

Achaladair

William S. Young

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This amiable action novel offers juicy romance in the breathtaking and rough Scottish countryside.

William S. Young's *Achaladair* is a jovial action novel about government agents defending the United Kingdom against the militant Irish Republican Army in the 1960s. Between missions, the affable agents indulge themselves at the Bridge of Orchy Hotel, joking over beers, sleeping with barmaids, and brawling with old buddies.

The book focuses on the leisure activities of the agents rather than their mission fighting the IRA. Most of their research into possible IRA members is done by other agents over the phone, and many of the physical battles take place in summary, as they try to mask how bloody the fighting gets to the hotel staff and tourists.

The tension between characters revolves around past grudges and current flings with the hotel restaurant staff. The result is a sexy and comedic novel with a splash of action to keep the plot together. While these elements don't always work harmoniously, the book never ceases to entertain.

Agent Frank Mulholland, the fearless leader of the rowdy group, precariously balances a love triangle with Carol, the good-natured hotel bartender, and her friend, the seductive and mysterious Georgie. He has undeniable sexual chemistry with Georgie, in spite of—or likely because of—her suspicious ties to the IRA, much to the chagrin of Carol. Though predictable, the will-they-won't-they tension is enticing.

The overarching story line of taking down the IRA is often lost among the love triangles and flirtations. There is rarely an immediate sense of danger. Still, the episodic tension is well executed and maintains intrigue. A couple of exhilarating chapters are spent on a little girl's disappearance from the hotel, as the agents and other guests frantically look for her in the frigid weather.

The rugged Scottish countryside setting is built mostly around the dialogue of a few agents with thick Scottish accents, with dialect written out phonetically. The detail and accuracy of the dialects are commendable and unique, though they can initially be laborious to decipher.

A keen appreciation for the natural wonder of snowy Scottish winters and a strong sense of community among the Scottish people keep the novel grounded and make it memorable.

The IRA is characterized by cartoonishly burly men, and while it is amusing to watch Frank outsmart them, this portrayal lacks context to the point of being ahistorical.

An amusing action novel with a strong sense of place and plenty of tantalizing romance, *Achaladair* has something for everyone.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (April 20, 2017)

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