



Baseball Dads

Matthew S. Hiley

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American Psycho meets Little League baseball in this delightfully disturbing satire.

There's a popular saying about the Lone Star State that shows up on bumper stickers from time to time: "Don't mess with Texas." It's a warning unheeded by Fort Worth satirist Matthew S. Hiley. In his outrageous new novel, *Baseball Dads*, Hiley takes a bat to Texan high society. And a tire iron. And a chain saw. The narrative amounts to a middle-aged man's sex-crazed, drug-fueled, gore-drenched revenge fantasy. It is a depraved and grotesque story. It's also addictively entertaining, and funny as hell.

Hiley writes his main character, Dwayne Devero, and his band of misfit friends as decent, if juvenile, men trying to get their kids better positions on a baseball team in the well-to-do suburbs of Fort Worth. What begins as mere commentary on the community's materialistic and hypocritical nature takes a psychopathic turn when Devero and his "Jedi alliance" decide to mete out justice on their own terms. Imagine if instead of on Wall Street, *American Psycho* were set in the competitive world of children's baseball.

Hiley's dark, irreverent humor isn't for the faint of heart. Besides barrages of politically incorrect jokes, he employs a sharp, sick sense of irony to great effect in many of his scenes. "You made my son feel inadequate today, Pete, and that's just not cool," Devero complains somewhat casually, while feeding an assistant coach into a leaf shredder.

The shock value isn't without moralistic purpose. Hiley gleefully wields his psychopathic protagonist against America's corrupt institutions. "There is no real hierarchy. The caste system has no true control," Devero tells his followers. "We are reintroducing ethics and natural law to a society that has tossed them aside, in favor of lives led by greed and pseudo spirituality."

At its worst, *Baseball Dads* is absurd, sickeningly violent entertainment. At its best, it's a subversive morality tale. Swinging for the fences, Hiley sends at least a couple runners home. He both disturbs and delights by imagining vigilante justice taken to an extreme.

SCOTT NEUFFER (Winter 2016)

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