



Winterland

Alan Glynn

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The worlds of business, Irish politics, and crime collide when two men with the same name, from the same family, die on the same night--one death is a gangland murder, the other, apparently, a road accident. Was it a coincidence? That's the official version of events. But when a family member, Gina Rafferty, starts asking questions, this notion quickly unravels. Told repeatedly that she should stop asking questions, Gina becomes more determined than ever to find out the truth, to establish a connection between the two deaths--but in doing so, she embarks on a path that will push certain powerful people to their limits.

Winterland Details

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Author : Alan Glynn

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From Reader Review Winterland for online ebook

Roger says

If this book had been 200 pages shorter it would have been very much better. However, a pretty ordinary story with an ending that was completely predictable was stretched out over almost 500 pages and that was far too long; the plot just could not support a book of that length.

The main character was, at first, quite interesting and I found myself caring what happened to her. However once she turned into some sort of action woman; shooting, kicking, taking hostages, she lost most of her credibility for me. Several characters appeared and vanished or became very superficial and the political plot line was not realised fully.

The villain gave up his secrets far too easily and his ending was, as I say above, very predictable and a complete cop-out by the writer. He tried to create suspense by dragging the ending out but it was too obvious and so there was no suspense - just irritation and feeling of "why don't you get on with it".

All very disappointing.

Having said all that, I recognise that I am one of the few who did not think much of this book. Most other reviewers are far more positive about it than I am. So I will try another Alan Glynn book and maybe I will be converted.

Anita says

Great book. I really cared about the characters enough to be kind of sad when it ended....I am still debating in my mind if I like how the "bad guy" died in the end. the story was current and I liked how the author connected all the pieces. and I liked the background info the author provided, very detailed but it tied it all together.

Bret says

This was my first Alan Glynn novel, bought on a whim. I am a fan of his writing style, and plan on reading more of his books.

David Lowther says

Winter Land started off at a cracking pace and the opening scene in the smoking area of a Dublin pub is very impressive. The plot is contemporary covering, as it does, issues such as planning irregularities, political corruption, short cuts in building construction and murder.

The characters are diverse and interesting from the smarmy developer, the ambitious politician, the gangster to the hero and heroine, both of whom are attractive and exciting.

The basic plot is strong and, for the first half of the novel, the narrative is gripping. Where Winter Land goes off the rails slightly is that it becomes increasingly incredible and the reader is left wondering whether or not people would have responded, as they do in the book, if they found themselves in similar situations.

My other gripe is that I like my loose ends tied up. However, I shall read more novels by Alan Glynn.

David Lowther. Author of The Blue Pencil, Two Families at War and Liberating Belsen, all published by Sacristy Press.

Anni says

I chose to read this after watching the film of Glynn's book The Dark Fields (re-titled as 'Limitless' and set in America rather than Ireland) which has marvellous plotting. This novel too would be very filmable, but I hope the setting would remain in Dublin. It doesn't have such an endearing protagonist as in Dark Fields, but it is a good example of the genre - Irish noir - in the same company as Adrian McKinty and Declan Hughes.

Rob Kitchin says

In Winterland Alan Glynn manages to intertwine two criminal cultures of Ireland – the gangland underworld and the boardrooms of corrupt developers and political cronies. It's a searing social commentary on Irish life, full of keen observational insight and emotional depth. Glynn writes with deceptively engaging prose, appearing quite ordinary but actually well layered and lyrical. The principal characters are all nicely developed, with full contextual back stories. The plot was well structured and despite the story being framed as a thriller that links a disparate set of characters it is very believable. One of the things I found quite fascinating is that Winterland is not a whodunit or even a howdunnit. The reader knows pretty much from the start who did the killings, why and how. They also know the answers to the secondary story. And yet, Glynn manages to maintain and ratchet up the tension throughout. It was an interesting approach and worked surprisingly well. The story is slightly flabby in places and could have done with a little tightening, and the ending felt a tad weak even though it had nice symmetry, but these are minor issues. Overall, a very entertaining read that provides real insight into twenty first century Ireland.

Anouilh M Buckley says

"Winterland", by Alan Glynn

Mr Glynn very kindly sent me a synopsis of his book, which is categorised as a literary thriller with noir over and under tones, rather than as a gritty crime novel.

"It has elements of the crime thriller in it, but I wrote it simply as a novel.

The main character in the book is a young woman, Gina Rafferty, who refuses to be lied to.

Two deaths occur in her family on the same night and she refuses to accept that it was a coincidence.

Her pursuit of an honest answer leads her through the worlds of business, politics and crime and to the unravelling of a dynamic in Irish life where people tell lies, cover them up, create all sorts of collateral damage over decades and never take responsibility.

One strand of the plot involves the construction of a high rise office building down in the docklands by a man who becomes Gina's nemesis or opposite.

One of the things I was trying to do with these two characters was create a simultaneous sense that 'the centre cannot hold' and that actually maybe, with adjustment, it can.

In an exciting abstract way I see an echo of that in your image."

Much has been written about the astonishing greed of the past fifteen years.

However, the Celtic Tiger did bring a sense of vitality to our lives and now that we are in post-boom times, our artists are offering considered explorations of what exactly seems to have happened and "where it all almost went wrong".

I am an optimist. I expect that Alan Glynn will manage to get the centre to hold in his much anticipated novel.

I have read that Mr Glynn has regard for James Joyce, who seems to have settled into the role of venerable patriarch to the city's numerous writers.

Dubliners, whose city motto is "Obedienta Civium Urbis Felicitas"...

"Happy the city where citizens obey" ..

are survivors. There is more to their story than the ones told through the moroseness of the many writers who chose exile rather than live in a place that did not suit their psychological needs.

Since the world of publishing is now a global phenomenon it is heartening to see writers living in our city and following its narrative as insiders at last.

Dublinia

posted by Tales from the Birch Wood. at 4:38 PM

3 Comments:

Blogger DaviMack said...

Congratulations on getting published, then! Cover art? Woo!

10/15/2009 6:56 PM

Blogger Cathy said...

Congratulations indeed! Will be looking out for the book and its cover.

10/16/2009 8:47 AM

Blogger Tales from the Birch Wood. said...

Thank you both.

It has been a dramatic few months and certainly a reason to focus more clearly on photography.

Cover art is very fashionable, it seems.

Ch3wbacca says

After reading *Limitless* (the dark fields) and thoroughly enjoying it, I was quite excited to read another book by Alan Glynn, but unfortunately I was left a little disappointed with this novel. I found the story a bit generic and underwhelming, and its characters a little bit two-dimensional. I still think it's worth a read but I just expected something better.

Taracuda says

This book managed to be simultaneously unexpected and logical, which made for a very enjoyable read.

I tend to get cranky with average-person-solves-a-mystery plots, because the protagonists do such stupid things. Stupid things like running toward gunshots. Stupid things like refusing to listen to the police and other authorities. Stupid things like going to a confrontation without letting anyone know where they will be.

Winterland's protagonist does try to solve a mystery that no one else notices, but she does it in such a way that you could often see yourself making the same decisions. Even when she makes gambles I might not, the plot twists them in new ways.

It's different. It's well-written. It pulls you in and keeps you reading. And it takes you for a fun ride to the end.

Josh says

There is a distinct correlation between Alan Glynn's *'Winterland'* and Dennis Lehane's *'Mystic River'* inasmuch as they are touted as noir masterpieces, the forefront of the new wave so to speak, with each respective novel thrusting the author into stardom and instant industry respect. Having now read both, I can draw the comparisons and conclude they are alike in terms of plot pace and deep seeded character development. Personally I like my noir boiling over the pan, whereas Glynn (like Lehane's *Mystic River*) was more a simmer with the occasional spill over burn - if it were faster and a little less bogged down in detail, *'Winterland'* could hold claim to the finest real estate noir written but being better in premise than delivery it falls short of the title. Having started with a gritty gangland murder and subsequent car cash death, the Rafferty family is in mourning and looking for answers. Enter Gina, sister of the elder Noel, aunt of the younger, who becomes obsessed with linking the deaths and assumes a quasi private eye persona to find

who, if anyone, is responsible. Gina, for the most part is an accidental hero type rather than the no holds barred heroine I would've liked (some say this is more real, I want more hardness and rough edges to my noir) who apprehensively bounds from one violent confrontation to the next all the way to the story's showdown conclusion. 'Winterland' has the makings of a solid Hollywood movie - politics, high roller backstabbing, cover-ups, money, cross continent interests, and thrills a plenty, for me, however, to say 'Winterland' is noir is diluting the brand a little - its a solid murder mystery/crime that, while longer than it should've been, is still quite enjoyable - 3 stars.

Gordon Johnston says

A decent Dublin based thriller, if a bit slow to develop. The characters are strong but the plot is rather linear - there was no real surprises as things developed. pretty much as expected.

Two men called Noel from the same family die on the same night. The younger is a crime figure, the older a respected structural engineer. It becomes clear far too easily that the latter was the real target. There was a real missed opportunity for misdirection here, and very little of a police investigation is mentioned.

Gina, the sister and aunt of the murdered men, picks up on the real story, which involves a major construction project and links to a senior politician, whose brother was killed in a car crash that claimed several lives - but there was a survivor.

Overall this one held my attention reasonably well, but the basic plot elements should have led to a much more thrilling novel.

Soham Chakraborty says

I picked up this title because I was thoroughly impressed with the writing of Alan Glynn in *Limitless*. And this book also orchestrates the same fluent, reader-captivating persona that Glynn's talent is.

Winterland is a crime thriller which takes place in the idyllic town of Dublin in Ireland. Irish city and its landmarks are vivid in description. The story is short spanned, happens within a period of three weeks. And in these three weeks, the life of Gina Rafferty spirals in, recoils out and she unravels the most gruesome truth that she has ever faced.

One evening, within few hours, Gina's nephew and brother, both named Noel, dies. One by a gunshot and one in a speculated car accident. Gina sees the swell of people who gather around in the mourning. But somehow, her gut feeling doesn't subside. She can't put the two deaths in different strings, can't accept them that they are not a part of a homogeneous subversion. She starts to become agitated and starts fact finding and soon meets a unholy mess of events.

The other story is about construction maverick Paddy Norton and his biggest project till date, The Richmond Plaza towering in the Dublin sky. Richmond Plaza is poised to be the biggest sky-scraper in Ireland and one of the tallest in Europe. Gina's brother Noel was the chief construction engineer for Richmond Plaza before his untimely death. On other side, Paddy Norton has a long, time-tested tie with soon-to-be-prime-minister of Ireland, Larry Bolger. Larry started into politics 25 years ago, after his brother who was supposed to take a

leading position in the Irish politics died in another car wreck with three other people.

The third story is about those three other people, well not about them but the only blood relationship of those three other people - Mark Griffin. He is the usual guy raised by his uncle and aunt who knows that Larry Bolger's rise to power is related with the car wreck that happened 25 years ago. And like Gina, he also can't put this story to rest, however he doesn't do anything, only cringes inside. Unless he is approached by Gina who states that she sees a pattern in the accidents of her brother and Mark's family.

But is this a discernible image. No, this is a pattern that can't be proved in facts, can't be extrapolated linearly with the proof that Police has to show. The line blurs somewhere and this is where Gina starts to do things. She starts to question people, starts to doubt motives of people and even wonders whether they are connected to something as long as 25 years ago.

Told in Glynn's unmistakeable lucid prose, wonderfully crafted and engagingly keeping the reader on his/her toes, this is one hell of a crime thriller. Viscerally wrenching with suspense, this is a true page turner. The story starts off slowly and then it develops the pace and just runs to the end in a stretch, without giving the reader any respite.

The difference between this one and other books of the same genre is that here, from the very beginning, we know what the links are and who is the mastermind behind all the crimes. How the aspiration of greed lubricated with the power of politics goes beyond bound, crawls beyond proportion. This is a chain of events that keeps going vertically to the shams of corruption and blood-fest. And Glynn lays it bare, he lays it bare that who is the criminal. But the reader still keeps reading to know how did it reach to the tip of the toe, how did the sky-kissing Richmond Plaza crashes into other people, tormenting people and defining truth.

Having read quite a few contemporary thrillers, I must say that this is not the path-breaker. This is not the best of the lot, this is not the epic story of Lisbeth Salander. The plot is definitely interesting but it is modestly sowed. It is not weak, it is not astounding but it is what the characters needed and that is where the novel excels. Bearing a distinct degree of separation of how crime suspense is dealt in contemporary novels, this is a fascinatingly engrossing tale.

Recommendation - Go read it and judge. 4 out of 5.

Shullamuth Ballinger says

The most delicious part of Winterland is the way the characters are managed and developed. Both Gina, the order loving protagonist, and Paddy, the pill-popping antagonist, are mercilessly unraveled, strung out by their obsessions. Glynn evokes a relationship between Gina and Mark, the somewhat deranged survivor of childhood tragedy, so intimate it transcends sex or even proximity since they only meet once, briefly over coffee, and still manage to save each other's lives.

My only complaint is that Glynn throws away, Christy, the star of the most effectively constructed shooting scene I've ever read, after the brilliant opening sequence. The plot is pretty traditional noir, but every time you think you know where the story is going, Glynn drops you just to the side of it, leaving you deliciously off balance, and from car alarms to crowbars, there's not an extraneous object in sight.

Cheryl says

Two men with the same first name, Noel die on the same night. Is this just a bizarre coincidence or is there some connection to these two men's deaths? Both men died in different ways.

The first was Noel Rafferty, who was part of a Dublin gang. He was known as "Grassy Noel" because he enjoyed partaking in smoking marijuana over hash. Grassy Noel was one of the top lieutenants in the gang.

The other Noel was also from the Rafferty family. He was the older Mr. Rafferty. His death was being ruled as a tragic accident.

No one believes the two deaths are connected. The only person who does is Gina Rafferty. She will stop at nothing to get justice for her family.

Winterland by Alan Glynn is the first book I have read by this author. I thought it was pretty good. It started out alright but lost some steam throughout parts of the books. Though, the ending was good. The only person I really found of interest was Gina. When she wasn't in the scenes than I didn't really pay attention to what was transpiring between the other characters. What made Gina appealing to me was her drive and determination to uncover the truth behind the deaths of her family members. Overall, Winterland is a pretty good novel worth giving it a try.

TJ says

This was a decent novel, but didn't really capture my full attention until the back half as the stories started coming together. It took me a while to get through this one. I liked the way Alan Glynn kept shifting focus between characters in rapid-fire short sections, especially in the same scenes.
