



## Factory Town

**Jon Bassoff**

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*Brilliant and disturbing, this horror novel is not for the fainthearted.*

Jon Bashoff's second novel is a nonstop nightmare, tucked between two brief scenes of reality in a way that knocks out the "it was only a dream" cliché and stuffs it in the closet.

Russell Carver's life has been one stumble away from perpetuating his abusive childhood, and the only thing preventing that stumble is Russell's compassion and utter refusal to repeat that horrific pattern. *Factory Town* exists only in Russell's mind, but its construction is deeply embedded with his memories of abuse. He knows it's a delusion, and simultaneously knows he has to escape it in order to not become his father. On this visit, he's searching for a girl whom he's told is in danger, but he doesn't realize who she is or from whom the danger will come until it's too late to back out.

Russell's journey through *Factory Town* is riddled with encounters with evil, any one of which is horrifying on its own. Bashoff uses just enough detail to create the mental image for each encounter without wallowing in the nastiness. Nearly all the people Russell meets on his quest have their own problems running the gamut of personal character failures. *Factory Town* is clearly a metaphor for the myth that bad breeds bad, that evil cannot be stopped if allowed to survive.

This novel-length hallucination should carry a trigger warning for those with PTSD stemming from abuse; the book is a boulder of depression that rarely lets up. The thing that saves it from being too painful to read is Bashoff's artistry. The story is perfectly paced, the characters are violently vivid, and the setting is dense with darkness layered over the everyday elements of *Factory Town*—a mastery which Bashoff shares with Stephen King. Bashoff's characters have no masks, yet Russell is often temporarily unaware of the other characters' evil intent, being saddled with his battle against his personal demons. It's his hope of finding at least one person in *Factory Town* who has a morsel of compassion that keeps him moving forward.

*Factory Town* is a brilliantly written psychological horrorscape of a novel. Like a poetry book, it should be read in small doses; its prose is a poetry of darkness, eerily fascinating yet not to be taken in large amounts.

J. G. STINSON (Winter 2015)

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