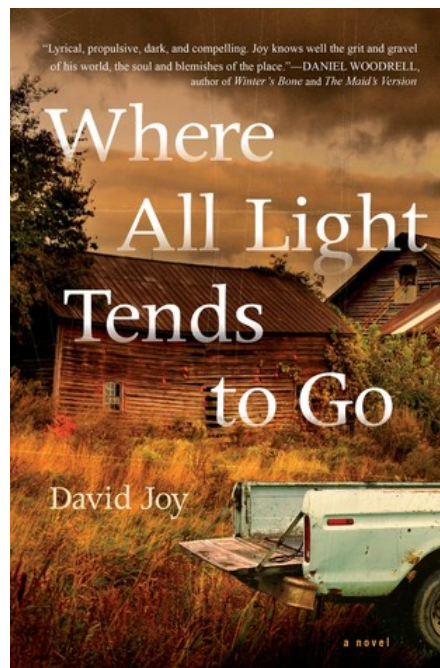




Where All Light Tends to Go

David Joy

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"Lyrical, propulsive, dark and compelling. Joy knows well the grit and gravel of his world, the soul and blemishes of the place."--Daniel Woodrell

In the country-noir tradition of *Winter's Bone* meets 'Breaking Bad,' a savage and beautiful story of a young man seeking redemption.

The area surrounding Cashiers, North Carolina, is home to people of all kinds, but the world that Jacob McNeely lives in is crueler than most. His father runs a methodically organized meth ring, with local authorities on the dime to turn a blind eye to his dealings. Having dropped out of high school and cut himself off from his peers, Jacob has been working for this father for years, all on the promise that his payday will come eventually. The only joy he finds comes from reuniting with Maggie, his first love, and a girl clearly bound for bigger and better things than their hardscrabble town.

Jacob has always been resigned to play the cards that were dealt him, but when he botches a murder and sets off a trail of escalating violence, he's faced with a choice: stay and appease his kingpin father, or leave the mountains with the girl he loves. In a place where blood is thicker than water and hope takes a back seat to fate, Jacob wonders if he can muster the strength to rise above the only life he's ever known.

Where All Light Tends to Go Details

Date : Published March 3rd 2015 by Putnam Adult

ISBN :

Author : David Joy

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Genre : Fiction, American, Southern, Mystery, Crime, Gothic, Southern Gothic

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From Reader Review Where All Light Tends to Go for online ebook

Jennifer says

"There was no escaping who I was or where I'd come from. I was shat out of a crankhead mother who'd just been cut loose from the loony bin. I was born to a father who'd slip a knife in my throat while I slept if the mood hit him right. Blood's thicker than water, and I was drowning in it. I was sinking down in that blood, and once I hit bottom, no one would find me."

It's the hopelessness that makes this book so dark. A good boy born to a bad family and an even worse future. It's depressing...but David Joy's writing makes the journey oh so worth it.

I found some excellent insight into the themes of this novel in an online interview with the author [HERE](#). If you have read this novel or if you just enjoy this author, I'd highly recommend giving this interview a look. It discusses how Jacob, this story's main character came to be...how Mr. Joy imagined Jacob as a boy being instructed by his father how to kill a pig with a knife, *"his father standing behind him telling his son what to do, and this boy watching the light go out of this animal's eyes and suddenly realizing just how much power a person had over life and death."* The interview also addresses the Appalachian region, class stratification, and the political, cultural, economic, and social effects of drugs, all of which play intricate roles in this novel.

For a debut, Where All Light Tends to Go is stunning. It's deep, emotional, dangerously real, ugly, and desperate. It's a book about patterns, family dysfunction, and a son's innocence that was never allowed to exist. Check it out.

My favorite quote:

"It's funny how it only takes one person taking the time to show you they care for all that bad shit to not seem so bad for a moment. It's not like the demons go anywhere. What haunts you is still right there when you go back under, but that one gesture from one person can bring you to the surface for a second or two."

Diane Barnes says

I wanted to like this book a lot more than I did. There were too many inconsistencies for me, too many details that didn't add up, too much that just didn't jive, sometimes in the same sentence or paragraph. The story was a good one, but in the end I just did not care about these characters or what happened to them. Too bad, but I do think this author has some promise. Maybe he can tighten things up in his next book.

Josh says

So.....I'm going to come across as a grit-lit snob in this. No avoiding it. I am quite sure many others will find very little fault in this book and rate it up there with all the usual suspects. I REALLY wanted to like this one- having looked forward to it for sometime on the recommendation of several great readers that I normally fall right in with lock, stock, and barrel. DO NOT AVOID THIS ONE BASED ON MY TASTES, you will probably enjoy it- quit reading this review now and come back after you finish to take issue with my critique.

For me, in the end- unlike the authors in this genre that I love, it felt a little too forced to be genuine. Rash, Woodrell, Pollock, Franklin, Gay, Charles White.....all those guys can drag you through the muck in a way that has credibility but seems unforced; in this one, I felt like I was reading it through the same lens that I would write it- because I don't live in that world, I would have to make sure I did the research and put enough reference in there to make it believable.

One other distraction was the repetitive references to story elements (examples....constant calling the cops "bulls", repetitive use of "Jos. A Bank's" for describing suits, particular attention to cigarette brands, and the multiple descriptions of how to maneuver up the front yard to avoid the Walker hunting dogs).....it lead to the effect of feeling manufactured downtrodden literary life rather than real life on display. BUT, I felt the same way about Woodrell's Tomato Red and LOVED his later works.

So, that leaves me at the praise. While it is violent- perhaps too much for most, there is a good story line in there. I will read along to see how this author negotiates future works because all the ingredients are in there to be someone I could greatly enjoy reading. I kinda feel like the author may have been pinched by the publisher to produce something "good and nasty"---and it certainly hit that mark. With time, much as often a good bourbon requires time to breathe post-pour, I think this guy may have the makings of something closer to Pappy Van Winkle than Evan Williams (see, I too have the makings of trying way to hard to make it sound believable).

Ctgt says

There was a place where all light tends to go, and I reckon that was heaven.

Pretty good grit-lit story set in in the mountains of North Carolina. Some of the elements are fairly standard for this type of book, meth dealing family run by a no holds barred old man who will stop at nothing to keep the business going, police corruption. While many of the themes are familiar I thought the author did a nice job of creating an interesting and somewhat unusual main character, Jacob McNeely. Instead of a thick headed county hick or a scheming mastermind criminal, Jacob walks the line between what he was born into and what he knows he can't do, namely, escape this world in which he finds himself. His outlook on his life is very bleak

There was never a moment in my life when I bought into the idea of light at the end of the tunnel. That old adage rests entirely on the direction being traveled. Out of darkness toward the light, folks might find some sort of hope in moving forward, some sort of anticipation for what awaits them. But my entire life I'd been traveling in the opposite direction, and for those who move further into darkness, the light becomes a thing onto which we can only look back. Looking back slows you down. Looking back destroys focus. Looking back can get you killed.

Rogers was trying hard to offer some sort of insight into a reality that he knew led to hurt. But I'd known it since I was a kid. That was my reality: the hurt, the shame, and everything else entailed. So, waiting around to die was something I'd known for a long time, and it wasn't the dying part that ate at me. It was the waiting.

There is a faint hope in his life, his former girlfriend, Maggie. This is another well used theme in all types of books, the lovers from different sides of the tracks.

It's funny how it only takes one person taking the time to show you they care for all that bad shit to not seem so bad for a moment. It's not like the demons go anywhere. What haunts you is still right there when you go back under, but that one gesture from one person can bring you to the surface for a second or two. And for a very long time, all I'd really needed was to come up for air.

When we were together it seemed like everything else, all the bad shit that surrounded us, stopped and we were all right for a moment or two. It was never a thing that felt like forever, but sometimes all a person needs is a chance to catch their breath.

Jacob had broken things off a few years back because he figured he would be holding Maggie back, but always continued to love her. Their relationship ebbs and flows throughout the story but Jacob never can fully commit to escaping with Maggie.

There for a while I got caught up in dreaming, and dreaming's an awfully good thing when you don't have to wake up. But staring back at the light only to stumble further into darkness hurts worse than never dreaming at all.

As Jacob tries to cope with a crisis in the family business and this rekindling with Maggie he never seems able to fully cut ties with his past.

The one flaw that kept this from being an outstanding book was that several of the scenes were very predictable and never really rose to the level of the character of Jacob. Otherwise a good book with a character I really enjoyed.

3.5 rounded to 4

Some souls aren't worth saving, I thought. There're some souls that even the devil wants no part of.

Jennifer Masterson says

Putting this book aside, too. Working on getting out of a book slump. Not a bad book just not the right timing.

Cheri says

Out of all the books in this genre that I've read this year, out of all the books I've read this year there are only a handful I can say are my favorites. "Where All Light Tends to Go" is the one that haunts me most of all of those, it's the one that I think of most often. Maybe partly because I'm familiar with areas near where this story is told, but the largest part is because it's a beautifully told story even when the story is hardly beautiful, the telling of it is poetic, lyrical, lovely even when you least expect it.

Dana says

"There was a place where all the light tends to go, and I reckon that was heaven."

Where All Light Tends to Go is one of the darkest, grit-lit, small town NC noir, hillbilly noir - or whatever label you want to give this genre - novels I have ever read.

Set in Cashiers, NC, a town a little over an hour from where I live - which inhabits the richest and the poorest, this is a coming of age story casting a portentous shadow from the first page. The language is rough and the story raw and heartbreaking. Jacob, the 18 year old protagonist, is growing up in a family of methamphetamine - his father the head of a meth operation - and his mother an addict - Jacob, caught up in the middle.

Thanks, Cheri, for recommending this book! It still haunts me, as well.

*the audio was exceptional - the narrator's voice a perfect choice

Pouting Always says

Jacob McNeely has tried to make peace with the hand life has dealt him, his mother is an addict and his father the cruel head of a meth ring and it seems as if all he's meant to do in life is follow his fathers footsteps as an outlaw. After dropping out of high school and breaking up with the love of his life Maggie it seems like he's gotten himself entrenched where he is. Then when Maggie graduates and a errand his father sends him to run turns south, Jacob must figure out if there is a way out for him.

I would say 4.5 stars honestly and I'm extremely depressed after reading this one. I can't take it honestly the way the story kept building up my hopes and then something would happen and Jacob would again be unable to move forward. Also that ending was just cruel. I loved the writing and the characters and the language was poetic. It was wonderful but I'm just feeling like I need to go lay down and cry or stare at the wall for a while now because I'm not okay with how it all ends up turning out and it's all so unfair.

karen says

3.5 stars, but who's counting?

The road back into The Creek bent and curved for what seemed forever, split off one way toward Walnut Gap and cut off another toward Yellow Mountain. That forever is part of what gave the place its lore. Folks that far removed had seldom associated law and justice with badges. The old time stories told tales riddled with bootleggers and murder, stories of copper stills on the fingers and branches of cold mountain streams, heads bashed in and buried before the blood had time to cool.

yes, it's another one of *those* kinds of books. an isolated southern community doling out its old-school justice without need for the law to intercede - where police are paid off to look the other way so the meth business can continue unobstructed. jacob mcneely is eighteen years old, and the son of charlie mcneely, the

undisputed meth king of cashiers, north carolina. they have a relationship that is based on blood, not affection, and jacob has been sucked into the family business without having either the aptitude or the heart for it.

I'd been around crank my whole life, so it had never been a drug, only money. When I was young, Daddy would put it to me like we were carrying on a family tradition, a matter of course that started with moonshine runs in chopped cars to make enough bread to survive the winter. It didn't seem so bad when he put it like that. Outlawing was just a way of earning a buck. By the time I was nine or ten, Daddy had me helping him break down big bags of crystal into grams, never anything smaller, and I got a cut just like most kids got allowance.

jacob has grown up knowing this was his birthright and that his path is inevitable, but although he does what needs to be done; what his father dictates - including acts of violence in the name of business, he is more of a resigned participant than an enthusiastic one. he has given up expecting anything apart from following his father's footsteps.

That was my reality: the hurt, the shame, and everything else entailed. So, waiting around to die was something I'd known for a long time, and it wasn't the dying part that ate at me. It was the waiting.

his mother has become an addict herself, and has lived apart from the family for a number of years, and since he dropped out of school and broken up with his girlfriend maggie, jacob has essentially been alone, plodding through a life he does not want, knowing there is no escape from his fate.

his father, apart from being a criminal, is also a real dick - this is no "rooting for the antihero" situation, no secret heart of gold, just a hardened, bitter man who gets a couple of moments of residual humanity, but is mostly just callous and unlikeable.

"I don't really think they wanted me there, and I don't really know why I went. But one thing led to another, and I left Avery Hooper spread out on the floor."

"Shit doesn't just unfold like that, now. Would be out of your character to just walk in and go hitting somebody. Wouldn't put it past me, but you avoided that kind of meanness some how or another. No, I reckon something had to have happened for you to just haul off and hit somebody."

"Maggie Jennings."

"And there it is, a goddamn woman."

"She ain't just some woman first of all and you know that."

"Well, I know a lot of things. I know you two were tighter than a burl growing up. I know you two were together a good while, and hell, you might've even popped her cherry. But I know that a woman's just a woman, and there's no changing that. If they didn't have pussies, the dumpsters would be full of them."

jacob has too much sensitivity to be a true heir to his father, who sees him as a pussy, and it becomes a real struggle for him to balance his father's demands with his better nature, his loyalty to his mother, and the feelings he still has for maggie, whom he left in order to avoid holding her back and tying her to their town, when she is one of the few he sees with the brains and aptitude to escape her own birthright.

his mother is rarely lucid enough to be a true mother to him, but they are allowed a few shining moments in which the kind of relationship they *could* have had is achingly glimpsed

It was the closest thing to a normal conversation I'd ever had with her. It was the closest thing to a mother she'd ever been. And if we'd been normal I reckon that would have been the time we'd have hugged one another and she'd have kissed me on top of my head. I reckon that would have been the tie that we looked each other square and said we loved each other. But we were a far cry from normal. There had never been any room for that sappy shit. There was a part of me that was happy for that, a part of me that thought the hardness that came with it helped to protect us from all the other bad that was in this world. But there was a part of me that knew the downfall. There was a part of me that understood that with that hardness came an inability to ever let anyone worth having get close enough to love.

which, of course, is a big part of the reason he is unable to remain with maggie, his childhood best friend become more in their adolescence. the book also grants them a few moments of possibility:

I wouldn't call it our restaurant or some sappy shit like that, but it was a spot we'd shared when the world seemed slower, a place that seemed to hold an energy similar to that spot in the creek where we stood as wide-eyed children with spring lizards squirming in our hands. In the two years that had passed, both of our lives seemed to have lost that simplicity. Both of us carried things now that we hadn't carried before. But being there, being there with her beside me, seemed to bring back all that old feeling. When we were together it seemed like everything else, all the bad shit that surrounded us, stopped and we were all right for a moment or two. It was never a thing that felt like forever, but sometimes all a person needs is a chance to catch their breath.

but these hopeful scenes are few and far between, and the realities of jacob's inherited outlaw lifestyle are more typically characterized by violence, betrayal, and helplessness, as this family/crime story smashes everything lovely in its path in grim delight.

it's gritty and bleak, and while it's not the best of its kind, it is definitely worth your time. it's a perfect introduction to this type of story for newcomers to the genre, but for someone like me, who has read A LOT of backwoods noir, it lacks a little of the spark that is found in, say, woodrell or mccarthy. but for a debut?? it's very impressive, especially those scenes where jacob is trying so hard to take initiative and do what he thinks needs to be done, only proving how inept he is at being a criminal mastermind - (view spoiler) he's one to watch, for sure.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

Daddy taught me well. Talk shit when you're free. Shut up in the cuffs. Lawyer up first chance.

Jacob McNeely's daddy runs the meth trade in the small North Carolina town. He gives Jacob the job of helping a couple of his guys take out a guy he thought was a "tattler".

They fuck that up. Daddy has to get involved.

Daddy McNeely has the town the way he wants it. With the law (bulls) looking the other way while he conducts business and his ex-wife (Jacob's mom) strung out on meth so bad that she doesn't know her name.

Jacob starts to realize that he knows where his life is headed. He is being groomed to take a place in daddy's empire. But then there's Maggie. Maggie just finished high school and she was Jacob's girlfriend back in the day. He thinks she is going to go on to great things in life and get out of the little hick town. Jacob had broken up with her when he decided he was holding her back.

Well Jacob...I don't know what to think of his character, he pops so many drugs that I don't know how he functioned to even figure out that she might go somewhere. Of course, he never did meth. Can't be sampling daddy's product.

I'm in the middle on a book I thought I would love. I just never felt the love for it. Too many inconsistencies, like Maggie-she is supposedly the golden girl but I kinda just thought she was dumb. She dumped her "now boyfriend" for Jacob after Jacob beat him up. Then she has unprotected sex with Jacob. Yep, she going somewhere. Probably to the free clinic.

The ending was dark and I did think it ended appropriately. I thought about sticking my head in the oven-that's my judge with whether a hick-lit book is good.

Some souls aren't worth saving, I thought.

There're some souls that even the devil wants no part of.

Edward Lorn says

4.5 stars rounded up.

First and foremost, this doesn't get all the stars for one minor nit-picky-ass reason. Some of the happenings after the halfway point were awfully convenient, and when I feel the need to stop reading because I'm struggling to suspend my disbelief, I gotta mark ya down, sorry.

Oh, and there's an odd repetition of the words "situate" and "resituate" and I have no idea why. These words pop up so much that I kept checking the title of the book to see if those words might be a running theme . But, no, it's just a case of an author getting stuck on a word, or in this case, two words. The best of us do it. Joy is no different.

(If you have the ebook version of this, I'd love it if you'd search for "situate" and "resituate" to find out how many times he uses them, pretty please!)

All that being said, this book is great. David Joy is a fantastic writer of hillbilly noir, and holy shit does this fit the noir staple. What a bleak experience this was, lemme tell you. Luckily, that's exactly what I was in the mood for.

The ending was utterly unexpected, and one of my favorite kinds of endings.

The character work (especially the dialogue) is pitch perfect. Every single character feels alive, even if most of them are brain dead - roughly dumber than slapping bricks together and expecting the sparks to become diamonds. But, no matter who was on the page, they were fun to read about. Or heartbreaking. Or terrifying. Damn good character work, I'm telling ya.

In summation: I've long been a fan of Joy's nonfiction, but this is the first novel I've read from him. It definitely won't be my last, either. In fact, before writing this review, I pre-ordered *The Line That Held Us* because it sounds fuckin' amazing. If you haven't read David Joy, I suggest you remedy that ASAP, ya hear?

Final Judgment: The best hillbilly noir has to offer.

Judy Collins says

WHERE ALL THE LIGHT TENDS TO GO, David Joy's debut is a gripping harsh tale set in deep rural Appalachia—a young teen, trying desperately to escape his evil, dysfunctional family environment and pulled in emotionally by a meth-addicted mother and a sociopathic father.

A mix of Southern Gothic, noir, coming-of-age, lyrical, gritty, psychological, dark, disturbing, and compelling. The next Cormac McCarthy.

Jacob McNeely's world has no future. It is a cruel world, pulling him into a dark world of violence. From the dark mountain woods of Sylvia, NC, a father runs a meth ring, and his mother is an addict. Jacob's dad has forced him to help him with his illegal business. Killing or whatever it takes. He has dropped out of high school and has no friends. This is the only way of life he knows.

The light of his life is a girl named Maggie, his first love; however, he has nothing to offer her. She desires to escape this backward town for a better life and future. Jacob encourages her and supports her.

Jacob is involved in violence while his father controls everything around him. At the same time, he is pulled—sucked into being loyal to his family. Can he ever leave the mountains, his family and have a life with the girl he loves? If given the choice, can he leave, or break free from the bondage.

A heartbreaking story of a young teen, and the dismal realities of his future, and his desires and hopes; a young love, he can only dream of.

From darkness to light, Joy captures every glimpse of hope and sadness. Brutally honest, as beautiful as it is heartbreaking. He captures the harsh realities of the area, its people, and culture, with storytelling drawing you into this world from his character's own heart and soul.

While I listened to the audiobook back in June, I was traveling at the time, and as I often do, rate the book with a review to come later. However, often, especially with audio, I fail to return to the writing of the review.

While reading *Brother* by Ania Ahlborn, also set in the deep rural Appalachia—(horror) of a young boy bound emotionally, haunted by a violent abusive family trying to escape his life (totally different twist); made me think about David Joy's *Where All the Light Tends to Go*. It was so powerful. When going back, noticed I had not written a review. This is a book you cannot forget.

Narrated by *MacLeod Andrews* with a voice, matching the characters, and the setting, delivering a solid performance. (highly recommend the audio version).

In the tradition of *Winter's Bone* meets *Breaking Bad*, a savage and beautiful story of a young man seeking redemption. For fans of Ron Rash and Wiley Cash.

A native of North Carolina, I enjoy supporting Carolina authors. **David Joy** has written an extraordinary Southern literary debut and captures the intimate feelings and emotions of his characters beautifully. *Available in paperback Feb. 2016*

Cannot wait for his second novel, **The Weight Of This World**, coming spring, 2017.

Lynda says

METH-AMORPHOSIS - physical and mental transformation caused by meth abuse.

- Faces of Meth

Methamphetamine (Meth) is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant drug that dramatically affects the central nervous system. It is usually illegally produced and distributed in several forms, including powder, crystal, rocks, and tablets.

In the short term, using meth causes an increase in energy and alertness, a decrease in appetite, and an intense euphoric "rush." In the long term, a person using meth may experience irritability, fatigue, headaches, anxiety, sleeplessness, confusion, aggressive feelings, violent rages, cravings for more meth, and depression. They may become psychotic and experience paranoia, auditory hallucinations, mood disturbances, and delusions. The paranoia may lead to homicidal or suicidal thoughts. **Because meth is so addictive, the distance between the short and long term effects may not be very long (generally a couple of months).**

Where All Light Tends To Go is a powerful, brutal, intimate and heartrending story about the effects of meth on a family and those associated with them. Set in the Appalachian Mountains near rural Cashiers, North Carolina, it is narrated by 18 year old Jacob McNeely, a young man ensnared in grim circumstances that leave little room for hope.

"There was no escaping who I was or where I'd come from. I was shat out of a crank-head mother who'd just been cut loose from the loony bin. I was born to a father who'd slip a knife in my throat while I slept if the mood hit him right."

His father, Charlie, an extremely violent man, runs a methodically organized meth ring, with local authorities receiving a regular payout to turn a blind eye to his dealings. His mother, Laura, is a crystal meth user, rarely sober and therefore "absent" for most of his life, thus leaving Jacob to be predominantly raised by his father in an environment fueled by drugs and brutality.

"Outlawing was just a way of earning a buck. By the time I was nine or ten, Daddy had me helping him break down big bags of crystal into grams, never anything smaller, and I got a cut just like most kids got an allowance."

"My mother was the definition of rode hard and put up wet. Her eyes were bulbous, her face sunken in, just a thin layer of skin stretched tight over bones. Hair that was thick and brown in old pictures strung greasy down her neck now."

"She was nothing like those pictures anymore, though she was exactly how I'd always remembered. She was absolutely pitiful."

"She was what she was, an addict, and there was nothing that could be said or done to change her. Death was her only saviour."

Essentially this book is about an 18 year old kid who is trying desperately to follow in his father's footsteps because that is how he's been raised, but as this darkness builds around him and he tries to go through with those expectations, it becomes evident that despite how much he tries, he doesn't carry that same meanness in his blood.

The only beacon comes in the form of Maggie, Jacob's ex-girlfriend and childhood best friend. She's described repeatedly as beautiful and smart – a "good girl" who's destined for a better life. Maggie represents everything Jacob can't have and feels he doesn't deserve – hope, beauty, goodness and honest success.

"God doesn't answer McNeely prayers."

As the situation with his father spirals out of control, Jacob must decide whether he can escape his criminal circumstances by leaving with Maggie, or stay with the violent, crime-ridden legacy he's inherited.

Where All Light Tends To Go is an excellent novel, one of depravity that paints a merciless and joyless portrait of poverty and crime in a drug infused environment. Joy has a real gift for scene-setting and vivid characters that keeps the reader on the edge of their seat until the final page is turned.

I was curious as to Joy's meticulous research and/or knowledge of the meth industry and the horrific impact this drug has on an individual. His telling of the effects was simply superb.

It brought to mind a poem that I had seen on Facebook, written by a young Indian girl who was in jail for drug charges, and was addicted to meth. She wrote this while in jail. She fully grasped the horrors of the drug, as she tells in this simple, yet profound poem. She was released from jail, but, true to her story, the drug owned her. They found her dead not long after, with the needle still in her arm.

I AM METH

*I destroy homes, I tear families apart,
I take your children, and that's just the start.*

*I'm more costly than diamonds, more precious than gold,
The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold.*

*If you need me, remember I'm easily found,
I live all around you - in schools and in town*

*I live with the rich, I live with the poor,
I live down the street, and maybe next door.*

*I'm made in a lab, but not like you think,
I can be made under the kitchen sink.*

*In your child's closet, and even in the woods,
If this scares you to death, well it certainly should.*

*I have many names, but there's one you know best,
I'm sure you've heard of me, my name is crystal meth.*

*My power is awesome, try me you'll see,
But if you do, you may never break free.*

*Just try me once and I might let you go,
But try me twice, and I'll own your soul.*

*When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll lie,
You do what you have to ? just to get high.*

*The crimes you'll commit for my narcotic charms
Will be worth the pleasure you'll feel in your arms.*

*You'll lie to your mother, you'll steal from your dad,
When you see their tears, you should feel sad.*

*But you'll forget your morals and how you were raised,
I'll be your conscience, I'll teach you my ways.*

*I take kids from parents, and parents from kids,
I turn people from God, and separate friends.*

*I'll take everything from you, your looks and your pride,
I'll be with you always ? right by your side.*

*You'll give up everything - your family, your home,
Your friends, your money, then you'll be alone.*

*I'll take and take, till you have nothing more to give,
When I'm finished with you, you'll be lucky to live.*

*If you try me be warned - this is no game,
If given the chance, I'll drive you insane.*

*I'll ravish your body, I'll control your mind,
I'll own you completely, your soul will be mine.*

*The nightmares I'll give you while lying in bed,
The voices you'll hear, from inside your head.*

*The sweats, the shakes, the visions you'll see,
I want you to know, these are all gifts from me.*

*But then it's too late, and you'll know in your heart,
That you are mine, and we shall not part.*

*You'll regret that you tried me, they always do,
But you came to me, not I to you.*

*You knew this would happen, many times you were told,
But you challenged my power, and chose to be bold.*

*You could have said no, and just walked away,
If you could live that day over, now what would you say?*

I'll be your master, you will be my slave,

I'll even go with you, when you go to your grave.

*Now that you have met me, what will you do?
Will you try me or not? It's all up to you.*

*I can bring you more misery than words can tell,
Come take my hand, let me lead you to hell.*

Both this book, and this poem, are deserving of being read.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

"Blood's thicker than water, and I was drowning in it."

Jacob McNeely has been raised in the mountains of North Carolina by his father - a real uhhhhhhh *self-made man*

His momma is still around . . . kinda . . .

Unfortunately, she didn't take the advice of Fat Amy so the majority of her life has been spent scratching at imaginary bugs and other important things like looking for a lightbulb.

Jacob came to terms at an early age that there would be little to no chance of getting out and has always done what his daddy told him - even when those things were of the sort that would nag at his conscience for eternity

When one of his "chores" goes South, Jacob must decide whether he's all in or to take a risk on a life with the girl he's always loved

If given more time to mull it over, this might end up as a 3.5 or even 3 Star book for me. That's why I'm not giving myself more time to think it over. I started reading *Where All Light Tends To Go* with my morning coffee . . . and never put it down. At 260 pages with prose that really sucked me right in, it wasn't hard to finish this in one sitting.

That's not to say the story was perfect. Daddy ran an empire, but we were never really given any details about the operation. Jacob was assigned to supervise some *serious* tasks, but was pretty much incompetent with **zero** common sense. Various scenes were totally far-fetched or unnecessary and I thought 25 of the last

50 pages or so kinda shit the bed. However, it ended up redeeming itself, even if it wasn't with the kind of adrenaline rush of an ending I had been expecting on all along . . .

Plus, I thought it was truly un-put-down-able and as an added bonus had a great freaking soundtrack . . .

For a debut, *Where All Light Tends To Go* was solid and I will definitely pick up whatever Joy comes up with next. Hick Lit is quickly becoming a genre of choice.

Hear that, NetGalley? You shouldn't have denied me this one. Thanks to the library for having my back . . .

Melissa says

The glaring contrast between the harsh ugliness of this storyline and the beauty of the author's writing makes for a **stunning** read. This is my second David Joy and I've gotta say, he *continues* to impress me with his level of grit, compelling characters and poetic words. I've enjoyed his writing so much, this city girl is contemplating a gander at his memoir, *Growing Gills: A Fly Fisherman's Journey*. Say what? Yes . . . that's how great his writing is.

At sixteen, Jacob resigned himself to the fact that he was meant to live the Outlaw life he was born into. He walked out of school, ditched his longtime love, Maggie, and joined his father in the family meth game. Now eighteen, living in a small mountain town, in the heart of the Appalachians, he's living under his father's rule, making one shitty decision after another, dodging "the bulls" and wavering on his place in this world.

Unlike Aiden and Thad, the two down-and-out characters from *The Weight of This World*, I found myself drawn to Jacob immediately. Empathizing with him on some level and maybe even harboring a little bit of a crush? Despite the situation he found himself in, he had heart and the wherewithal to know he wasn't and would never be the cold and calculating man his father was.

My heart was giddy at the thought of him and Maggie making a go of it, again. Ultimately, I think it was the love he had for her and the sacrifices he made that impressed me the most. It proved to me, in some way, that despite everything he'd done, he deserved more than this grim existence. Just like her, I wanted him to snap out of it and realize he could leave it all behind. That he didn't have to accept this fate without a fight. It would just take guts and a little bit of determination, right?

The harsh reality is, life isn't pretty or easy and sometimes our choices have a way of coming back and biting us in the ass. This book is **dark** and even a tad grotesque at times, but somehow, the author still manages to deliver all of this wickedness with a level of . . . *elegance*. Is that even a word I can use to describe grit-lit?

Marilyn C. says

Dark and gritty - A solid, 4 star Appalachian noir read!

Erica says

I was meh on this book, disengaged and disbelieving.

This kid, Jacob, is, essentially, the hooker with a heart of gold character and all his hopes are pinned on a girl, Maggie, whom he's always loved. Only, he's not a hooker, he's the son of the small town's meth king. He thought he had found a way out of his miserable life and he was so close when some new cops, ones not being paid off, show up on the scene and go up against the methy population which, in turn, poses a problem for the cops who are on the pay and this leads to all sorts of trouble and ruins Jacob's chances of escaping forever with Maggie.

Jacob and Maggie are not too different from Todd and Viola from The Chaos Walking series what with their dumb conversations and the One-never-listens-to-the-other schtick but this story is set against the gritty, meth-addled Appalachia backdrop instead of a far distant planet. It doesn't work any better for these two than it did for those two.

The main gist of this entire book is Jacob's inability to get control of his life. He keeps stating he's stuck, he can never leave. But why? Why can't he leave? What's really stopping him from going to a another town and getting a job? It's not like he has stuff he has to take care of at home. He hates his abusive, meth-making dad. He doesn't have any other family (aside from his mother who has no clue she's his mother because she lives on the couch, tweaking her fool head off, day and night) The love of his life is moving away and has asked him to come along so he has an actual out...so WHY is he stuck there, again? I don't know.

Also, why is he so amazingly stupid? He's always 2 steps behind and that's what gets him into trouble over and over and he never learns a damn thing. I get frustrated with characters who create their own hopelessness but don't seem aware enough to understand that they're the ones who have to change their circumstances. These are the characters who do a lot of waiting for things to happen and make a lot of bad choices while they sit there, twiddling their fingers. I just don't have time to wait with them. I'm a more proactive person.

And then it all ended with me rolling my eyes and sighing heavily.
I wasn't really a fan of this story. I give it 1.5 stars and a surly glare.

Lawyer says

Where All Light Tends to Go: Love, Light, and Fading to Black

Where All Light Tends to Go by David Joy was chosen by members of On the Southern Literary Trail as the Post-1980 Group Read for May, 2015. Special thanks to Trail Member Dawn Copley for nominating this work.

David Joy has written a compelling debut novel in Where All Light Tends to Go. A student of Ron Rash, Joy obviously listened closely to his gifted mentor. Daniel Woodrell praises the novel as, "Lyrical, propulsive, dark, and compelling. Joy knows well the grit and gravel of his world, the soul and blemishes of the place." No faint praise from the widely recognized author of "Country Noir."

Where does all light tend to go? Perhaps the answer lies in the Psalms.

Pss.18

- [1] I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.
- [2] The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
- [3] I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
- [4] The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
- [5] The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me...
- [6] In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.
- [7] Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.
- [8] There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.
- [9] He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.
- [10] And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
- [11] He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.
- [12] At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.
- [13] The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.
- [14] Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
- [15] Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
- [16] He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.
- [17] He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.
- [18] They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.
- [19] He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- [20] The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
- [21] For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
- [22] For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.
- [23] I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.
- [24] Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
- [25] With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;
- [26] With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.
- [27] For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.
- [28] For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
- [29] For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.
- [30] As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.
- [31] For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?
- [32] It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.
- [33] He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.
- [34] He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
- [35] Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.
- [36] Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.
- [37] I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.
- [38] I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

[39] For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
[40] Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.
[41] They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
[42] Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
[43] Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.
[44] As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
[45] The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.
[46] The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.
[47] It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.
[48] He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
[49] Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.
[50] Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

Or, perhaps all light just fades to black.

Jacob McNeely has been raised in the hills of Western North Carolina by a Meth kingpin, protected by cops on the take. Charlie McNeely has used his son in the family business since Jacob was a youngster, promising him a payday in the long run. But Charlie keeps the money put away "safe," as he drags Jacob deeper into the dirtier bits of the drug trade. Bits like taking care of snitches who blab to the law not on the family payroll.

Charlie may be a stone killer, but Jacob isn't. Nor can Jacob put aside his mother, turned into a Meth addict by his own father, who has simply called her "the Bitch" so long, it takes a law man to inform the reader she once was called Laura.

David Joy deftly paints Jacob as a young man conscious of living in a world so evil he believes it impossible to escape from it.

Jacob will sacrifice his own happiness by breaking up with his love Maggie to keep her from becoming entangled in the world in which he is trapped. And Jacob will descend into a maelstrom of ever increasing violence ordered by his father.

Joy plots his novel at fever pitch. The ending stuns, startles, and reveals where all light tends to go. Is it in the Psalms, or does it simply fade to black? This is a must read. The answer to where the light tends to go is not an easy one.

David Joy is an author to be watched. Highly recommended, especially to admirers of authors such as Ron Rash and Daniel Woodrell.

Perry says

Heck of a story, told with profundity and clarity, set in a stark, cursed world few see

This novel is especially praiseworthy for a debut, particularly when I compare it to some of the early works of other authors of the Southern lit (noir) ilk, like Daniel Woodrell, whose praise graces this book's cover. I keep wanting to compare this to a Ron Rash short story (like those in the stellar, sulphurous *Chemistry and Other Stories*) expanded and developed further into a rather short novel. By this comparison, I intend high praise.

Written as a first person narrative of Jacob McNeely, apparently 18, around the time of his former classmates' HS graduation. He dropped out of school to help out in the family business, a West Carolina mountain meth mob of which his daddy, Charlie McNeely, is the don. The book revolves primarily around the relationship between Jacob and daddy, their ties to the community (vel non) and particularly to "bulls" (law enforcement officers). The themes include whether one can escape blood and environment ("blood is thicker than water, and I'm drowning in it"), and the irrefutable difference between what's right and what's wrong and how this distinction sometimes gets muddled by a life full of "broken windows."

Jacob's love interest Maggie (childhood sweetheart) and their possibly rekindled romance are a driving force in the story, her being symbolic of "a way out of here." And yet, I never could identify with it enough because, I think, she was not fully developed; thus I never realized their relationship in a way that made me feel despair at the threat of losing it. Perhaps that's what Mr. Joy intended. Ever present was a sense of the emptiness of a life lived with a daddy don and a momma meth head, with a little dark and *addled* spice a la Flannery O'Connor thrown in.

The novel kept me hanging until the end. Mr. Joy employs clear, conversational prose to convey a funereal context. I can't help believe that if he'd had a little more experience under his belt, he might have more fully explored the story of Jacob + Maggie and have hit a home run.

I look forward to reading more from this gifted writer. He can tell a hell of a story, with profundity and clarity, set in a stark and cursed world few see aside from on nightly newscasts or TV news-magazines.

James Thane says

This is a fantastic debut novel, beautifully written with great characters and a wonderful sense of place. Set in the rural area of Cashiers, North Carolina, the protagonist is eighteen-year-old Jacob McNeely, whom we meet one night as he climbs the town's water tower to look down on the high school parking lot as his former classmates leave the building from their graduation ceremony. In particular, Jacob is searching for Maggie, the girl he loves and whose heart he broke two years earlier.

Jacob is not graduating with his class because he left school the first moment he could to join his father in the family meth business. Jacob's father is the kingpin of the local meth industry. He launders his cash through his auto body shop and pays off the cops to look the other way. In truth, Jacob comes from a long line of outlaws and he knew at an early age that he destiny was predetermined. He's been assisting his father for a good many years already, and even if he had higher aspirations, he understands that he hasn't a prayer of achieving them.

Jacob's mother lives alone in a cabin in the woods, surrounded by Jack Pines, having long ago become addicted to her husband's product line. Jacob laments that "I wasn't old enough to remember the day Daddy sent her there. The way he told it, she was stealing crank and spent most of her time climbing around the peter tree. So he sent her to this place. Loved her too much to give her nothing, but giving her anything at all

squared things so he'd never have to love her again."

While Jacob knows he'll never escape from Cashiers, he hopes that Maggie will. She's the brightest and most beautiful girl in town, and Jacob knows that she's one of the few who has a chance to escape, go to college and make a real future for herself. Accordingly, though they had loved each other since they were children, he broke off the relationship two years earlier so that she would not feel trapped, bound to Cashiers through him. He still cares for her very much, though, and when he sees that the future he envisions for her might be threatened, he acts in a way to protect her, irrespective of the consequences for himself.

In the meantime, his relationship with his father becomes increasingly rocky. His father is a strict disciplinarian who expects Jacob to obey his orders without question. Jacob is not cut from the same cloth, however, and when problems arise in the meth business and things get increasingly violent, Jacob will have some hard decisions to make.

As I suggested above, this is a great read, easily on a par with the best of Daniel Woodrell's books, and I promise that anyone who enjoyed *Winter's Bone*, for example, is going to love this one. 4.5 stars for me--my favorite book of the year thus far, and I eagerly await David Joy's next book.
