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Let Him Go: A Novel



Synopsis

A retired sheriff and his wife go after their young grandson in a riveting tale of familial love and its unexpected consequences. Let Him Go, Larry Watson's ninth book, returns to big sky country in mid-century America but, with the pervasive menace of a small town family gone wrong and a shocking and deadly ending, this novel charts new territory for the author and provides a powerful dose of suspense for the reader. It's been years since George and Margaret Blackledge lost their son James and months since his widow Lorna took off with their only grandson and married Donnie Weboy. Margaret is resolved to find and retrieve the boy; while George is none too eager to stir up trouble. Soon, the Blackledges find themselves entangled with the entire Weboy clan, who are determined not to give up the boy without a fight.

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes you read a book so good that it leaves you breathless and not wanting to come up for air. That is the case with Larry Watson's, Let Him Go: A Novel. Written in language rich, poetic and spare like the land it takes place in, it is a story that will leave you wanting to read whatever else this author has written. The year is 1951. Margaret and George Blackledge have lost their son in a horse accident. He was thrown off the horse and his neck was broken. He left a wife, Lorna, and a son named Jimmy. For a while, Lorna and Jimmy lived with the Blackledges but Lorna has since remarried Donnie Weboy, a troublemaker and a poor stepfather. Margaret has witnessed Donnie treating Jimmie abusively and she has never forgotten this. Lorna, herself, did not come to Jimmy's

aid in this situation. George and Margaret live in Dalton, North Dakota not far from the Badlands. Margaret gets it into her head that with or without George she is going to find Lorna and ask her to give them custody of Jimmy. Margaret packs most of their belongings in their car and they travel to Montana where Lorna now lives and plans to ask for the child. George decides to go with her. "I'd loaded up damn near everything in the house. Everything we'd need to live out of the car for months, if need be. And that was the vision I had - George and me on the road, chasing Donnie, Lorna, and Jimmy, traipsing all over the west. We'd have ourselves a real adventure. By the time we'd caught them we'd have earned Jimmy, as if there is such a thing..." What happens from then on is a story that grips the reader and never lets go. Watson's writing is magical.

LET HIM GO George and Margaret Blackledge have been married forty years and have been through just about everything life can throw at them. And they have survived. Their love is deep, pure, and strong, as both of them are. Their devotion and dedication to each other is so profound readers correctly assume that the two would do anything for each other. Fate deals them a very cruel hand by taking their son, James, away from them after he dies due to a freak accident. Then, fate rearing her ugly head again, James' widow and young son, Jimmy, leave town, her marrying a no-good, white-trash, bad boy and moving to his home town. George and Margaret have lost about everything now except Margaret's need, desire, and will to go get their grandson and bring them back to live with them, his loving grandparents. While Margaret and George deep down know that it won't be easy to convince their ex-daughter-in-law to part with her son, they are not prepared for the likes of the family she has married into -- the Weboy clan. Never have the Blackledge's met up with or could have imagined a family such as this, the Weboys. With their gumption still alive and ready to face just about anything, George and Margaret don't give up the good fight to claim their young grandson and bring him back home with them. I absolutely loved this book. Larry Watson writes like butter -- smooth, rich, sweet tasting. His words flow and pour straight into your heart. For instance -- "The sun has dropped low enough to bring up the colors in the prairie grasses, the shades of lavender and gold that can't be seen at any other moment of the day and that incline most travelers through this landscape to silence. Gospel hour indeed.

The simple plotting of Larry Watson's Let Him Go - the quest of Margaret and George Blackridge to reclaim their young grandson, who lives with his mother and rotten-to-the-core stepfather - belies the strong emotional impact of this exquisitely powerful book. The power sneaks up on the reader when it is least expected - in a snatch of dialogue, a perceptive insight, a small detail that turns

everything around. Larry Watson is a master of breathing life into his characters through ordinary conversations and actions that hint at extraordinary revelations that bubble right beneath the surface. The story takes place in Dalton, North Dakota in 1951 in what some people refer to as the "real America" - a place where people don't waste words, where hard work and straight talk is respected, and where the people and the land are reliant on each other. Their grown son has met with tragedy, and Margaret prevails upon her taciturn husband to travel to Gladstone, Montana to find his namesake Jimmy...a boy who has been caught in the web of his stepfather's violent Weboy family. Larry Watson walks a delicate tightrope; what he doesn't reveal is every bit as meaningful as what he describes. Is the long and tender marriage of Margaret and George more complex than it appears? What were they like as parents to their twins - James, who is now dead, and Janie, who is estranged from them? Does raising Jimmy give them the right to another chance? Along the way, there are brutal surprises and heartbreaks and words so true they cause the reader to gasp at their validity. Take this, for example: "A four-year-old has so little past, and he remembers almost none of it, neither the father he once had nor the house where he once lived."

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