself also still haunts me like a specter that must be exorcised. Even if I can't say that I truly enjoyed it, and even if the writing could have been better, I have a feeling this puzzlingly peculiar tale will linger in my memory for a while. I figure it must take some storytelling skill to make me feel that way, so it seems, in that capacity, the author has done his job well.

Note: I received a copy of this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Laura says

Only the Strongest Survive is a thriller novel by Ian Fox. At the beginning of the novel Emely is kidnapped. This story is her tale of survival.

I really enjoyed reading this book. The story held my interest and I couldn't wait to see what happened. Emely went through many ups and downs during the story. She grew as a character and she survived. I like the way the story went back and forth from present day to flash back. We learned a lot about Emely and how she became the woman she was.

We also learn a lot about the 2 kidnappers, Ronald and John. Over the course of the book we learn what led them to commit this crime. Ronald and John to learn and grow during this book, one more than the other.

This book may not appeal to all readers but I really enjoyed it. I am looking forward to reading more by Ian Fox.

Jessica `~Blahyze~` says

This was nothing like I have read before and I have to say, I found reading this just a little bit disturbing. The rape scene in book did not appeal to me on any level, I think if it had been more glazed over or just alluded to without going into the act like it did it would have been more suited for me. I just found it an unnecessary part; they didn't particularly add anything to the intrigue of the story for me. I couldn't connect with the lead female character Emely, she went from wanting to escape and live, to loving her captor? To loving the man who raped her, tried to kill her and held her hostage and then weeping over his death...I just didn't understand that. Sometimes I found jumping between Emely's old past experiences confusing to keep up with but generally it was fairly easy to read.

Unfortunately, I just don't think this was my kind of book. It was a bit too intense for my liking though I couldn't help but keep reading to find out how everything turned out. The expression of the emotions of each character was done well and I think the atmosphere of the book was also written to perfection. It unfortunately just wasn't my type of read, a tad too dark for me.

Submitted for Review by Author

helen roberts says

Ransom

An interesting and well written book. Has believable characters and plausible story line. Great and unexpected twist at the end.

Julie Barrett says

Only The Strongest Survive by Ian

This book starts out with a kidnapping of the CEO of a huge company that is worth billions in the stock market.

Although I don't normally read thriller books this one held my interest because of the many aspects of it. The book concentrates on those who now run the company and the decisions they make with Emeily gone- they are still not sure if it was a kidnapping or she just needed a week away from things.

Love the story line and learning about the stock market.

Her life is spared, brought back to life and must now live where she has no outside contact with others but has transferred 2 million dollars to John. She had taken over his familys company several years ago and now John wants what the company was really worth-10 million.

One brother, Ronald has no idea she is alive again, last he left her was in the ground in a coffin, buried.

I am caught up in the moment of reading this and I can't seem to read fast enough to find the answers I want. John leaves many nights and from her basement room she can hear the alarm that sounds when one comes and goes into the complex.

The story goes back in time as to how she got the position she held at the company and then to the present: She does get to spend some time with John as she advises him what to buy and sell and they get to talk about the past. She gets to know him.

Love the explanations of how to buy and sell and why.

Journalism during war or earthquakes was a new one for me.

I am totally petrified for her and then he announces he will set her free.

There is some sex and at times it appears to be rather brutal and at other times it's just a passion for sex.
