

When One Falls Down

Jay Matthew Korn

jmkorn (Jul 15, 2013)

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Driven by style, the florid writing of this thoughtful novel hints at sinister omens and suspicious circumstances.

This engaging, low-key cliffhanger meanders thirty years into the past to quiet the spirits of those now deceased. Jay Matthew Korn writes from the standpoint of a quirky narrator who tells his bizarre tale in a pseudomemoir, leaving no insignificant detail unexamined. Strange events mingle with supernatural phenomena in a slow-paced character sketchbook that brings to vivid life the personalities and motivations of several interacting protagonists. Even the title, *When One Falls Down*, hints at sinister omens and suspicious circumstances.

When One Falls Down is told from the fascinating perspective of a literary connoisseur, yet it is somewhat lacking in the edge-of-the-seat intrigue typical of thrillers. Lack of focus allows this far-fetched, candid trip down memory lane to go off in too many directions, incorporating humorous asides and nonchalant introspection as the narrator tells the fateful story of how his friends met their demise.

The book's conversational tone is not off-putting, but the buzz needed to propel essential action is weak: "And as you know by now I have access to the information and have looked through some of it and decided not to show it. It doesn't seem necessary. This ain't a porno. And now, that I've decided to let my daughter, Anna, do a bit of editing and transcription for me on these tapes, I've got to show some discretion about the kind of material I dictate into them."

The reading experience is more like tasting appetizers than delving into a hearty meal. Every chapter is a culinary treat, not to be devoured quickly, for there are countless ingredients in each. The narrative may concern itself with a special effect, a color, or a sound rather than the "why" behind a scene. Without question, this book is driven by style. This is neither an asset nor a flaw, but a matter of preference. The narrator takes great liberties in his thought-provoking exploration of years gone by, as he seems far more concerned about the creative use of words than adhering to a plot line. "For the love of God, there are blues and golds and rosy reds, pinks and lavenders and all manner of iridescent, phosphorescent, luminescent—shiny fucking colors, twinkling, in motion somehow, in the air right behind Ezra and Mickey as I watch the scene unfold; but no one else in the scene seems to be seeing it."

Classifying this unique title as a thriller may hinder its marketing potential—a tentative journey may be a better description. A borderline creepy cover depicting what appears to be an empty street drawn in subdued shades of crayon accurately conveys the mood of this reminiscence. Korn alludes to his messages, placing symbolic imagery in his unsettling descriptions and subtle premonitions of danger and death.

Korn is a published poet and a short story writer. His screenplays have been recognized for their artistic merit. *When One Falls Down*, Korn's fictional escapade into the uncomfortable realm of irreversible consequences, is a thoughtful debut novel suitable for discussion.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (March 10, 2014)

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