



It Came by Loss

Bill McCausland

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This is a novel of depth and intrigue that shows that sometimes difficulties yield good results.

Bill McCausland's *It Came by Loss* is a flowing tale of love, loss, truth, heartbreak, and joy that details the trials and triumphs in the life of Pete Gordon.

The novel opens in a hospital room where Pete, who is about to graduate from college, watches over his mother, an alcoholic who is dying from liver failure. At various parts throughout the book, Pete tries to come to terms with his mother's alcoholism, his father's role in it, and how both affected him growing up. He considers how he's been shaped by those circumstances.

This pivotal storyline is interspersed with several romantic relationships, friendships, and working relationships that are impacted by Pete's past. Instead of action-packed scenes, *It Came by Loss* offers insight into the human psyche, using Pete's story to comment on how one can accomplish goals and go on with life after great loss.

The text is full of rich and opulent vocabulary that sometimes distracts from the plot. While some such language is mellifluous and beautiful, the overabundance of polysyllabic words and phrasing becomes overwhelming. The language lends itself to the more complex and cerebral nature of the book but can at times overshadow the development of characters.

Pete is a mostly relatable character; he makes mistakes and learns from them, and he struggles to find a direction in his life. At other times, though, he displays wisdom beyond his years, and those moments aren't supported by his development or the overarching story line.

Pete's relationships with others are inconsistently developed. His relationship with ex-girlfriend Karen is believable and relatable, and is fleshed out with a strong backstory and clearly rendered intense feelings. His relationship with Loi, his deceased best friend's mother, is more confusing. Both are greatly impacted by the death, but their interactions also feature apparent elements of romantic intrigue that are not clearly dealt with until the end of the book.

Long passages and conversations in Spanish could be frustrating for those without language familiarity, and they're awkwardly laid out in context, with their meanings not revealed until far down on the page.

Bill McCausland's *It Came by Loss* is a story with depth, intrigue, and cerebral elements that teaches that sometimes the best things in life come through difficulties.

ALLISON BUTLER (January 30, 2017)

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