



Swift to Chase

Laird Barron, Paul Tremblay (Introduction)

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Laird Barron's fourth collection gathers a dozen stories set against the backdrops of the Alaskan wilderness, far-future dystopias, and giallo-fueled nightmare vistas.

All hell breaks loose in a massive apartment complex when a modern day Jack the Ripper strikes under cover of a blizzard; a woman, famous for surviving a massacre, hits the road to flee the limelight and finds her misadventures have only begun; while tracking a missing B-movie actor, a team of man hunters crashes in the Yukon Delta and soon realize the Arctic is another name for hell; an atomic-powered cyborg war dog loyally assists his master in the overthrow of a far-future dystopian empire; following an occult initiation ritual, a man is stalked by a psychopathic sorority girl and her team of horrifically disfigured henchmen; a rich lunatic invites several high school classmates to his mansion for a night of sex, drugs, and CIA-funded black ops experiments; and other glimpses into occulted realities a razor's slice beyond our own.

Swift to Chase Details

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From Reader Review Swift to Chase for online ebook

Richard says

In one of the most ambitious books I've read all year, author Laird Barron presents us with a collection of stories that not only play with the mixing of pulp genres like hard-boiled noir, slasher thriller, and cosmic horror, but also build a whole horror mythology as they move along, compiling to become a mosaic novel in which everything is connected. All of the stories revolve around various people that live in a small, cursed Alaskan town, and the horrors that befall them.

"There's a hole no man can fill," says the count. "No amount of love or hate or heat poured into the pit. No amount of light. I am the voice of the abyss."

This is my introduction to Laird Barron and he truly has a voice of his own. I was really impressed with his writing; on a sentence level, it might be some of the best prose I've read all year. Every story has a palpable atmosphere and there are parts of these stories that are truly creepy and stuck with me at night. But I do feel that each story meandered and took too long to get to its payoff. Although I loved the writing, I do feel that the tales were a little long-winded and overstuffed. Because this book reportedly builds on other Barron stories, I wonder if I would've enjoyed this more if I read some of his other work first. There are many things about this book I still don't fully understand, but I was always intrigued, similar to the way I felt after seeing David Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.* Although it's sometimes confusing and frustrating, it's a unique piece of work and definitely going on my re-read list again so I can appreciate and explore it more.

Paul Kohn says

There were a few great stories in this book of 12.

Laird Barron has a unique way of writing and describing things. He relies heavily on the imagination of the reader. This is often very good thing, but sometimes it can become a little confusing, particularly in the stories that jump from scene to scene very quickly.

Overall, 3.5 stars.

Paul says

I wrote an intro to the collection. Suffice to say, it's Laird's best book to date.

Dan Schwent says

Swift to Chase is a collection of interconnected Laird Barron tales, most set in Alaska.

That's really underselling the collection. In Swift to Chase, Laird Barron performs a juggling act, pitting the bleakness of life in Alaska with the mangled nature of time and cosmic horror that lurks just around the

corner. The interconnected nature of the tales and the fact that they aren't presented in chronological order drives home Barron's concept of time that is as twisted and deformed as a wrecked car. There is a disjointed, dreamlike quality to the collection but that doesn't diminish the horror in the slightest.

The Jessica Mace tales that begin the collection set the stage for the rest of them. Almost every character mentioned in every story appears somewhere in the book. I could read a hundred Jessica Mace tales and still want more.

The book bounces around between people Jessica knows to her parents to the people her parents knew once upon a time, all the while the Followers of Old Leech lurk in the background like a time bomb hidden in a closet.

Laird Barron's prose is as delightful as ever. There's a certain poetry to his descriptions of people being stabbed, short, or rent limb from limb. I've mentioned some horror authors as guys I'm sure I would have been friends with had we met as teenagers. Barron would have been the guy that I would have wanted to talk to but would have been afraid to approach. I get the sense that his early life in Alaska was brutally hard but that's what makes this book so effective. Which is worse, unfathomable cosmic horror or being alone in the dark and cold of an Alaskan winter?

One of my favorite parts of the book is in the introduction. One of Paul Tremblay's little girls asks Laird how he got his eye patch. He says "Has your dad ever told you not to run with a pencil in your hand?"

This was one hell of a read. I'm giving it a 4 now but I'll probably bump that up on a reread. This is definitely a book that begs to be read more than once.

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥♥ says

Some seriously stunning stuff that deteriorated into some mediocre half-coherent horror by the end of it. Was it worth spoiling a good flowing narrative with that freak show?

Q:

Me? Let's say I prefer to rely upon a combination of native cunning and feminine wiles to accomplish my goals. Flames and explosions are strictly measures of last resort. (c)

Q:

I'll put my life in mortal danger for a pile of cash. No shock there, anybody would. (c)

Q:

It's as if the stars and the sky don't align correctly, as if the universe is off its axis by a degree or two. (c)

Q:

A good friend who worked in the people-removing business for the Mafia once told me there aren't coincidences or accidents, reality doesn't work that way. Since the first inert, super-dense particle detonated and spewed forth gas and dust and radiation, everything has been on an unerring collision vector with its ultimate mate, and every bit of the flotsam and jetsam is cascading toward the galactic Niagara Falls into oblivion. (c)

Q:

The dude possessed a more inquisitive nature than one might expect from an enforcer by trade. He said, Jessica, you're a dancing star being dragged toward the black hole at the ragged edges of all we know. Drawn with irresistible force, you'll level anything in your path, or drag it to hell in your wake. (c)

Q:

You dames have all had bad experiences. (c)

Q:

"I heard that name somewhere. Want to say a news story. Which means somebody got maimed or murdered. Wouldn't be news otherwise." (c)

Q:

"How can you be sure you're here?"

"What, think you were humping your pillow?"

"Sorry, Jess, you started this. Maybe all of it is a projection. Or a computer program. You're a sexy algorithm looping for eternity." (?)

Q:

Hey, everybody, this is Jessica Mace. She's wandering the earth. Make her feel at home. (c)

Q:

Big brains. Quantum physics, exobiology, anthropology. They're famous, infamous, one of those things. A pair of mad scientist types. They'd love to build a time machine or a doomsday device for the kicks. (c)

Q:

I stepped back and gripped the Ka-Bar under my coat. Come to it, I'd stab a hillbilly psycho, badge or not.

My shiny new policy. (c)

Q:

You're a dancing star. ... Meeting you is fate. Can't be anything less than the machinery of the universe clicking into place. (c)

Q:

My ever-intensifying death wish might've compelled silent complicity, or whatever wish it was that had followed me since the debacle in Alaska. (c)

Q:

Stars flared and died. The moon burned a hole through the black and into my mind. (c)

Q:

Another time a kid walloped me full force with an aluminum bat. This felt kind of similar ... (c)

Q:

Sir Arthur C. Clarke once said that any sufficiently advanced technology would be indistinguishable from magic. In my humble opinion, that goes double for sufficiently advanced lunacy being indistinguishable from supernatural phenomena. (c)

Q:

"Real sorry about your deputy... Sorry about the dog, too. He was probably a good dog." (?)

Q:

We drove deep into the night, cleaving through a vault of stars. The air thinned until the stars burned through the windshield. (?)

Q:

His totem animal was something savage and furtive, it watched me from beneath heavy lids. (?)

Q:

All those dead stars shone on. (c)

Q:

We didn't talk, not that there was ever much chatter, but this was two-cactuses-on-a-date quiet. (c)

Q:

Politically speaking, the difference between a conservative and a liberal in the forty-ninth state is the caliber of handgun one carries. (c)

Q:

You are an earthquake, a tidal wave, a mountain of collapsing stone, waiting to happen. You are the implacable wilderness personified. What is in you is ancient as the black tar between stars. A void that howls

in hunger and mindless antipathy against the heat of the living. (c)

Q:

How can you be certain, Ms. Mace?

Maybe I can't. Killer could've been anyone. Could be anyone. The doctor. The nurse. Maybe it was you.

YOU look fucking suspicious. (c)

Q:

The angel on his shoulder keeps whispering in his ear. (c)

Q:

I meditate at night. Sit in the middle of my room and open my mind to the cosmos. All kinds of shit is floating around in the dark. Seeps into us every minute of the day. I just figured a way to make it happen faster. (?)

Q:

This line of work doesn't engender intimacy, it heightens eccentricities. A man becomes known by his foibles, his personality tics. Illusions of bonding or brotherhood are perfidious. (c)

Q:

The wind is the tongue of a ravening beast. It licks at our warmth, the feeble light of our miserly souls. (c)

Benoit Lelièvre says

This book was absolutely brilliant. It's the third Laird Barron book I read inside the last twelve months and while I loved them all, this is by far the best. It probably is the only example I've ever experienced where short stories actually do something a single novel could never do: create a mythos from top to bottom. There are some major moments in this collection: Termination Dust, Ardor, Black Dog, Tomahawk Park Survivor Raffle, but it's how Laird Barron connects the dots and creates a terrifying and majestic portrait that this collection truly shines.

This is not just cosmic horror, this is some greater scheme pulp fiction and a work that challenges the very boundaries of storytelling. Laird Barron has been playing chess the entire time we were playing checkers, guys. This is the best book I've read this years and it's not even close. It's the kind of stuff that's going to be studied in college. We're not ready and we're not worthy, but Swift to Chase is coming anyway. Rejoice!

Mark Tallen says

This is yet another excellent collection of fiction from Laird. My personal favourites in this book are, Termination Dust, Ears Prick Up and Frontier Death Song. In May of this year (2018) Laird will have his first crime novel published by Putnam. I for one, am looking forward to that.

Jack Haringa says

Laird Barron's Swift to Chase is marketed as the author's fourth short story collection (after the groundbreaking The Imago Sequence and Other Stories, Occultation and Other Stories, and The Beautiful Thing That Awaits Us All: Stories), but I believe that in reality it's a stealth novel. To be sure, each story in the volume can stand on its own, yet the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Barron seems to be going about the work of constructing a new mythology, or a new branch of the Old Leech stories that comprise

much of his earlier work. This collection/mosaic novel revolves around events that echo each other across several decades, from the '70s to the present, mainly in the same few Alaskan locales, impacting a recurring group of characters and their descendants. The final novelette--"Tomahawk Park Survivors Raffle"--ties in even the most disparate of the included tales, and the cumulative effect of our encounters with the madness, savagery, hallucinations, conspiracies, and myths that Barron weaves through them all is deeply unsettling.

Since at least the publication of his novel *The Croning*, Barron has been hard at the task of grabbing traditional narrative structures by the throat and wrestling them into new contortions. This deconstruction of standard storytelling is on full display in *Swift to Chase*; there are no easy stories here, either in content or in form. Terrible things happen, revelations of deep and awful secrets lurk between word and action, and one's sense of reality is undermined--constantly, violently--by the authors destabilization of the very form he works in. *Swift to Chase* is difficult, rewarding, unsettling horror, unlike anything else being published today.

Christopher Payne says

Introduction by Paul Tremblay

Publishers Weekly top ten list for most anticipated horror/Scifi Fall 2016 releases.

Laird Barron's fourth collection gathers a dozen stories set against the backdrops of the Alaskan wilderness, far-future dystopias, and giallo-fueled nightmare vistas.

All hell breaks loose in a massive apartment complex when a modern day Jack the Ripper strikes under cover of a blizzard; a woman, famous for surviving a massacre, hits the road to flee the limelight and finds her misadventures have only begun; while tracking a missing B-movie actor, a team of man hunters crashes in the Yukon Delta and soon realize the Arctic is another name for hell; an atomic-powered cyborg war dog loyally assists his master in the overthrow of a far-future dystopian empire; following an occult initiation ritual, a man is stalked by a psychopathic sorority girl and her team of horrifically disfigured henchmen; a rich lunatic invites several high school classmates to his mansion for a night of sex, drugs, and CIA-funded black ops experiments; and other glimpses into occulted realities a razor's slice beyond our own.

Combining hardboiled noir, psychological horror, and the occult, *Swift to Chase* continues three-time Shirley Jackson Award winner Barron's harrowing inquiry into the darkness of the human heart.

Seregil of Rhiminee says

Originally published at [Risingshadow](#).

Laird Barron's *Swift to Chase* is the author's fourth collection. It is a prime example of what modern horror fiction and literary dark fiction can offer to readers, because it contains beautifully written, disturbing, experimental and memorable stories that boldly break new ground.

I can honestly say that *Swift to Chase* is one of the most impressive collections I've ever had the pleasure of

reading, and I consider it to be Laird Barron's best and most exciting collection to date. When you've read horror fiction and weird fiction extensively, you'll easily notice that many stories are similar to each other and lack freshness, because finding originality has become difficult. That's why it's great that the author writes original fiction and delivers fresh material to his readers.

Laird Barron is an author who - along with a few other authors (Livia Llewellyn, Richard Gavin, Michael Wehunt, Stephen Graham Jones, Clint Smith, Philip Fracassi etc) - has rejuvenated modern horror fiction and has dared to offer new and terrifying vistas to readers who delight in reading strange and thought-provoking stories. He fluently blends hardboiled noir fiction, psychological horror, the occult, literary horror fiction and weird fiction, and he creates stories that have plenty of style and substance.

I think that most readers, who have read horror fiction, are familiar with Laird Barron or have at least heard of him, so I won't say much about him. I'll only mention that he is the author of four collections, one novel and several stories. His fiction has been published in many anthologies. If you haven't had the pleasure of reading any of his stories yet, this collection is an excellent entry point to his fiction.

Because I enjoyed reading Laird Barron's previous collections (The Imago Sequence and Other Stories, Occultation and Other Stories, and The Beautiful Thing That Awaits Us All), The Croning and The Light is the Darkness, I was excited about this collection and couldn't wait to get my hands on it. When I began to read it, I was instantly impressed by the author's prose, writing style and dark imagination, because each of the stories was well written and worth reading.

Swift to Chase has been divided into three different sections and contains the following stories:

I: Golden Age of Slashing

- Screaming Elk, MT
- LD50
- Termination Dust
- Andy Kaufman Creeping through the Trees

II: Swift to Chase

- Ardor
- the worms crawl in,
- (Little Miss) Queen of Darkness
- Ears Prick Up

III: Tomahawk

- Black Dog
- Slave Arm
- Frontier Death Song
- Tomahawk Park Survivors Raffle

I'm tempted to say that some of these stories represent a unique marriage of modern pulp fiction and literary dark fiction, because it's the best way to describe them. Careful readers will notice that these inter-connecting stories are - in varying degrees - connected to the author's ever-growing mythos which can be considered to be one of the cornerstones of modern horror fiction, because many of the author's stories have influenced other authors.

One of the things why I love these stories is that there's an experimental edge to some of them (I've often

found experimental and literary dark fiction to be interesting, because it's imaginative fiction that requires a bit of thinking on the reader's part). The author's approach to experimental fiction works well, because he seamlessly blends various elements and is not afraid of experimenting with structure. In certain ways he is horror fiction's equivalent to Brendan Connell.

Another thing why I enjoy these stories is that the author has a keen eye for psychological horror and dares to explore the darkest and deepest reaches of the human psyche. Based on this collection, I can say that he's one of the best writers of psychologically effective horror fiction, because his stories create genuine feelings of discomfort, unease and terror in the reader. There's something cerebral and visceral about them that will haunt you after you've finished reading them.

There's intriguing cosmic horror in these stories, because Laird Barron approaches cosmic horror from a new direction. I admire him for steering his fiction away from the well-known Lovecraftian cosmic horror and producing his own kind of vision of cosmic horror. In my opinion, this collection proves that if you have talent, you can write modern and original cosmic horror that is modern and different, but just as disturbing and intriguing as the stories that were written by old masters of weird fiction.

The characterisation is excellent and delightfully vivid in these stories. I like the way the author writes about the characters and their lives, because he makes them real people who face difficulties, obstacles and strange situations and try to cope with them. Readers are mercilessly subjected to emotionally challenging material, for the author doesn't shy away from difficult themes and issues when writing about the characters.

Here are a few words and my thoughts about some of the stories:

"Termination Dust" is a brilliant story about Jessica Mace who is introduced in the previous stories, "Screaming Elk, MT" and "LD50" (this story originally appeared in Tales of Jack the Ripper, which was edited by Ross E. Lockhart). This stunningly written story pulses with raw power and dark energy that beckons readers to read it as fast as possible. It's great that the author gives his pulpy protagonist a strong voice.

"Andy Kaufman Creeping through the Trees" was originally published in the anthology Autumn Cthulhu (edited by Mike Davis). It's a satisfactorily weird and mesmerising high school story that takes place in 1998.

"Ardor" (originally published in Suffered from the Night: Queering Stoker's Dracula, edited by Steve Berman) is perhaps the most striking and most memorable story in this collection. It is one of my favourite stories, because it's a unique, bleak and disturbing story with cosmic and surreal elements. The happenings take place in the Alaskan wilderness where a man is hunting for someone. I'm sure that this story will impress and unsettle many readers.

The novelette, "the worms crawl in," was originally published in Fearful Symmetries (edited by Ellen Datlow). It's a brilliant and memorable glimpse into a twisted mind.

"Ears Prick Up" (originally published in SQ Mag) is an excellent and strikingly written dystopian science fiction story which features a cyborg war dog called Rex and a Rome-like civilisation (the distinct feel of Roman Empire intrigued me). The author wrote so fluently about Rex, his master and their deeds that I found myself wholly enthralled by the happenings. It's been a while since I've read anything like this.

"Black Dog" (originally published in Halloween: Magic, Mystery, and the Macabre, edited by Paula Guran) is a satisfactorily strange story about a blind date that ends in a weird way. This story features excellent

dialogue. It was enjoyable to read how the characters interacted with each other.

"Tomahawk Park Survivors Raffle" (this story is original to this collection) is a strong and well written final story. I won't go into details about its contents in order to avoid writing spoilers, but I can briefly mention that it is a thought-provoking and unsettling account of certain events.

I liked the author's way of writing evocatively about Alaska and Alaskan wilderness. He evokes a distinct sense of bleakness and untamed beauty that is ever present in the wilderness. The harsh, untamed and unyielding wilderness offers good contrast to the settings that can be found in other authors' works.

I also want to mention that I like the author's approach to sex and violence, because certain descriptions are satisfactorily graphic and realistic. He writes well about these issues and easily integrates them into his stories.

Laird Barron explores various themes and issues in *Swift to Chase*, covering a lot of ground between the real and the surreal. This collection marks partly a new direction for Laird Barron, because he has never before written as intriguingly and widely about various things as he does in this collection. This is a welcome direction for him, because he masters it perfectly and doesn't stumble when writing about strange things.

The introduction by Paul Tremblay is excellent and deserves to be read. It provides readers a bit of information about the author and his stories.

As you may have already guessed, I was deeply impressed by this collection (this kind of fiction has always been to my liking, because I enjoy reading dark, entertaining and thought-provoking stories that feature good prose). I wholeheartedly recommend it to horror and dark fiction readers.

I end this review by saying that Laird Barron's *Swift to Chase* is a dark, entralling and sinister collection that should be on every horror fan's reading list. If you've ever - even remotely - enjoyed reading horror stories, you need to take a look at this collection, because it's a rewarding, challenging and unsettling reading experience. The disturbing nature of these stories will deeply impress you.

Highly recommended!

Shane Douglas Keene says

An excerpt of my review on This Is Horror: <http://www.thisishorror.co.uk/book-re...>

If you've been reading horror fiction for any length of time, then you've likely heard of and even read Laird Barron. If you haven't you should probably go see what all the buzz is about. Barron is the author of several brilliant collections and novellas, tales of the strange and cosmic with a heavy pulp noir flavor and literary sensibilities, and he's pretty much the single author who sets the bar that likeminded writers strive to reach. His most recent novellas, *X's for Eyes* and *Man with No Name* were groundbreaking works of literary cosmic noir and fine examples of the new directions Laird tends to move the genre in with each new release. Now, with *Swift to Chase*, his newest collection from Journalstone, he once again pushes the boundaries of genre fiction, defying established norms and redefining the structure of horror.

Paul Roberts says

What happened to Laird Barron? Has the doppelgänger he's warned us about all these years finally taken over? This is Huffington Post Horror.

Jon says

Barron's masterpiece to date.

Matthew says

It's not often that my first reaction to finishing a book is to sit and stare out a window in disbelief, but that was all my mind could summon my body to do after turning the last page in Laird Barron's new collection *Swift to Chase*.

It is that good.

I've been a fan of Barron's for a number of years now, and every time I think I've got a handle on the sheer breadth and scope of his fiction he releases a new short story, collection, or novella that blows my mental battleship straight out of the water. *Swift to Chase* is no different. Barron, wielding plot strings like a cosmic puppet master, fuses everything we've come to associate and love with his work (that wicked blend of horror, noir, and pulp) and takes it in new and wonderful directions with this latest release.

The collection is broken down into three distinct parts, though each is related to the other and to Laird's larger mythos that he has been steadily constructing over the past decade. The first part deals primarily with Jessica Mace, Laird's pulpy and noir protagonist whose broken nature and encounters with the darkness will leave you with chills that you can't shake. "Termination Dust" is the standout in this section, as Barron takes you back through Jessica's adventures and time as he slowly lifts the veil on the evil that stalks everyone hungrily. The second part includes some of this collection's most powerful and disturbing tales. My favourite, "Ardor" tells the story of a man hunting for someone in the harsh and uncaring wilds of Alaska. This story showcases Barron's ability to weave an incredibly unique, surreal and fascinating tale whilst also grounding it within the scope of a moody noir and cosmic piece. "Ardor" is uncompromising, beautiful, deeply disturbing in places. It also highlights the fact that you CAN write exceptional cosmic horror out from under the shadow of Lovecraft and his acolytes. This section also includes "the worms crawl in", a revenge story that quickly escapes its boundaries and escalates beyond all expectations, and "Ears Prick Up", a remarkable story that includes robotic canine war machines and a post-apocalyptic Romanesque civilisation with an Emperor at its head. I was addicted to this particular tale from the outset, with Barron hooking me in with his unique, raw and poetic cadence:

"My kind is swift to chase, swift to battle. My imperfect memory is long with longing for the fight."

Some writers can create permanent and lasting memories in a reader's mind. Barron achieves that in spades with "Ears Prick Up". The stark and haunting image of Rex loping across the frozen tundra will remain with me to my dying days I suspect.

In the third section Barron ramps it up even further with the cosmic and surreal strangeness of his tales. "Black Dog" takes a blind date and twists it with a bizarre and eerie ending, and "Slave Arm", a short and ambitious piece, answers so much and before asking even more. This final section is rounded out by two of my favourite stories from the collection, "Frontier Death Song", a terrifying and brilliant tale that draws upon wild hunt mythology, and "Tomahawk Park Survivors Raffle", a story where several familiar and recurring characters reappear as loose ends are tied up, and the violence and horror hinted at in the preceding stories fully realised and set loose upon our world.

Swift to Chase is, to put it simply, masterful. It is an enthralling and terrifying journey across many different landscapes, from the physical to the mental through to forays across time and space. It is indicative of Barron's skill that he somehow manages, despite the shifts in time and place, to make this collection one of his most accessible yet, with each and every story relating directly back to his ever-growing mythos. It also represents a new and wonderful direction for Barron in many ways. From the cold and biting harshness of Alaska through to the carnivorous reality that lies just beyond the perception of most, Barron weaves a seductive web that traps readers and makes morsels of them. This book answers some questions, whilst posing even more. It also elevates Barron to a pedestal where few other writers exist. Intoxicating, ambitious, and utterly superb storytelling, Swift to Chase is Barron's finest work to date.

5 out of 5 stars.

Waffles says

Another dark and gloomy winner by Laird Barron. This time we are given loosely connected stories that in their entirety could be taken as a novel. There were moments that reminded me of Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski, maybe even some Gilbert Sorrentino. This is cosmic horror for adults.

My favorites were Andy Kaufman Creeping Through the Trees (What a title!) and Frontier Death Song. All of the stories are solid.
