



Since the Layoffs

Iain Levison

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"[A] dark, satirical comedy. . . . Written with the same kind of deadpan humor Levison used so well in his first book."--*USA Today*

"A gleeful satire. . . . It's an amusingly bleak little (im)moral fable."--*Detroit Free Press*

"Exciting, funny, poignant and sociologically important."--*The Chicago Tribune*

"Levison's irony is acute as he caricatures the working world's groundlings."--*The New York Times Book Review*

The work Jake Skowran is offered is a lot less than legal. He's got little choice except to take it. The guys who owned the factory have left town for someplace where there's more sun and cheaper labor. The deserted plant is fenced in and the fence topped with razor wire, as if they'd worried that the locals would steal tractor-building equipment and start making tractors in their basements. Jake's girlfriend has also decamped (along with the vacuum cleaner and the entertainment center).

"She went off with some used car dealer, huh?" his bookie mocks.

"He was a new car dealer," Jake retorts.

Jake's got six months of unemployment left before he's dead broke and the locks get changed. Life has turned into one big downgrade. It has downsized and hardened him. He's up for anything. The economy is pain, lies and silliness, and he is going to carve off a piece of it for himself or die trying.

Iain Levison is the author of *A Working Stiff's Manifesto*, an account of his postcollegiate work experience, consisting of 42 jobs in 10 years. He lives in Philadelphia.

Since the Layoffs Details

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John says

I made the mistake of opening this book on a Friday evening while waiting for someone else to get out of work. I was two hours late and left the party early to go home and finish it. Very funny but never glib.

John says

Jake Skowran (not Skowron, like Moose) lives in a former factory town. The factory closed, and everyone is out of work. Things are miserable, and Jake's seething anger at the situation makes him ripe for the pickings when an unusual job offer comes his way. His transition from unemployment to a pair of jobs (hitman and convenience store clerk) provides a lot of new experience and allows him to see the world a little differently.

Levinson handles Jake's despair and bitterness well; looking at his previous books, it's not surprising that he writes them well. When Jake's experiences start changing him (for worse as well as for better), Levinson also handles that well. The supporting cast is believable and well established. The story was very relate-able. I really got a good sense for what Jake was going through and wanted to keep reading; this book flew by. The ending happened fast, but it was wrapped up well and very enjoyable. And it wasn't what I expected.

I could be talked into 4.5 stars but I am not quite ready to go the full 5.

Lili Aurelie says

Une histoire pas très morale, c'est sûr, mais ne boudons pas notre plaisir : l'auteur réussi à manier humour noir et cynisme, avec en toile de fond une ville et ses habitants à la dérive suite à la fermeture de l'usine qui la faisait vivre.

Jane says

Fun story!

Ieva says

Izv?le manam las?šanas bingo lauci?am "autoram ir t?di pat inici??i k? tev" (turkl?t pat ne IL, bet tieši IeL !) - cit?di man nebija ne jausmas, kas t? ir par gr?matu un ko man no t?s sagaid?t. Kopum? - ?tra las?mviela, p?rpilna ar ironiju un melno humoru. Situ?cijas apraksts par mazpils?tu, kur? sl?dz fabriku un teju visi zaud? darbu ir izdevies ?oti re?listisks. Ta?u galveno varoni gan nek?di nesp?ju uztvert k? re?lu - kaut k? tr?ka, p?r?k vienk?rša bija t? p?reja no parast bezdarbnieka uz algotu slepkavu un atpaka? par parastu darba cilv?ku, man pras?j?s kaut k? vair?k .

Gregheiden says

Very funny. A real page turner.

Dan says

In December of 2001, I was laid off from a job that I had had for 24 years. At the time, I became depressed, but then Al Genie, a professor at Loyola University, discussed books on working and work ethics on the local NPR station. The premise of the book, is that some people will do anything to work, and the hero finds a job with his bookie as a hit man. It is a gruesome book in that respect, but the story is interesting and the book is short.

Both times after I read the book, I felt better. I think that reading the book took me through the anger that one feels on losing a job and the wish to strike out. Thank God for books that let you fantasize as opposed to actually doing what the protagonist decided to do.

David says

This is the second Levison book I've read (this is his first novel). Another thoroughly enjoyable book with some themes that I recognize as ones that will be recurring (in "How to Rob an Armored Car."). These themes are: marginalized characters working crap jobs in dead end towns, just trying to get by, who get enlisted into doing some completely outrageous criminal scheme that winds up being completely sensible within the context of the story. This one is aptly titled. Every action taken by its main character, and all the people who inhabit this story, is propelled by a huge factory downsizing, leading many who were once having comfortable middle class existences to try to make ends meet however they can. In the case of the narrator, the profession he falls into in this economy is as a hired assassin.

It's a hoot. A brief hoot at 177 pages, but a hoot nonetheless. If you take it to jury duty or something, maybe take along another of Levison's books, in case it's a long day and you are spending a lot of time sitting. That way, you won't worry about running out of reading material.

For me, it's on to the next book by my current favorite author. This book is funny in a laugh-out-loud sort of way, absurd without being annoyingly so. It's kind of like Clerks 2 meets Goodfellas (although I have to admit, I've never actually seen Goodfellas), as ultimately our hero just wants to get out of the killing business to open a convenience store.

Without spoiling the ending--let's just say that the tone remains gleeful and fun, making light of the serious business of unemployment. Great fun!

Maarten Mathijssen says

Small but beautiful novel about the economic (and moral) decline of a America. Almost frightening how acceptabel the nihilistic, amoral attitude of the main character is. Great inside in a American culture.

Patrick says

This is a decent book. The story hits home for me because my father is an auto worker. Sometimes i bet he wished he just up and made himself in to a killer for hire. It beats paying to see a shrink.

Devon says

An enjoyable one-day read. I'm not quite sure why I liked the book so much, and I didn't like it as much as *Working Stiff's Manifesto* but it was still very good.

El?na Treikule says

Viena no retaj?m gr?mat?m, kas lika man smieties l?dz asar?m, ?paši, šis fragments: "Man b?s š? lente j?sadedzina, bet Kena smiekli ir gandr?z lip?gi, j?tu, ka s?ku ?i?in?t, atst?stot, k? dr?zos paka? pilotam ar ?ur?s izmirkušu, smilt?m piebirušu šauteni rok?, viss velti, un k? es p?c tam plunkš?in?jos vi?am paka? pa vi?iem, t?lodams aligatoru."

Andrea says

Nice little satire on the Blue Collar Condition. Light and (sporadically) very funny, but still raises some interesting questions.

Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: Jake Skowran

RATING: 3.5

WHY: Jake Skowran has been having a hard time since being laid off from his job as a factory loading dock supervisor. He's pretty much lost everything, including his girlfriend, and is in debt to a local bookie named Ken Gardocki for almost \$5000. Gardocki offers Jake the opportunity to erase the debt plus make a little extra cash if Jake kills Gardocki's wife. Jake suffers no moral pangs from doing the deed and ends up becoming Gardocki's private hit man. I almost stopped reading near the beginning but am glad I stayed with it - it's nicely twisted with a bit of a surprising ending.

Marcis Erdeli says

Gr?matas autors ir Ieins Levisons. Darba nosaukums ir "Kopš t? laika". Rom?ns norisin?s k?d? no ASV mazpils?t?m, kad piepeši to piemekl? ekonomiska kr?ze - pils?tu pamet uz??mums, kas bija vien?gais mazpils?t?, kas nodrošin?ja cilv?kus ar darbu. Izv?l?jos šo gr?matu, jo t?da tipa rom?nu visp?r nebiju las?jis, rom?ns ir ?oti aizraujošs, neparedzams k? ar? dramatisks un tra?isks, kas spilgti apraksta mazpils?tas dz?vi p?c ražotnes sl?gšanas.

Rom?na galvenais t?ls ir Džeiks Skovrans. Kura dz?ve dzimtaj? pils?ta bija ide?la - vi?am bija darbs un draudzene ar kuru vi?š dz?voja kop?. Bet vien?g? ražotne tika p?rcelta uz citu pils?tu, jo valst? s?k? ekonomisk? kr?ze, un fabrikai nebija vairs izdev?gi uztur?ties mazaj? pils?t?. Liel?k? da?a mazpils?tnieku bija bezdarbnieku, kura starp? bez darba palikušais Džeiks - god?gs, nikns un bezizej? iedz?ts mazais cilv?ks. Rezult? Džeiks uz??m?s darbu, ko nek?di nevar nosaukt par likum?gu. Vi?š k??st par algotu slepkavu. Rom?ns ir veidots klasisk? stil?, jo galvenais varonis p?rdz?vo par savu izv?l?to profesiju un par nogalin?tiem cilv?kiem, bet vi?š vienm?r sevi mierina, ka šis ir vien?gais veids k? nopein?t iztiku šaj? pils?t?.

Es ieteiktu izlas?t šo gr?matu visiem, kam pat?k rom?ns ar dramatiskiem un neparedzamiem notikumiem. Šis rom?ns tieš?m ir ?oti labs ,kas liek aizraut?gi dz?vot l?dzi notiekošajam, saj?smina ar neuzb?z?go humoru, kas caurstr?vo šo darbu.
