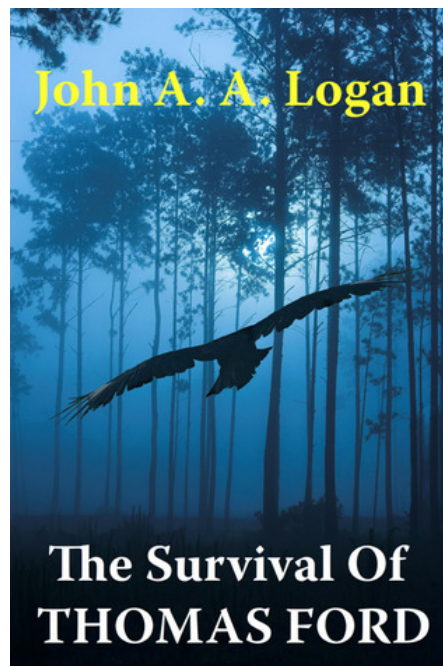




The Survival of Thomas Ford

John A.A. Logan

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THE SURVIVAL OF THOMAS FORD

Thomas Ford is the only survivor of the car crash which killed his wife. He is also the only witness who would be willing to identify the young, reckless driver who caused the crash. But the driver has no intention of ever letting himself be identified, not to mention what his father's intentions are...or those of his girlfriend, Lorna, the hospital cleaner.

The young driver's father is Jack McCallum, the powerful entrepreneur who has built a housing empire, McCallum Homes, on the high hills surrounding the city. Jack has his own dark secret to protect, as well as his business edifice to hold onto. There is no way in the world that Jack McCallum will ever let anything threaten the future of McCallum Homes.

Robert Ferguson, the passenger who was with the young driver on the day of the crash, curses himself for ever getting into the car. He watches carefully to see what the universe will do about it all, and he thinks he can hear the gears and chambers of the universe's engine, rolling terribly towards them, out of the future, and he knows he can't cope with that, not even if he takes his medication.

In the end, destiny will pull them all far out of the city, some of them to the moonlit hillside, where white butterflies and mysterious gas fill the air, and wild cats wrap themselves around cold trees. Jack McCallum's trusted Polish foreman, Lanski, will recognise the place from the folklore-wilderness of his own childhood, a place where death can come stalking in the form of a white wolf, but perhaps also redemption can appear, for those like Thomas Ford who seek it.

In any case, the young driver has it in mind to take his destiny into his own hands now, which will soon lead to the life of a second young woman hanging in the balance, awaiting salvation or destruction, perhaps only the Fates, or the wind that blows through the trees, know which.

The Survival of Thomas Ford Details

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From Reader Review The Survival of Thomas Ford for online ebook

Reb MacRath says

Once upon a time, an acclaimed Scottish short story writer wrote four novels with high hopes...and watched decades pass while he found himself crushed under the weight of rejection. He emerged from exile with an astonishing novel called THE SURVIVAL OF THOMAS FORD. Now, day by day, the good news spreads: When an Artistic director goes slumming with a commercial thriller, the result is Martin Scorsese's CAPE FEAR...but when a Literary writer produces a thriller with love and respect, the result is THOMAS FORD. The engine of the novel is meticulously crafted: Ford, and his wife are run off the road by a joyriding punk and his pal. Ford's wife dies and he spends six-odd weeks in a coma. While he sleeps, bad trouble brews: the bird-faced punk, Jimmy McCallum, and his burly friend Robert fear that Ford may remember their faces. Jimmy has extra good reason to fear: his father's a violent, dangerous man and word of this could harm da's business...When the boys begin to scope Ford out, the book's engine proves to run on a very high octane indeed. But nothing plays out as we'd thought. Thomas Ford isn't Bronson or Eastwood. The boys are not pure evil. Violence comes as expected, and yet...Meanwhile, Logan weaves a spell of lovely prose and carefully orchestrated images that we'll be thinking of long past The End.

Linda Gillard says

An outstanding debut from an indy author. Tartan Noir, but also darkly comic.

Kath Middleton says

This book starts with a death in a motoring accident and the survivor of the crash becomes engrossed in trying to find the man who caused it. We are drawn into the life of the perpetrator, an amoral man, whose family and friends are evil or weak. There are some really strong characters in this book yet somehow I didn't feel I got to grips with Thomas Ford himself.

It is a very compelling story and I tried for 15 minutes to put it down after lunch today! The writing is really well crafted and there are certain parts of the story where I found myself wondering if the supernatural would play a part. I'm still not sure!

There is a lot to think about in this book; about survivor guilt, about the corrupting effects of the love of power, status and money, about how family ties can prevent us discerning the difference between good and evil. There is a little reference or two to the influence of Grandmothers. I liked that too! I recommend this book as a really good story.

Laurel says

Frightening. Mesmerizing. Confusing. Teeming with metaphors and imagery. Kind of like watching a train thunder down a track in an old Western movie, all the while knowing that the track runs out at the edge of

the deep canyon- you know the train is headed for destruction taking its passengers with it, but you are powerless to stop it, and you cannot bring yourself to stop watching/reading! That is what this book felt like to me. I did not like the characters. I suspect that Logan did not write them to be liked. The themes of personal choices linked to greed, materialism, sex and relationships, were not pleasant to think about. Yet, I could not put this book aside, nor out of my mind. Another reviewer likened it to rubbernecking at a car crash. Well put! It is beautifully crafted and moves forward quickly. A literary thriller which may lead to reflection, or in my case, a chilly feeling like I just spent several hours in the rain, and I can't seem to get warm or dry. Violent and filled with strong language- not for the faint of heart, but well worth your time. But do not think that you will leave this novel on your shelf, without thinking of it again.

Cally Phillips says

Literary fiction is usually up my street. Contemporary thriller, only sometimes.

From the very opening, the 'literary' fiction box was ticked with the beautiful prosaic description. OF A CAR CRASH. That was a master stroke. It worked. And I wondered why it worked? I was put in mind of the many films that I've seen (in a former life as a screenwriter) and how often the use of cinematic lighting can kill off the veracity of a scene or movie (Killing Private Ryan springs to mind... I mean, going into war beautifully back lit?) However, in this novel, the opposite is true. The heightened language actually enables one to fully engage with the horror of the initial car crash. So far so good... the writer has us hooked. Would the rest of the novel live up to expectation?

I'm happy to report that it did. What really did it for me in this excellent novel was the depth and detail. This applies to both characters and plot/narrative. Logan really takes you into the depths of his characters souls, using the kind of details that show up only in a well crafted novel (and that other writers appreciate because they know how hard it is to achieve). There is a panoply of characters one cannot 'like' but Logan manages to keep you engaged with them, almost as if you are rubbernecking a car crash! Giving compelling motivations to unlikeable characters is a skill that Logan pulls off every time.

The consequence of in depth, detailed, controlled writing (especially interesting in a novel where one of the characters is obsessed with Chaos Theory) was that reading it became like waiting for the moment of impact... that's the best way I can explain the suspense engendered by the author. The imagery is strong, haunting and sometimes horrific, but then you wouldn't expect to walk away unscathed from a car crash now would you?

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<http://indiebookreview.wordpress.com...>

Marti says

Thomas Ford and his somewhat estranged wife Lea have gone out for a pleasant drive, hoping to re-connect at least a bit when disaster strikes. As they come upon a hill, a red Volvo is illegally passing a truck (lorry) at the crest of a hill. Thomas' only chance of survival as he sees it is to swerve over the embankment even though he knows that will land them in the lake (loch). As they enter the water, he is able to release his seat

belt but Lea is not. When Thomas tries to release the belt for the panicing Lea, she slaps his hands away as the windshield shatters and the world goes black. Six weeks, Thomas awakens in the hospital where he has been being treated since the accident. Thomas has no memories of the accident beyone the point when the world went black for him but even before he has been told, he's surmised that Lea didn't make it out and he at least partially blames himself. He does have a vivid memory of the driver, a young dark-haired man with bird-loke features and also of the passenger, who has a square face and a thick neck. He remembers the vehicle had a red "bonnet" but doesn't know the make or model. The driver of the lorry had a heart attack at the time of the accident and the driver of the red vehicle did not stop. Upon awakening, the detectives have several questions for Thomas about the accident. He tries to cooperate as best he can, giving detailed descriptions of the driver, passenger, and what little he can remember of the vehicle. The problem for him, however, is that there is no one who can corroborate his story, making him a person of interest to the detectives. This is pretty tightly written and a fairly good "page-turner." I didn't love it to the degree that reviewers I read did, but it did hold my interest fairly well. I would recommend this to those who enjoy a good thriller although I didn't like the amount of coarse language. At least the violence was not detailed or gratuitous.

Tristan says

John Logan has created that rare treat - a thriller with a seriously literary voice behind it. His story-telling is marvellously gripping, but it was the beautiful poetic lyricism of his writing that really got me. It's hard to put my finger on exactly why, but there's a gently mournful Scottish resonance throughout too - which anyone who's spent any time in the highlands will instantly recognise.

Wendy says

This book was a dark look at philosophy and the morals and choices that we make as well as what haunts us about our choices. I think depending on your own experience, you will see the book slightly differently. I thought the writing was brilliant and sort of like Stephen King meets Tim Burton. Metaphors were used throughout the book to describe both people and "what lurks"...depending on how you interpret them, you could see the "light" or "darkness" of every character and/or action, i.e. bird-like, butterflies, gas. For me this was extremely thought-provoking and kept me on the edge of my seat as I tried to figure out what each metaphor meant and how/who would conquer their own demons from within.

Patti (baconater) says

Wonderful characters who have haunted me throughout the reading, even to the point that one invaded my dreams.

I found myself frequently thinking of the story and wondering what would happen next when I wasn't reading it.

A book I spent my days so looking forward to pick up again.

A treasure for thriller fans.

Roz Morris says

A story about a man who survives a crash in which his wife dies. But the driver who caused the collision is hunting him down because he is worried about being identified.

From this apparently straightforward premise comes a story that is tense and gripping - but far from simple. The characters Thomas must outwit are unhinged, amoral lowlifes, from a milieu that gentle Thomas has never before had to encounter - like most of us who live normally and quietly. This gives the novel a universal, mythical quality. This is a story of survival, but not just physical escape. It is a crawl back to life after a clash with barbarous, feral forces. It is also a clash with conscience - if someone died beside you, and you feel responsible, how do you survive? Do you even deserve to? How can you ever redeem yourself to live a normal life? Thomas finds himself in a world where men have no consciences as he does battle with his own.

But this is no story of navel gazing. The plot works on a literal level as well as a symbolic one and the characters are solid as much as they are embodiments of forces. The prose is bold and unfancy, yet supple enough to connect with the vast and elemental. Although there is a good deal of violence, which Logan doesn't shy away from, he has a knack of not showing it to you, but still giving you the impact of the experience. So a cat watches mesmerised as something horrid and bloody goes on in a family's living room (itself another level of irony only visible when you step back and analyse). I frequently found myself rereading pages - not because of any problem with clarity, but because a phrase drummed in my head long after the plot had dragged me past, demanding a second look to enjoy it again. The storytelling is effortless, the echoes are long lasting. Do read it.

David Staniforth says

4.5 stars – almost 5

This book has been sitting on my Kindle for a long while after being downloaded as a free book or one that was drastically reduced. I can't say why I haven't read it sooner, but once I started I found it hard to put down. In some respects it put me in mind of something Stephen King would write, and I thought it would veer towards supernatural (those elements were left unanswered, hence the dropping of a half star). It was a great read though, with characters that came to life on the page. Refreshing too was the fact that we know who-done-it from the outset, and are taken on a journey to see how it would unravel from there.

Daniel Sharkey says

Highland Noir.

A fascinating and disturbing novel.

With a potent mix of character and plot, on a flight through the dark of weeping souls and tortured psyches we encounter a priapic and his flaccid friend. The psychotic father and a weary protagonist. A femme fatale and the avenging foreign angel all trapped in a web of death, deceit and debauchery, where events are in the saddle.

John A.A.Logan has crafted a feral drama with psychological and spiritual nuance. He is of the tough and tense tradition. His work crackles and sparks.

Here is a writer whose star will shine. Look out.

Catherine MacLeod says

Outstanding. I lost two days of my holiday to this extraordinary book.

I bought it on the recommendation of someone who seems to have had an instinctive understanding of the sort of book I would enjoy. I'm so glad I listened because once I started reading *The Survival of Thomas Ford* I was drawn into something really quite extraordinary.

From the first paragraph I was mesmerised. Yet the clear bare prose of the opening pages had a haunting quality that lulled me into a world I had not - could not have from the gentle opening - anticipated. A compulsive read, a story that gripped and shocked with its unsparing clarity. Characters as wicked as they were believable, they became even more believable as the story progressed I think because, however wicked their thoughts (and we were not spared their dark thoughts) their vulnerabilities were also laid before us, like real people's thoughts justify actions even when those actions are terrible and the consequences of those actions more terrible still.

A thrilling page-turner, a literary fiction novel that swept me into the at times feral-like lives of ordinary folk. Set in the Highlands of Scotland, the dialogue was perfect and true. Yet it could equally have been set in any part of the world. Something about the unflinching way the author held up these people with their most basic human drives and motivations, their flawed reasoning, their loyalties and their desperate need to make something of their lives, guided - or haunted - by elements of mysticism made this feel almost like a ghost story at times.

Beautifully written, this is the first book where I was moved to 'highlight' a passage on my Kindle:

'Paper odds were for cowards, who wanted an excuse for not trying. If you were going to dare to try to shape the future you had to forget about such things. You had to try to change your mind into a machine that could create diamonds, then you had to use the diamonds as tools to cut your name, your family's name, into the glass surface that other people called the future. Then other people would read your name there.'

Through such insightful and beautiful descriptive passages I was able to feel an uncomfortable degree of empathy and understanding for Jack McCallum and the desperate measures he had been driven to throughout his life. The observation that earlier in history he might have been a great man. Society does that, doesn't it? It changes the goal posts. But the human spirit has its own path.

A brilliant book.

Caleb Blake says

Cross-posted from Papyrus Independent Author Reviews

(<http://papyrus.calebblake.net/2012/03/18/the-survival-of-thomas-ford-by-john-a-a-logan/>)

After a motoring accident leaves his wife dead, Thomas Ford is left in hospital with only fragmented memories of how he survived and how his wife died, of a car and its strange bird-like driver forcing him off the road and into the loch. As he recovers from a 6 week coma, he is haunted by the crash until a visitor arrives who has information about the accident, a visitor who has triggered a series of events that will culminate in murder.

The Survival of Thomas Ford to me defies genre. Although there seems to be crime/mystery elements and thriller moments, I think it would more comfortably sit in the non-genre or even literary fiction section of a book store.

Thomas Ford seems like he would be the main character of the book, but I think the author doesn't necessarily pick favourites among the cast of completely dysfunctional characters. I could not relate to nor root for any of them with the possible exception of Thomas Ford himself. I may not really understand much about the Scottish highlands having never lived there, but this book seems to present the idea of the inhabitants being completely hard, violent and with an alien pragmatism that is sometimes quite frightening.

The author seems to explore guilt in this novel from several different angles and to different degrees: that of the policeman investigating the accident when he closes the case, that of Jack in assessing his life and decisions, that of Jimmy after causing the accident, that of Robert as the passenger and his mother at her failings as a parent and that of Thomas Ford himself as sole survivor. The varying levels of passivity or aggression that result from that guilt ranged from comprehensible to baffling.

Additionally, this seems to be a study on the nature of the universe. We are presented with different ideas of how the universe works: from Jimmy's assertion of randomness and chaos, through Robert's feelings that the universe self-corrects, to Jack's pragmatic and self-serving idea of strength and will and even through the more superstitious heritage of Lanski. As I approached the very messy and violent conclusion of this story, I'm not sure I could pick exactly which view the author would like to dominate. Was it just a series of accidents, chance events that led to disaster, or was it foretold – was the universe deciding how to right a wrong or did the spirits of past actions have some influence on the outcome? Or finally, was it the characteristics (the strengths or correspondingly the weaknesses) of characters that would have always eventually lead them to such a conclusion? I enjoyed that it remained inconclusive.

The writing itself worked very well for me. I became accustomed to the vernacular in the dialogue and the narrative itself was quite elegant at times. There did seem to be a massive repetition of the word "sniff" which I tend to think wasn't an accident. Each character seems to sniff incessantly during this story and the action became like a device to further disconnect me from the characters. It is used so many times where a far more emotional reaction is expected, so that it seemed to reinforce that these characters were somehow broken, inhuman and unfathomable.

Where I found the novel an overriding success was that even though I found the characters either completely unlikable, unreadable or even alien, I found myself quite eager to progress through the story. I oscillated between fascination and a dull shock at each turn of events and still continued happily in anticipation of the next unpredictable experience.

I would say if you like to be able to relate to the characters in a story and you like to feel attached to a hero or heroine, this is probably not a good book for you. However, if you feel that reacting to characters is just as valid as relating to them and if you don't mind your reading experience to be unpredictable and without perhaps a clearly spelled out message, put this story towards the top of your list as I believe the experience is worth it.

Elli says

Very mesmerizing to me. It is set in the hill country of Scotland. Both the main character and his almost main character father have some aberration in their thinking and moral makeup. And they are not nice or really honest people. The father is a wealthy contractor who got there on his own steam, not family influence, wealth or anything like that. And he wants it all to go to his son although he knows that there are things wrong with the boy and is merciless in trying to correct them. Starts with a horrible accident caused by irresponsible driving in which people were killed including Thomas's wife. The son of the contractor was responsible. Then, to cover up the crime as irresponsible boy keeps shooting his mouth off, the plot thickens and a road of really heavy twists starts and continues racing onward. It really had me going!
