FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Autobiography & Memoir

Boy With Loaded Gun
Lewis Nordan
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
978-1-56512-199-7
(December 31, 1999)

A lot of kids pretend they are Superman and fantasize they can fly. Many of them even have a special Superman cape their mother made for them to aid in the games of fantasy. How many children, however, get themselves so worked up that they actually attempt flight and end up knocking themselves out upon impact with the dusty ground?

Nordan was just such a child. He was the class clown with little, if any, impulse control. His life was marked by obsessions. From the comic books and TV of childhood he moved on in adolescence to a longing to get out of his little Southern hometown. He clung to mail order as a way of communicating with the outside world, and even ordered an old Army Surplus pistol out of the back of a barber shop magazine. His obsession was so strong and impulses so out of control that he once attempted to murder his father with this gun. He didn't succeed, but it seemed to lay the groundwork for a life wrought with obsession, crazy schemes and loss of control.

Nordan writes in his memoir of a lifetime of alcohol abuse, shut-off emotions and marital problems. It is a story that could have easily buried itself in melodrama and self-pity, but thankfully Nordan doesn't allow himself such easy pleasures. Instead, he exposes the tender underbelly of his demons with honesty and humor, never once inviting the reader to pity him. He takes full responsibility for the lack of control and misdirected anger that characterize his choices in life.

This is a book for adult readers, not only because of the language and sexual content, but because the life traumas expressed are the kind that most young people have not had to face yet, and therefore won't identify with. Long-term alcoholism, marital affairs and the death of a child are tragedies Nordan explores with truth and an undying faith in the human ability to keep going. This is an honest journey into the soul of a man who experienced more freakish events than most, and is simply sharing what he learned from them. The tragedy is not the focus; it is

the lessons learned that take center stage.

Christine Canfield