

The Bridal Chase

Robert Downs

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With a blockbuster beginning and constant action, The Bridal Chase races by in a light and airy way.

Robert Downs's breakneck novella *The Bridal Chase* pits true love against ruthless thugs, and overflows with bombastic action and movie-style showdowns.

An abrupt abduction shatters the otherwise joyous wedding of Elisha and Ronnie. Two men snatch Ronnie and vanish, but Elisha isn't a typical bride. Still wearing her bridal gown, she jumps into a vehicle, grabs a mouthful of chewing tobacco, and begins a chase in earnest.

Ronnie is trapped in a trunk headed to an unknown destination, but he begins to suspect who the men are working for. Car chases, crashes, daring escapes, tense interrogations, and more follow as the two lovebirds race to save each other at any cost.

The narrative starts off with the abduction, then backs up to previous events, then rockets forward to a dramatic conclusion. Action and tense set sequences dictate the story's directions. Elisha suffers a day or two of hospital rest, but it does not slow the novel's action; her attempts to escape unnoticed and regain the chase are realistic, taut, and tense.

The brevity of the story is its greatest impediment. Characterization takes a hit; characters are not fleshed out beyond one or two traits. Elisha's primary attributes are her brash nature, cursing, and love of tobacco. She is vibrant with a touch of dirty realism. Ronnie is less developed—his claim to fame is a tendency to gamble and a fear of tight spaces. Neither are sympathetic, and interest in their troubles wanes early on.

Dialogue is sparse but balanced. Characters tend to simply act; their actions and thoughts propel the story. Chapters alternate between Ronnie's point of view and Elisha's, maintaining tension. The later inclusion of a third point of view, from which events are merely repeated from another perspective, feels out of place and slows the story's pace.

The central mystery around Ronnie's past feels forced; without ample buildup, the villain simply makes an appearance the day before the wedding. Secondary conflicts crop up but do little to propel the plot in new directions. It is Elisha's drive to save her husband-to-be that keeps the story even.

Most of the book is evenly paced and structured, but the ending is rushed, wrapping threads up too quickly and in a lackluster way. Prose is bland; not enough context, scene setting, or detail are provided. Despite its action, the book feels flat.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (June 13, 2018)

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