



## The Throwaways

**L. S. Hawker**

The Vanishing Point Press

(299pp)

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*Suspenseful and thrilling, The Throwaways is a murder mystery with plenty of surprises.*

In L. S. Hawker's fast mystery *The Throwaways*, a character who's in the wrong place at the wrong time faces new challenges.

George Engle never amounted to much, especially considered against the high-achieving legacies of his twin older brothers, who tragically died in college. When George offers a ride to a charming sorority girl, Stacia, everything changes.

George blacks out and revives just in time to see a building burst into flames. Stacia is nowhere to be found. Panicked, George turns to some estranged longtime friends for help. They learn that the fire covered up a triple homicide, and evidence was placed in George's car to incriminate him. As they try to protect those they love and fight for normalcy, they realize how far they will go to help each other and how valuable their friendship is.

The plot is creative, intriguing, and packed with frequent new evidence to consider. The beginning wastes no time, plunging George into terrifying conflict over being framed. The stakes are high, with threats to the safety of both George and those he loves, promoting an effectively quick pace. Scenes of peril, including surprise encounters with the people framing George, are interspersed with scenes of character development between the four friends that explain their recent histories.

The narration gives insight into George's thoughts and those of the other main characters without dwelling or adding excessive details. Chapters break at the appropriate points. The mystery of why George was implicated resolves in a tight, satisfying conclusion. While there are many names to keep track of, all of the characters play an important role in the ending.

George is a well-developed lead. By many accounts, he is underperforming in life but is an otherwise ordinary guy. His paralysis in the face of danger is frustrating, though he learns substantial lessons and emerges a wiser person. Some secondary characters, including Bill, George's drug-addicted professor friend, are complex and not easily pegged, while others are not developed. Dialogue between George and his friends is realistic but bland.

Clues are introduced naturally, and the novel's big reveals are genuinely surprising. Elements of the deaths are shocking and scary without being gruesome. The book's language is straightforward, sparse, and precise.

Suspenseful and thrilling, *The Throwaways* is a murder mystery with plenty of surprises.

LAURA LEAVITT (November 9, 2018)

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