



Moon Up, Past Full

Eric Shonkwiler , Christina Collins (Illustrator)

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As Faulkner's voice portrayed the South and Breece D'J Pancake's represented Appalachia, Eric Shonkwiler captures the Midwest, with this collection of novellas and short stories that peels back the edges of rural existence to expose the heart of it. Through parental neglect, rebellious sons and daughters, drug-addled war veterans, backwoods zombies, injured firemen, car thieves, witch doctors, and Navajo ghosts, Shonkwiler brings you a disregarded world you can no longer ignore—one thriving with the mundane, the bruised, the unheard. Here is the voice of the rest of us, spoken only the way firsthand experience, rooted deep in overworked soil, can say it.

Moon Up, Past Full Details

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Author : Eric Shonkwiler , Christina Collins (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Moon Up, Past Full for online ebook

Deanna Bihlmayer says

I am not partial to short stories, but this was well worth the read. These stories really make one feel as if he's in the Midwest with these characters, watching them trying to navigate the pitfalls of their choices and lives. I wished that some of the stories ended more definitively, but then in life, stories don't really end, just pause until a new storyteller comes along.

I recommend this book for anyone who appreciates the short story and the Midwest. Truly, well worth the read.

D.A. says

This is a meaty, earthy, sometimes violent collection of short fictions, set in the rural verges and small towns of America's heartland. The strength of these tales is the broad, flat sentences that mirror the landscape: "We laid together on the couch in the living room, covered by a sheet that had ash burns sprinkled all over it." Like Mickey Spillane with a dose of Flannery O'Connor, the prose is deadpan, sliding easily across the moral divide without missing a beat. The pacing is suspenseful, as each detail is unveiled slowly and deliberately:

"He looks both ways down the road, still abandoned, and starts to highfoot it across the cornfield, the broken stover catching and tripping him up every so often. Now he can see it's a woman, wearing one of those sweater-vests. He can see the white of her turtleneck now and her jeans. He yells again, starting to breathe heavy, and waves. She's just standing there, walking a tight circle."

Shonkwiler notices every detail; lets his narration linger over the silences that hang between lovers, friends, neighbors. There's a quiet desparation at times, but the arc of these stories is largely redemptive. A sad gorgeous book that seems lost in its own sorrows, like a solitary ranch hand standing in the juke joint at closing time. Once you pick it up, you'll want to devour every story. Take your time. The pleasure here is in having no particular place to go, and letting Shonkwiler lead you delightfully astray.

Leesa says

LOVED IT. BLURBED IT: "Shonkwiler's stories are pleasantly dusty, country. Full as a tick. Well-written wordy breezes swirling into a blinding windstorm of memorable characters, families, women and men, animals, trucks, guns, bottles of bourbon. This collection is alive and sad and violent, heartbreaking and lonely—steadied by Shonkwiler's strong hand. He has both the guts and extraordinary talent to keep his reader reading."

Linda says

Let us now go slowly insane. All together now. These people have some serious problems, but who doesn't? I think I know some of these people, maybe all of them. Eric Shonkwiler writes in a rich and gritty way, so it does seem as if you know these characters. Some stories are realistic, some border on magic, some are

dystopian. These might be a little hard to read in one sitting, since they are intense. But spread the reading out over a couple of weeks, and preferably not right before you go to bed. The one where the meteor hits and everybody goes crazy...I mean, really crazy...I'm still having nightmares. And the one where the person's nose keeps bleeding...aw, geez.

Osman Welela says

This is a great collection of short stories! Fans of Cormac McCarthy will enjoy it, I think, and everyone else will definitely find a thing or two to love in these worlds. The writing is a bit odd, having no quotes to enclose the dialogues in, but, as the author says, this makes the reader pay more attention to the whole thing. It's got surprising tales and disturbing ones, go check them out!

Leah Angstman says

Purchase at Alternating Current Press: tinyurl.com/p5wlwl9.

I am the editor, so while I am biased, let me tell you why I selected this manuscript. I read through hundreds of manuscripts each year, and few have the startling, surprising, and beautiful prose of Shonkwiler's. His Midwest comes alive. His people hurt. His landscapes and characters are true and flawed and complicated and unlucky. He can write an unbelievable sentence that just makes you stand back and breathe out: "Wow. Just wow."

It ain't no slim pickin's, either. At 250 pages, it contains 2 previously unpublished, full-length novellas alongside 12 other previously published and unpublished stories, and it is fully illustrated in gorgeous ink and watercolor by Christina Collins. Contains 5 Pushcart Prize-, 2 Best of the Net-, and 3 Million Writers Award-nominated stories; a finalist for the Best Small Fictions Prize; a finalist for the Pen 2 Paper Prize; and a finalist and First Place winner for the Luminaire Award for Best Prose, including the highly acclaimed "Rene" and "Chindi." All pieces have been carefully revised and reedited, and the book is one of the best collections we've ever had the pleasure of standing behind, after 22 years of publishing.

Ethan says

Fresh off the heels of his well received novel Above All Men, author Eric Shonkwiler presents a collection of short stories titled Moon Up, Past Full. I was made aware of Shonkwiler by Lori at The Next Best Book Club on GoodReads. The club hosts a monthly author/reader discussion in which several copies of a work are provided to readers and the author joins in the dialogue about that book. It has been a great source of discovery for new books, a great place for intelligent discussion, and an overall melting pot of diverse ideas. As soon as I read the description of Shonkwiler's collection, I knew I wanted to be a part of this discussion.

My favorite story from the collection, Rural Tendencies, chronicles one man's descent into a drug-filled life of crime and lust. I was completely drawn to the tragic way that the main character's one night of snorting lines at a party evolved into cooking meth in his basement and having an affair with a drug dealer's girlfriend. Shonkwiler's unflinching honesty and crisp words gave a depth and reality to this story and really captured the harsh lifestyle of a drug dealer.

Beyond that selection, *Moon Up, Past Full* contains other unique stories and novellas that are all connected by the Midwest setting that Shonkwiler depicts through his powerful prose. His writing has been compared to that of Cormac McCarthy, a comparison that both speaks to his undeniable skill with the written word and one that gives you an idea of the kind of stories that he excels at. Like McCarthy, Shonkwiler eschews the use of quotation marks and keeps his text clear and easy to read. More importantly, he writes stories about everyday people dealing with their own personal crisis. Whether it is a young lady dealing with noises in her head or the more pressing end of times, Shonkwiler masterfully writes stories that jump from the page and are an absolute joy to read.

Denton says

Frank Bill may have said it best when he said that Eric Shonkwiler “has an eye for detail and a lot of heart. His words stay with you.”

I picked up Shonkwiler’s collection of novellas and stories, *Moon Up, Past Full*, when I was in Washington DC in 2017 for AWP. For the rest of the year, the book sat at the top of my to-read pile, but I was having a hard time reading anything. When I finally picked the book up this week, it was like taking a shot of good whiskey—smoother than you could hope for and over quicker than you want it to be.

I admire this book and Shonkwiler's writing so much. His stories are perfectly balanced between character and action. His imagery is great. His language has some beautifully poetic turns but is also perfectly precise. So much happens in each story that even the shorter pieces feel completely developed and novelistic in scope. However, it is in the longer works in this collection where Shonkwiler really shines.

The longest piece in the collection, “GO21,”—an apocalypse-type story that I didn’t want to end—was also one of my favorites. The story works on so many levels. It’s a must read.

Another favorite was the story, “Rene,” originally serialized in three parts online at Fiddleblack. Rene is a young woman on a horse with a sick mother. Like all of Shonkwiler’s stories, the complications keep adding up as the story goes along. Unlike most of the other pieces, Shonkwiler is exploring issues of race and class in this story. I highly recommend you read the story for yourself.

It’s not by any means one of the longest stories in the collection, but “My Wakeup” is probably my absolute favorite of these stories. Like Shonkwiler’s other work, this story is detailed and deceptively simple. It starts off with Geier, an Iraq war vet, on his return home from the base in Kuwait. Once back and unsure of what to do with himself, he hooks up with another former soldier, Jones, and the two take a road trip cross country. Some of the drinking and drugging and whoring might be predicable, but (like all of Shonkwiler’s stories) the feeling behind it all feels tragically sincere which makes it unique. And beautiful. And well worth the read.

Lori says

Read 10/08/15 - 10/15/15

4 Stars - Strongly Recommended for fans of short stories that climb up off the page and play themselves out right there next to you

Pages: 238

Publisher: Alternating Current Press

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Eric Shonkwiler is quickly making his way up my list of all time favorite authors. Jose Saramago, Jules Verne, Cormac McCarthy, Vladimir Nabokov, and David Maine have been holding on to the Top Five spots on that list for a very long time, with Denis Johnson as an extremely close sixth. These guys (yes, I'm fully aware of the fact that they are all guys, thanks) won't be easily displaced. But if Eric keeps writing the way he has been, he's going to give those writers a run for their money.

Last January, if you remember, I had kicked off 2014 by reading Eric's *Above All Men*, and within the first few pages I was already referring to it as my favorite read of the year. I gushed about his incredible control over language and setting. About the subtle tension and intensity of his words. About how he kept me on tenderhooks nearly the entire time.

And for those of you who may have worried about whether or not he'd fall victim to a sophomore slump, Eric's second release, a collection of short stories titled *Moon Up, Past Full*, is just as sparse and beautifully written. Where his debut novel dealt with the onset of a national apocalypse, these stories feature individual apocalypses of the mind.

Now, a few of the stories were already familiar to me. I first read *Frequencies Between* - where a woman suffers from audible hallucinations, not of voice, but of sounds, which grow in intensity as she reaches her destination, like a beacon of bad things to come - on *Go Read Your Lunch*. *Chindi* - a story about a local reservation cop and his troublemaking brother - won the 2015 Luminaire Award for Best Prose. And *Rene* - which is set in the way-backwoods of the midwest, featuring a woman whose nose won't stop bleeding and the trip she and her daughter take to pay a visit to the witch doctor - initially appeared in *Fiddleblack* as a serialized novelette.

Go on ahead and check those stories out. I'll wait here while you do. Take your time.

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See what I mean about apocalypses of the mind? The stories are tender and patient but powerful. They are sneaky and wiley. The characters hurt and ache, but it's below the surface. And they ignore the warning signs until it's too late. They struggle and yet in Eric's hands, they seem so safe.

My favorite stories are the darkest ones. Yeah, yeah. No surprises there, right?!

I adored *For the Man After Me* for its dark nature. There is death but it is not immediate. There is internal struggle but it is born out of the fear of getting caught, not out of the war between what is right and what is wrong.

GO21, by far my favorite, is a zombie story sans the zombies. The tension is on fleek. It is everything you think you'd do and become under threat of an apocalypse when you aren't entirely sure what the apocalypse is. It's about being one of the last men standing, no matter what horrible things you have to do to get there.

And *No Toil, No Tranquility* pangs the heart muscle a bit, unless you have no heart and if that's the case, you

really shouldn't be reading this collection. It's about the choices we make and what any one of us would become if we were haunted by the same shitty ghosts.

Eric continues to astound and amaze me with the way he lifts the Midwest up and off the page. His characters climb right out of his stories and plop down next to you on the couch. They are speaking directly to you. They shrug and hold their palms up. They demand your forgiveness. They play on your humanity. They got a shit deal and they played it the best way they could. They are all running from something. And they are all running towards something else. And in the end, we are left wondering whether the past they are leaving behind would have been better than the future they are barrelling headfirst into.

Eric says

I may be a wee bit partial.

Christine says

I think this is an excellent book of literary short stories.

Vivid characters carefully drawn with just the right touch. The language is outstanding.

I love the voice. It reminds me of Heller's *The Painter* & Coplin's *The Orchardist*.

I think the stories will appeal to a broad audience.

Recommended Read.

Kevin Catalano says

This collection shows Shonkwiler's incredible prowess with plot and prose. Having read his earlier novel, *Above All Men*, I expected to love this collection. Still, the variety of stories -- the narrative twists and nuanced characters -- made each piece unexpected. The novella, *GO2*, was my favorite. I don't want to give anything away about it, other than it's Shonkwiler's version of a zombie story. (Or is it?)

Steph Post says

Gorgeous short fiction collection that takes you down to some gritty places, but then swings you back up high. Shonkwiler, as always, is an author to be reckoned with and *Moon Up, Past Full* is a perfect follow-up to his novel *Above All Men* (highly recommended as well!).

karen says

this has been waiting about three months for me to review it.

which is not the *most* shockingly behind in a review i have ever been, but it's pretty bad.

part of it is that my life is horribly crazytown, part of it is because i'm still figuring out how to handle reviews of short story collections, and part of it is that i have an e-copy of this, so it's not there in the stack of to-be-reviewed books on my windowsill glaring at me every day like some others. (I SEE YOU family unit - and i will get to you!!)

short stories are intimidating to review. the overachiever in me always wants to review each story individually and in detail but the me that is more than 40 reviews behind just wants to mumble-type "this book is good," slap a picture of a puppy on it and then go back to procrastination/panic/hiding from the world in my little cave.

this collection of stories and novellas IS good. and because of that, it deserves a little more than a picture of a dog before i scurry back to cave. i'd already read the author's novel, *Above All Men*, so i knew what to expect in terms of the clarity of his writing and the strength of his imagery, but i think i liked these stories even more than i liked the full-length novel, which is something that nevernever happens.

when i sat down today to try to organize my thoughts to finally write this, i totally got sucked back into the book again and ended up reading several stories over again in their entirety, which is very bad for productivity. i found that many of the stories had stuck with me, and it was a happy journey of "oh yeah THAT one!" and "oh i forgot this one was by this guy!"

there's some minor crossover between the stories, but for the most part they are unconnected. popular themes include family, the interlocking concepts of regret and nostalgia, attempts at returning home or going "back," with the understanding that some things are gone for good. it's mostly written at that intersection where steinbeck meets hemingway that characterizes the best of grit lit - all that quiet brutal humanity populated by the sympathetically downtrodden still tough and ready to fight, but there is a dusting of the supernatural, and it's not *all* tough-guy bravado - shonkwiler is equally skilled at writing in a female narrator's voice, and in writing characters of any gender who are tender and yearning. also, zombies. maybe.

Gripping the Heel

He wanted for once in his life to deserve the way he'd been treated. There's been no rewards for behaving.

a strong open to the collection, documenting the quiet and gnarled failures of a family. like several in the collection, there's an emphasis on the distance a character finds themselves from their past - a strong childhood memory serving as an anchor or a bruise to press against in those moments of self-flagellating sentimentality, a reminder that even the most broken-down, barroom-brawling man has memories of being a little boy and a longing *To roll down a hill, to have a child's inertia.*

the descriptions in this one just freaking *sing* off the page. it's not my favorite in the collection, but that didn't stop me from reading it twice more today.

For the Man After Me

god this is a perfect little story. it's about a man who illegally strips abandoned or crashed vehicles for parts before they get towed away who has a very challenging day at the scene of a car accident.

it's written so vividly - the car, the snow, the attention to details like the tap out necklace on the rearview

mirror and the carhartt jacket - it's crystalline. and when it needs to pull back from the situation and pull a tasteful curtain of vagueness across the action, it does.

also - food-for-thought observations

He wonders how the poles are strung a hundred feet apart, yet people always seem to hit them, never pass on through into the field or to someone's yard, something harmless.

Frequencies Between

with a couple of tweaks in the direction of the genre's typical content and a firm commitment to a paranormal explanation instead of the deliciously ambiguous events in this story here, if shonkwiler ever wanted to go into the urban fantasy market writing powerful female characters who administer justice for crimes against young women everywhere, i would buy those books.

can you see it - sorority girls taking younger underprivileged girls under their wings as little sisters, doing good deeds that usually involve buying them new school clothes or birthday presents but sometimes also includes revenge?

bigger than *buffy*, i'm telling you.

Rural Tendencies

three words: meth love triangle

i adore this story. it's a perfect grit lit/crime fiction mashup which takes its time getting to where it's going, making sure it puts all its ducks in a row so it can sit back and enjoy its giant middle finger of an ending.

a giant thumbs up to that middle finger.

GO21

Look, he said, I'm all for survival. But there's a line between that and being dicks. It's not like this bus is on your property or somethin'. What if this guy's just out for a walk? He comes back, and we took all his food?

this is the first novella in the collection, clocking in at about 50 pages. it covers the paranoia, misinformation, and confusion resulting from the onset of a disease that is characterized by zombie-like behavior and the experiences of a few people waiting it out in the isolated cabin of a survivalist.

things go poorly.

i read pretty widely in this general area, so a lot of it felt familiar, but i definitely enjoyed the creeping-dread tone, and wondering where this was all going to end up, since it's pretty different from the other stories in the collection. although, like anything else, transplant the action to another location, strip it of its parts, and it's a story like any other story - people just struggling to get by.

Nettle Creek Cemetery

There's about an inch between you and hell at any time; do you know that?

that is one of the twenty-two sentences that make up this super-short story. it's kind of jarring/kind of genius

to place this one directly after that long novella, and there's not much more to say.

Last Snow

this is one of the stories written in a woman's voice; the voice of a mother taking her young daughter on a road trip to see snow in a world where snow is so rare, its presence is a tourist destination at a single location with a visitor's center, tickets for sale, and capacity-regulations. it's all a little like

and it is just as profoundly sad and moving. this story fairly gushes with maternal love as more of this family's story and its particular complications are revealed, and the voice is spot-on perfect. i always enjoy when a writer has range, and this is a very strong departure from type.

My Wakeup

The interstate is straight for miles. The land reminds me of driving into Iraq. It doesn't look like it, really, but it's flat and dry and it's not home. There's enough heat in the air, and dust, that the green I know is there in the crags of the drying riverbeds and on the slopes of the broken canyons is yellow. My head does the rest. I've got the windows rolled down because the AC is broke, and at one point, I reach to put my rifle in the window—no rifle. My finger was even checking the safety.

it's fear and loathing with ptsd as two damaged and disconnected soldiers experience difficulties reacclimating to life after service and so go on a cadillac road trip filled with drinking and drugs and fornication with ladies and it is full of memories like this:

A week goes by in a stupor, drunk and high and doing drugs I've never even seen

and

We're doing ninety with my head hanging out of the passenger window, and I'm vomiting in a mist down the side of the car.

but it's not all just brain-scouring partytime, because not even a boatload of drugs can salt the earth of what these men have seen and done, and although it certainly feels like a carnival for much of the story, there's a hangover hovering over it all, waiting to strike.

it is beautifully done.

Come to Fall

this story is only 18 pages long, but it feels much longer. it is among my least favorite in the collection, although i can definitely see other readers liking it more than me.

there's nothing wrong with it - the writing is as good as in any other story in the collection, but it's a quiet one - a trip down shitty memory land as an estranged family of two brothers and their mother reunite to make arrangements for the disposal of the body of the abusive man who hurt them all for far too long.

i am again impressed with shonkwiler's range as a writer, but the story didn't push my personal readerly buttons.

Rene

You two are ripe with ailment.

this is a kind of southern gothic with a western overlay.

see what i mean about range?

i'm not even sure how to describe this one, but i liked it very much. some of it was confusing and i don't know if it was me or the story, but i am a person who can enjoy something without having to fully "get" it. which is good. for my sake. it's another longer one - 27 pages - but it's one i would have read 27 more pages about, especially if those additional pages cleared up the confusion i had. some people will likely find this messy or mishmashy, but i kind of liked its trajectory from hospital to medicine woman, with family seerecrets and social commentary and book burning and its heroine rene who is a log-splitting, horse-riding, calloused, redheaded bookworm who works in the meat trade and must save her mother from her unstoppable nosebleed and figure out how to make ends meet.

it's much better than i am making it sound.

i am not good at reviewing ~~short stories~~.

Black

this one is only 12 sentences and i have not one thing to say about it.

Re-up

I took a seat near the door and nodded at the others sitting across from me, a stringy-blond girl and a couple of guys who looked like they'd be doing meth in an hour.

this is one of the overlap-stories - this one both directly references/presents as an anecdote the entirety of "my wakeup" and also features a drug dealer character named lonnie, presumably the same lonnie who is the jailbird brother of the man in "gripping the heel."

once again, there's that combination of nostalgic childhood ruminations set against a valueless present that permeates so many of these stories, so many of these characters:

...thinking of leaving the town again. Everything good about it was over with, couldn't be had anymore. Memories with friends, some dead, one in prison. Others just gone. Nights running from the cops just to run from them, to give them something to chase. High off our asses, throwing a shovel at the moon.

basically, the replacements should reunite and set this book to music.

Chindi

this was one of the ones i had forgotten, but as soon as i reread the opening lines this morning, i was like "oh yeeeah - this was *good*!"

it's crime fiction, reservation-style. guns, bootlegging, family, lawlessness, etc. short, but densely packed.

No Toil, No Tranquility

another broken man who means well but is inadvertently alienating his family through his emotional clumsiness and the shitty cards life has dealt him, just trying to save his family any way he can.

if i had a heart, it would be dead with sad from this.

IN CONCLUSION:

this is a wonderful collection that it took me way too long to review but it will not take you too long to read and i know you will then do a better job reviewing it than i have here.
