



Catch and Release

Lawrence Block

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"Catch & Release" appeared in and was written for STORIES, the anthology edited by Neil Gaiman and Al Sarrantonio. It's a very dark story with an articulate and introspective narrator, and if you don't like to spend time at the intersection of Sex and Violence, it's probably not something you'll enjoy. The lead character, as the title suggests, is a fisherman. The reviewers liked it, and one said she found it singularly impossible to forget.

Catch and Release Details

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Author : Lawrence Block

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From Reader Review Catch and Release for online ebook

Richard says

Well, it is not really a novel, but a number of short stories, a couple of novellas that are really one story, and a few things he had forgotten he had written including one he is not sure is his or not.

The best part of the book, Story Notes, hardly more than 4 pages after the fiction, is included in the back.

Kevintipple says

The latest book from author Lawrence Block titled *Catch And Release: 17 Stories* is an enjoyable grab bag of tales. Short tales, long tales, and a play are present here where those involved almost always offer a philosophy on life and their role in the world. As such, this is a thinking reader's book and not a light weight read where the characters just run around shooting people and killing folks for the heck of it. Everything that happens, or does not happen, is because a character made a conscious decision based on his or her philosophy of life and his or her role in it and the word as a whole.

The book opens with "A Burglar's-Eye View of Greed" where the narrator goes to see his favorite bookseller, Bernie Rhodenbarr. Fortunately for Bernie he doesn't have to sell books to survive. He very well may be the last of the gentlemen burglars.

All you want when you have had losing hands all night is "A Chance To Get Even." Richard Krale is having a bad night and wants his chance to finally settle up. Not just for the bad night of poker, but for other matters as well.

"A Vision in white" comes next and is a story that is nearly impossible to discuss at all without ruining it for the reader. As you read it, the tale should make things abundantly clear where the inspiration came from in the sports world.

The signature story of the book "Catch and Release" (previously available as a solo short story confusing some readers) follows where the water is on not at all involved except a metaphorical level. He has his methods and his fantasies in a tale that plays with the reader right to the end.

Katherine "Kit" Tolliver had a mission when she arrived in Toledo, Ohio, in "Clean Slate." Like the main character of the proceeding story, Kit has a plan to balance things out.

In what has to be the most flat out disturbing story in the book (though "Catch and Release" comes close) hoarding is just part of the issue in "Dolly's Trash and Treasure." It begins with a visit by child protective services and Mrs. Saugerties has some very strange answers.

Next is a one act play tilted "How Far." Dorothy Morgan has a problem and Billy may or may not help her. One doesn't really know until the end.

The end of the TV show the Sopranos annoyed many of us. It annoyed Mick Ballou as well. In "Mick Ballou Looks at the Blank Screen" he ponders what was meant by that ending and more. He's doing all this thinking for a good reason.

As the years pass, the familiar often has to make way for something new. That idea is a small part of the tale “One Last Night at Grogan’s.” Mick Ballou, the major character of the proceeding tale, is the primary focus here as well in another good read.

Walters stole some very valuable information and Jondahl wants him stopped and the information retrieved in “Part of the Job.” The history of the tale is almost as interesting and explained in the attached piece titled “The Story About The Story . . .”

Like several of the previous characters, the main character in “Scenarios” has twisted fantasies. It ends where and when it ends.

An elderly man helps with an oral history project in “See the Woman.” Doing so stirs up for more than just memories.

Numerous stories within the main story is the author technique at work in the next two long stories. The backdrop is a poker game where a variety of characters from various walks of life discuss sins, philosophy, and much more in “Speaking of Greed” and “Speaking of Lust.”

Routine is important to Kramer in “Welcome to the Real World.” Kramer likes things the way they are and isn’t ready to change. Yet a former coworker seems intent on helping Kramer change-- one way or another.

Colliard didn’t really want the coffee, but, he had to do something with his hands in “Who Knows Where It Goes.” Life wasn’t supposed to work out this way, but it has, and the options are few.

“Without a Body” is the last story of the book and features a narrator where one isn’t sure if one is dead or alive.

Explanations of the various stories and their history are provided in “Story Notes.” A short author bio and ads for other books bring the book to an end.

Catch And Release: 17 Stories features characters that over their philosophy on crime, life, and more. What happens, or does not happen, in these tales is because the main character has made a conscious decision based on his or her philosophy of life and his or her role in it and the word as a whole. The tales are complicated with twists that make the reader pay attention and think. The book is also very good.

Catch and Release: 17 Stories

Lawrence Block

<http://www.lawrenceblock.wordpress.com>

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\$9.99

Material supplied by the author in exchange for my objective review. Print versions of the book are available from Subterranean Press and Hard Case Crime.

Kevin R. Tipple ©2013

Cara's Craftastic Creations says

3.5

Dan Schwent says

Catch and Release is a collection of Lawrence Block's short stories. As usual, I'll attempt to comment on them as I go without revealing too much, which is difficult when it comes to short stories.

A Burglar's Eye View of Greed: Bernie Rhodenbarr gives his thoughts on greed. It's a nice little window into his personality and makes me want to resume reading the Burglar series.

A Chance to Get Even: This is the story of a poker player who doesn't know how to bet more than he can afford to lose and keeps trying to climb out of the hole he's dug for himself.

A Vision in White: A man develops a fixation on a young beautiful tennis player.

Catch and Release: A former serial killer explains his catch and release philosophy, thinking of himself like a fisherman. Best short story of the collection. Chilling and creepy.

Clean Slate: This was a story that eventually grew and became *Getting Off: A Novel of Sex and Violence*, Kit Tolliver's systematic killing of every man she's ever slept with to restore her spiritual virginity.

Dolly's Trash and Treasures: This is a sad and creepy story about county workers trying to help a hoarder whose family has run out on her.

How Far: This is a one act play about a woman who wants to get her ex to stop bothering her. It's all dialog and all Block so it's pretty slick.

Mick Ballou Looks at a Blank Screen: Mick and Matthew Scudder talk about what happens after death and the Sopranos finale.

One Last Night at Grogan's: Mick Ballou closes Grogan's and invites Matt and Elaine to spend one last evening with him there. Still as touching as the first time I read it.

Part of the Job: A man searches for another man who's jumped to the competition with an important set of plans. This one was all about the ending, which I will not spoil here. The story behind the story is that someone gave Block a magazine with the story published in it and Block never remembered selling it.

Scenarios: Scenarios is an interesting tale of what might happen when a man meets a woman in a bar.

See the Woman: An elderly former cop recounts the tale of an abusive drunk and the wife that kept making excuses for him.

Speaking of Greed: A group of poker players swap stories about greed in this novella.

Speaking of Lust: A group of poker players swap stories about lust in this novella.

Welcome to the Real World: A retiree's routine is disrupted when another man suggests he play golf instead of just practicing at the driving range. As with P.G. Wodehouse, stories about golf are more interesting to me than actually watching it on TV.

Who Knows Where It Goes: An unemployed man tries a different line of work and thinks about how things change. Without spoiling too much, this could have been a very early Keller story.

Without a Body: This is the story of a murder and the aftermath from the victim's point of view.

The afterword tells the stories behind the stories; what Block had in mind while he was writing it, who he wrote it for, etc.

I'd say Catch and Release, the titular tale, was the best of the bunch but I didn't think any of them were duds. Unlike some Hard Case reprints, this one had the Hard Case feel throughout. Another winning Hard Case from Lawrence Block! Four stars!

Cathi says

The author's voice is so droning and one dimensional it was enough to put me to sleep. That was bad because I listened to this while driving. I'm not sure if the stories were boring or just the voice.

Josh says

I have no problem with trash, but this isn't quite the kind of trash I'd hoped for; instead of gleefully pulpy tales, most of these are either quite pedestrian (especially the insufferable poker and golf stories, and the lengthy philosophical discussions), or else they are dark and depraved for no reason other than-- seemingly-- to shock and titillate. There are only a couple of entries that truly surprise and entertain.

Craig Childs says

Lawrence Block is known as a genre writer. Except for a handful of books on the writing life, he rarely roams far from the familiar grounds of crime and mystery. However, he is quite versatile in style and this collection showcases the breadth of what is possible within the genre. Catch and Release compiles 17 stories published since his last collection, Enough Rope (2001). Included are two long novellas, a one-act play, four stories featuring popular series characters, four tales concocted around sports, and a few assorted others.

The only negative about this collection, for me, was that I had already read over half these stories in other anthologies.

A Burglar's-Eye View of Greed – A short interview with one of Block's popular series characters, gentleman thief Bernie Rhodenbarr. A lighthearted fluff piece that shows up sometimes on Lawrence Block bibliographies because it was also published separately as a limited-edition broadside.

Clean Slate – My favorite Lawrence Block short story of all time. An introduction to Kit Tolliver, the femme fatale who loves picking up strange men and taking them to bed, and loves what comes after even more. The

events of this story were eventually incorporated into the novel *Getting Off*.

Mick Ballou Looks at the Blank Screen –Part of the Matt Scudder series. Very short, but it fills in an important gap in Mick's personal life between the end of *All the Flowers Are Dying* and the beginning of *A Drop of the Hard Stuff*.

One Last Night at Grogan's— The final elegiac prose-poem for the Scudder series. Matt, Elaine, and Mick reminisce for the final time at Grogan's Open House.

A Chance to Get Even - A crime storied centered on a poker game. Every bit as tense and expertly paced as Ian Fleming's famous sequence in *Casino Royale*.

A Vision in White – Tennis may be boring to watch on tv, but watching a beautiful young tennis player through the eyes of her stalker is both fun and darkly funny.

Catch and Release – This story is not really about fishing, but fishing does provide the perfect extended metaphor for a chilling serial killer.

Welcome to the Real World – The most humorous story in the collection. A widower picks up the habit of hitting balls at the driving range every Friday morning, only to encounter disdain from the "real" golfers in the club.

Dolly's Trash and Treasures -- A short, juicy satirical character story with a dark twist. Inspired by a reality television show about hoarders.

How Far: A Play – Based on Block's short story "How Far It Could Go". Decent but predictable.

Part of the Job – An early lost tale from 1962. The story of how it was discovered is actually much better than the fiction itself.

Scenarios – The author provides three possible endings for a common crime scenario.

See the Woman – Two police officers, a rookie and a jaded veteran, are helpless to save a woman from her abusive husband. Block's stories often involve murder, and he approaches the subject with humor, sometimes flippancy, other times indifference. Rarely does he take the approach in this story—which is to explore violence and death head-on with heartbreaking poignancy.

"*Speaking of Greed*" and "*Speaking of Lust*"—These novellas were originally written for a pair of multi-author short story anthologies edited by Lawrence Sanders. The anthologies on the whole were disappointing, but these title stories were not. They both consist of a framing device--a doctor, a policeman, a priest, and a soldier sitting around a poker table and sharing their stories and opinions of the sins of avarice and lust. The stories they tell each other--vignettes within the larger frame--each illustrate some shade, complexity, or twist on the subject at hand. The prose seems to float effortlessly off the page, as if the author is simply talking out loud to you off the top of his head, but there is a crafty subtle art going on. While it entertains, this story forces you to ask philosophical questions and perhaps redefine some of your preconceptions.

Who Knows Where It Goes—Another great example of how thoroughly the author can delve into his characters in just a few short pages. This story of man taking inventory of his abilities is utterly authentic and chilling.

Without a Body – An impressionistic life-after-death vignette told from the point of view of an elderly murder victim. Based on a real-life crime.

Veronika ?ervencová says

Nevzrušené a nezaujaté rozprávanie sériového vraha o „chytaní rýb" pridáva tejto poviedke nový rozmer hrôzy.

Randy says

CATCH AND RELEASE is a collection of crime stories that run the gamut of settings. We have backgrounds of golf, fishing, a couple on poker. We get serial killers, burglars, retired folks, a cop, a priest, a doctor, and a soldier.

A couple I'd read in their original appearances, but it was nice to get reacquainted. All were well written, as one would suspect from the master, and had a twist here and there with victims getting in shot here and there.

The book is available in a nice hardcover edition from Subterranean Press who do their usual handsome job as well as Hard Case Crime's trade edition and an ebook for those on that end of the reading base.

Highly recommended.

Patrick says

Like any collection of short stories this is hit or miss. The two worst were "Speaking of Greed" and "Speaking of Lust." They involve a soldier, priest, policeman, and doctor playing cards and like Caterbury Tales they each tell a story relating to greed and then lust. Greed was pretty boring while Lust was fairly disgusting, involving incest, rape, and a murderer who kills so he can get a boner. The characters actually say, "What's the harm in a brother and sister sleeping together (and marrying)?" Really? Are these guys members of House Lannister or what?

The other stories were OK. Some like the one about golf were funny. I wish the Bernie Rhodenbarr one had been longer. He's the only regular Block character to show up in this.

That is all.

Dave says

Short story collections, even by the best authors, can range from crap to greatness. Sometimes, such collections are ego-driven collections of stuff no one would ever publish. Sometimes they are collections of an author's early work. Once in a while, a well-known author actually publishes a collection of short stories that is the literary equivalent of hitting it out of the ballpark. With Catch and Release, Lawrence Block's latest short story collection, published in 2013, he has, indeed, launched a ball so high, so far, so deep, that I can fully recommend it for your reading enjoyment.

Catch And Release is, of course, the title story for this volume and, as such, is worthy of a review entirely of its own. Jim Morrison once explained that, The hitchhiker stood by the side of the road and leveled his thumb in the calm, cool, calculus of reason. This book about the joys of hitchhiking and the joys of flyfishing is just terrific. It is told in such a routine, matter-of-fact yarn-spinning manner that it almost deceives in the twisted sickness found in the narrator himself. He is a loner who likes to pick up hitchhikers, especially young, cute hitchhikers in short cut-offs and scooping tops. He does offer sage advice to the young lady he drops off at her parents' home, explaining that he is a catch-and-release fisherman, but not everybody is a catch- and-release fisherman. She has no clue what he is talking about, but any reader of dark mysteries and noir literature does. Sometimes a fish is allowed to wriggle off the line and flop back into the water. Often, they do not know how lucky they are.

Clean Slate is a lengthy novella-type story from the Kit Tolliver collection. Block also offers it separately as a single. If you like this (and warning: not everyone will), I suggest you run out and grab whatever copy is remaining of "Getting Off," Block's full-length book featuring all of his Kit Tolliver stories. I highly recommend it. "Clean Slate" offers a real peek at Kit Tolliver's background and gives the reader an understanding of how she set out on her path, criss-crossing America and donning different identities in different cities. Kit is a knockout. She has a list and, yes, she is checking it twice. She has a list of men who could sit around a campfire and brag about how they had her. She is going to do something about that list, something about whittling that list down. Kit is no angel. She engages in all kinds of conduct, not all of which is legal. Somehow, Block has crafted this story which includes all kinds of violence and matricide and identity theft and makes the reader want to follow along.

I found all of these to be top-notch stories with a special mention going out to Speaking of Greed and Speaking of Lust, bawdy tales of sex, violence, avarice, love, and betrayal, told by a doctor, a policeman, a priest, and an elderly man while sitting around after a poker game.

WARNING: this collection is for mature audiences only as it contains sexual situations, violence, cruelty, and cuss words.

Do I need to conclude by explaining that I think this is a fantastic, mind-blowingly good collection that it is well worth your time. Scratch under the surface of our society and it is not all clean and neat and ordered. This is greed, lust, larceny, and revenge percolating out there. I can't say enough good things about this collection. Enjoy!

Andrew Smith says

I'd read a scratching from Block on the back of a cereal pack, so picking up a new set of short stories from the Master of Crime was a no-brainer. I say new but I've come across some of these before, notably in a previous collection (Night and the Music) and also a book he penned in 2011 under the pseudonym Jill Emerson (Getting Off). Though rereading these offerings was no problem, in fact given the state of my memory these days it was a while before I recognised I'd trodden some of these paths before.

For the record my favourite offerings were, in no particular order:

Clean Slate

Mick Ballou Looks at the Blank Screen

One Last Night at Grogan's

Speaking of Greed

Speaking of Lust

Welcome to the Real World

There is a huge variety of tales here. The second and third stories listed above feature Block's brilliant sleuth Matt Scudder. They remind me what a fine body of work the Scudder series represents; I really must re-read these books one day. Speaking of Lust/Greed - two works previously published as stand alone novellas - are very clever. If you were ever in doubt, you'll know you're in the hands of the master when you get to these - just brilliant. And the final story I listed is funny and, as a fair weather golfer, something I could absolutely relate to.

The only reason I couldn't bring myself to give this five stars is that - and it's the nature of a collection like this - there are a few stories here not up to the very high standard of the very best. But don't let that put you off, overall it's an excellent compilation.

David Macpherson says

Good collection of mostly recent short stories by Block. I like the way he writes, so I am inclined to like what he does. A lot of the stories were quite dark, but still entertaining.

StoryTellerShannon says

I liked the the idea of these short stories and their themes but Lawrence Block as a narrator didn't work for me. :(

OVERALL GRADE: C to C plus.

Bad Cookie says

I gave the majority of these stories 1 or 2 stars. I liked 7 out of the 17 and gave them 3 stars each. Here are some of my thoughts on some of the stories:

"A Burglar's Eye View of Greed": What a tease. How the hell do you rate a story with only a couple of pages? I get that it's a short story, but really!? I was looking forward to a story featuring Bernie Rhodenbarr after reading past books featuring this character and this was a big disappointment. Rating: 1 out of 5 stars

"A Chance to Get Even": Surprisingly, I liked the way it ended, even though all that card talk was boring. It was probably boring because I don't know a damn thing about poker. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars

"A Vision in White": If the author's goal was to thoroughly creep me out- he did it in spades. However, I always have a difficult time enjoying a story revolving around a bad guy. Unlike "A Chance to Get Even" where I felt sympathy for the main character until he did what he did- or what you're led to believe he's about to do- I didn't feel anything good about this stalker. Rating: 1 out of 5 stars

"Catch and Release": This story was extremely disturbing. If I was rating based on the quality of writing, I'd give it a high rating. However, since the rating system is a matter of showing how much you like it, I'll have to give it 1 star because I most certainly did not like this story.

"How Far": Surprisingly, I liked it. It wasn't creepy at all- not like some of the others. At this point, I hadn't

liked the majority of the stories and I thought that this would be another dud. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars

"Mick Ballou Looks at the Blank Screen": Short, but sweet. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars

"Part of the Job": Whoa! That story had a surprising ending. I disagree with the author on one thing. The story itself IS better than the story about the story. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars

"See the Woman": A very depressing story. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars

"Without a Body": I liked that the character Irene had something beautiful to look forward to after death. Rating: 3 out of 5 stars
