

Live Caught

R. Cathey Daniels

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In R. Cathey Daniels's harrowing novel *Live Caught*, a young man confronts his troubled past.

In the 1970s, Lenny set out for the Atlantic from his North Carolina farm. He washed up on an unrecognized shore, his boat lost. He was rescued by a renegade priest, Father Damien.

To show his gratitude, Lenny began work for Damien's illegal charity operation, growing food and offering work to celebrants under a tenuous agreement with law enforcement officials. Still, although he was harbored in anonymity, Lenny did not trust his surrogates. With the help of a young father and a petty criminal, Raymond, he executed a plan to escape.

Ten years later, Lenny returns to the farm to attend his mother's funeral with Raymond's daughter, Romey, whom he means to rescue from delinquent parenting. But Romey, like Lenny, learned street smarts from her unorthodox parents. She, too, has a plan: to lead Lenny back to the source of his fears of his unstable family and Father Damien.

Beginning and ending with water, the novel is fluid and balanced. The opening scene sets a breathless pace. Throughout, fishing imagery (of waiting, the fight of getting caught, and fish as sources of sustenance) enhances the book's urgent biblical tone.

Lenny is developed through actions more than words. Short, directive sentences mirror his calculations as he builds plans and stays on the move. Others, including Father Damien and Romey, ground the story in a steady undercurrent of mercy and love. Shown practicing their baptismal and math skills with diligence and patience, they are matches for Lenny's escape habits. And the open-ended, hopeful finale brings the cast together well.

Live Caught is a riveting novel about learning to forgive by making mistakes.

MARI CARLSON (May / June 2022)

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