

Book festival Northern Arizona

***Suicide's Girlfriend*, Elizabeth Evans Review by Katie Klein**

Elizabeth Evans' characters could find their surreal counterparts in the writings of Aimee Bender. But those are stories for another day, and another frame of mind. What we find in *Suicide's Girlfriend* are the fraternal "normal" twins, short stories written about characters who are real, yes, but with a sadness, a heaviness of their psyches that you want to keep at arm's length. The irony being, though slightly disturbing, the words and the deeds that you read about in these short stories (and one novella) can be finished in only a few minutes, yet they keep you wanting to read more. You want to see what's coming, to find out if they are really the twisted, slightly off-kilter ones you can only hope you are not. But so many of us are.

How can it be fair, in a world that isn't always, that the slime ball in "Blood and Gore" ends up saving the day but only because he is so disgusting? Blood and gore, being how he thinks of his wife giving birth, as well assorry, can't tell.

Known for her complex characters in *The Blue Hour* and *Carter Clay*, Evans seems to love to play with whatever the strongest emotion she can touch in us is. Feeling the heartbreak of both sides of a sad story could be her trademark. It's the empathy, the humanity, that makes the most reprehensible crime acceptable once we know the insides of the people involved.

Suicide's Girlfriend may end too quickly. Maybe you skimmed over the part that was too like yourself. Was it hard to read about Marie and her little siblings in "Ransom"? Maybe you know her from your own life, the abused child, forced to grow up too soon. Or maybe you're the fatherly stranger in the truck stop. Or the drunken father, a pathetic human being who was his own punishment. Or have you been Marie's savior, answering the prayers of a person in need who was looking for a sign?



In "A New Life" Todd is trying with little success to get the girl he has his heart set on. His life takes a turn he hadn't counted on when he and his college buddies find a dead man. No matter how much we want things to be a certain way, sometimes we have to accept what we have and "...understand that a person couldn't go out and get whole new life every time something bad happened to the old one, that the old life and the new life were one and the same."

"Voodoo Girls on Ice" is the story of growing up and away. Two girls, friends who have grown apart but still clinging to the friendship they had. Drinking in a snowstorm one night, they are remind of where they are now and why they are no longer the friends they had been. Somebody has to be the one to care a little more...

Evans has a way with her characters that sucks you in by the first sentence. She lives so many lives for us between the pages of *Suicide's Girlfriend* that it makes one wonder where she gleans her insight into the individual. She does not only see. She is.

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