



Reel: A Novel

Tobias Carroll

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Reel follows two lives that collide at a Seattle punk show, and the strange consequences that arise. Timon serves as the hyperobservant western outpost of his family's business, verifying artifacts and losing himself in deafening music and isolation. Marianne fears stagnation, and has begun to crave the rootless travel of her youth. After a tense meeting, each proceeds through a series of surreal encounters that deconstruct the lives that they've created, forcing each one into a reckoning with the world around them.

Reel: A Novel Details

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Author : Tobias Carroll

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From Reader Review Reel: A Novel for online ebook

Janie C. says

This book is rich in texture and is built intricately with words that both balance and refine the text. It is the story of two alienated people, their brief intersection, and the ways in which they coincidentally affect each others' lives. Both characters are reeling along on their own courses without set directions. Both are searching for a sense of self, and their longing to belong are equally matched by their need to pull away from attachments. The story does not rely on action to pull the reader in, but on finely delineated thoughts and complicated emotional frustrations. There is an intricate art to Tobias Carroll's character development, and the journey to the final words is inherently affecting. This book is a stimulating treat of cerebral enterprise.

Chris says

Pretension abounds in this precious little novel. It's clear that the author loves his words, and he's in desperate need of a good editor. Reel is basically a 20-page short story stretched to 156 pages with unnecessary SAT words -- the book contains the word "preternatural" more than once -- and drawn-out, yet still staggeringly unclear descriptions of exercise routines and packaging materials.

Incidentally, I couldn't tell you much about the actual story because I found my mind drifting for pages at a time due to the dragging and ostentatious prose.

I learned of this book from an internet list called something like "The 15 Best Short Novels," which I have since learned almost exclusively included novellas by authors from the same circle of Brooklyn-based writers. So I feel duped. Luckily, I found this one on Amazon for \$4; I'd have been really upset if I'd paid any more than that. Still, it robbed me of 3 hours of my life.

Robin Bonne says

Slow, but with beautifully written prose.

Kristenfalsocapaldi says

While it took me a few pages to immerse myself completely into the story, once I did, the words gripped me and held on tight. The character of Timon has a haunting quality; he's torn between a family-mandated professional life and his inner anger, an "id" which unleashes itself on late-night dance floors. His counterpart, a stifled artist, is lost despite her attraction to maps. Literary fiction that will leave you thinking; very solid writing.

Hyacinth says

I received this book in a goodreads giveaway.

Lori says

Read 9/5/16 - 9/11/16

3 Stars - Recommended to fans of slow moving, hibrow fiction

Pages: 157

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reel

/r?l/

verb

- lose one's balance and stagger or lurch violently.

Back in 1993, a fairly large group of friends and I spent the afternoon moshing and floating over the crowd at an STP, Flaming Lips, and Butthole Surfers concert. There were so many of us that we needed to ride in multiple vehicles to get there. Some of the people I knew well, some I recognized from brief introductions, and a few people I hadn't met yet. So I piled in the back of a pickup truck with a handful of the kids I was closest to. I don't really remember ever meeting with up the rest of the group during the concert, but apparently, unbeknownst to me at the time, my future husband was buried in there somewhere. He was one of the ones I hadn't yet been introduced to. To be so close to someone, to spend the day at an event together, and never quite cross paths is kind of weird when you think about it. Was he one of the hands holding me up over the crowd? Did he vacate the port-a-potty I had used moments before I entered it? What would have happened if I had gotten into the car he was in instead of tucking myself under the blankets in the back of the pickup that day?

It wasn't until we started dating in 1994, shortly after 'officially' meeting for the first time during an orientation at a new job, that we discovered we hung out in the same groups. Like, some of my best friends were friends with his best friends. And not only were we both at the STP concert together, but Lollapalooza that same year AND a handful of house parties. How had we never met until now? How could we have orbited each other so closely and been oblivious to one another? Hello. Mind. Blown.

This all comes rushing back to me when I start reading Reel and realize the two main characters are in a similarly fucked up, but almost completely opposite, situation when we first meet them. Here, two strangers are sort of swimming against the tides of their own lives when they momentarily collide at a punk show. Timon, fresh from vomiting in the bathroom after exorcising some demons in the mosh pit, bumps into

Marianne, who is not at all impressed by his jerky behavior front and center during the gig and tells him so. After a seriously awkward encounter, they walk away from one another. This should be the end of the story. Yet, as we continue to follow them from that point on, we begin to discover just how deeply that brief meeting has nudged their lives off center. Whether they notice or not, they have begun to fall under the influence of one another.

Strange coincidences start popping up shortly after the show. The first - Marianne discovers a mural on a roadside coffee shack in which one of the people painted in it shares an uncanny resemblance to Timon. It disturbs her so much that she goes on a mission to identify the artist and attempts to get into touch with her. Though she never manages to speak with the painter directly, Marianne later learns that her two BFF's are preparing to open an art gallery that is being funded by, wouldn't you know it, the mural artist. Small world, you guys.

Meanwhile, Timon takes on a job at his father's prompting, working with a guy named Carligne who claims that he comes highly recommended by a mutual friend of theirs, Timon's ex-girlfriend, who is also, wait for it, the artist of the mural Marianne stumbled across. Even weirder? Marianne comes THIS CLOSE to working on a website project with Carligne until he backs out last minute. Even smaller world, right?

It's kind of like playing that game "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon". At one point, I thought, man, how many different ways can we connect two complete strangers to one another? But if you stop and think about it, this kind of circular, orbiting influence is present in each one of our lives. We're most likely just too close to it to realize it. As I read the book, I found myself wondering how what I do might impact, or influence, people I will never ever meet. I mean shit, how many people might come into our lives for the briefest of moments but continue to live on through peripheral connections we may never be aware of? Our reach is so much greater than we give ourselves credit for, you know?

Then it hit me - the title of the novel is ridiculously fitting. The universe seems to be set upon pushing Timon and Marianne together while they appear to be making decisions that continuously drive themselves further apart. But they have no friggen clue. It's not intentional, it's just that they both wish to be somewhere else, doing something other than what they are doing, and are somewhat unwilling to take the leap to completely change their situation, and so they continue to orbit the same atmosphere and are constantly influenced by one another without even realizing it. Which really, to bring it back to my original point, is the flipped version of my situation, in which my future husband and I orbited each other initially and were ultimately nudged together in a right-place-at-the-right-time sort of way.

Will Marianne and Timon get another opportunity to "meet" each other? Will the stars align for them in the same way they seemed to align for me and my husband? Or will they continue to stumble and lurch in opposite directions, drifting further away from one another, like a pair of planets knocked off their orbit, feeling less and less of each other's pull until there are simply no connections left...?

(On a side note, I'm nodding at that cover like whoa because it's pretty fucking phenomenal. It vibes like old school science fiction which can throw the reader for a loop because the writing is actually kind of hibrow hoity toity and it's not sci-fi at all unless you count all the orbity-influentialness of it sci-fi, but who the hell cares with a cover like that? Right?)

Nadia says

Tobias Carroll - A guy who knows how to put himself out there. Check out Vol 1 Brooklyn!

Nick Scandy says

I dig it. Feels a little bit like Dana Spiotta in the way that music and art is weaved into one's internal chemistry—though with a '90s/00s-searching kind of narrative arc.

It also makes me want to go grab a copy of this referenced Rachel's and Matmos collab record. All I've got is Music for Egon Schiele and I'm feeling like one of the less-in-the-know characters of *Reel*. Like Timon's Dad or something. That dude isn't even that good at verifying shit.

Tobias says

This novel, it's pretty good! And the guy who wrote it, he's all right too.

John Madera says

Tobias Carroll's *Reel* is a deft portrait of two escapists, one sadly caving ever inward, the other potentially perilously outward, both along their respective ways accidentally colliding into each other then careening away from each other, only to repeatedly tenuously connect in a series of strange coincidences. The novel features many plays on, off, and against the various denotations and connotations of the book's title, as in the various characters' off-kilter behaviors, Timon's disruptive unbalanced dances, the audio recording tape he's employed to authenticate, and more besides. Employing a thorny lyricism reminiscent of Denis Johnson, Carroll nimbly evokes the Pacific Northwest's foggy melancholia and New Jersey's hazy post-industrial blight; music and other noises conjured throughout, effectively demonstrating how sounds, organized or not, thoroughly affect and arouse the body and mind, or, as he writes, "the impact of bodies on bodies and its jarring absolution"; all of which marking *Reel* as an engaging rendering of characters and atmospheres and their corresponding disturbances.
