



## Stranger Will

*Caleb J. Ross*

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William Lawson has two months to start believing in the world again.

William works as a human remains removal specialist, removing stains left by the dead. Whether by a bloody crime scene or a quiet domestic death, William is reminded each day of the frailty of human life. As his fiancée, Julie, nears term with their first child William becomes increasingly desperate for a way to overcome his belief that to birth is to kill.

But Mrs. Rose, an elementary school principal and messenger pigeon hobbyist, nurtures William's depressive outlook and claims to have a way to prove that William's hesitancy to accept fatherhood is not only natural but necessary.

## **Stranger Will Details**

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Author : Caleb J. Ross

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## From Reader Review Stranger Will for online ebook

### Gordon says

In this story, a cult of aspiring "strangers" work shifts dressed as bums on park benches adjacent to a school playground as part of their indoctrination, while the specially-chosen children in their eyeline learn life lessons of their own from their shared leader, Mrs. Rose. She's a charismatic Tyler Durden type (both mentor and antagonist) with utopian dreams but dystopian methods who guides our William through the not-so-traumatic experience of losing his unborn child.

That William never wanted to bring a child into this awful world to begin with — even in his fiancée's last trimester — will make most readers squirm. The point is repeatedly driven home as Will derives much of his outlook from his experiences as a crime-scene cleaner, but these are also what lends the novel its unique quality: the more flawed the character, the greater the possible arc for redemption. We are so repulsed by his refusal to praise the miracle of Life, until we meet other kindred spirits who put his own beliefs in perspective and challenge him to embrace greater ideals. At this point Will becomes more identifiable and sympathetic as he befriends a child at the park who sparks the conflict within him.

While the themes and literary devices employed in the book are reminiscent of Chuck Palahniuk's early work (it's also the May selection for discussion at Chuck's site's book club), the prose stylings are pure Ross. Dark, disturbing imagery combined with great sensory detail and a grotesque wink now and then. We smell the toxic chemicals of his trade that infuse Will's entire existence, from wardrobe to vehicle to house. His infected dog bite that festers throughout the story has us scratching at our own arm. He does a masterful job of putting the reader in Will's head, especially given that the story is written in third-person (a fact I had to verify just now, so close is the point of view to the protag). This is not a beach read; bring it to the doctor's office or stash it wherever you hide your smokes from your old lady. Discuss it with your friends via carrier pigeon.

As for criticisms, Otherworld Publications is a young press, evident in some editorial errors like typos and such, and hopefully they'll correct these in future editions. Also, sometimes the cult ideologies that pervade the narrative seem to be in direct opposition to one another, though I think this is probably true to the spirit of those who subscribe to such belief systems, and having that debate play out actually helps us see the conflicts more clearly.

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### s.d. says

Dark, dark, dark. And beautiful.

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### Frank says

STRANGER WILL by Caleb J. Ross is art through prose. Every line is finely crafted. Each sentence suitable for quoting. The story itself is brilliant and unique. I have given high praise to earlier short story collections from Caleb J. Ross and his first full length novel has me absolutely enamored with the writer.

Reading **STRANGER WILL** could take an iron constitution if you're a parent. In typical Ross style he claws with rusty nails at the wonders of parenthood and finds that microscopic shred of nasty little thoughts that get buried deep within your being. That is when he really goes to town and incubates those dirty little ideas and culls a vibrant petri dish of twisted emotions. You don't just read a Caleb J. Ross story, you evolve through it.

**STRANGER WILL** also serves as a philosophical work. The arguments all revolve around the idea of perfection. Those ideas are argued brilliantly from all sides. It's truly amazing when all those arguments are coming from the one voice of the writer. I often found myself drawing parallels from this book to the classic Philosophical tome, **ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE**. That sentiment alone could be the biggest compliment I could pay this book.

This is without a doubt a 5 star read. I know I will be left haunted by it for quite some time. This is the type of story that should one day be studied in college literature and/or philosophy classes. It is a marvel to read and I can not place enough emphasis on the need for anyone who breathes to read this.

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### **Bibliophile says**

This dark story about an unwilling soon-to-be-father starts off promisingly. Will, a pessimistic crime-scene cleaner, is trying to convince his very pregnant girlfriend to give their baby up for adoption. The world being evil and Will being mentally unstable, this makes perfect sense for him, though not so much for Julie, the long-suffering girlfriend. I would have happily read a novel about a couple coming to terms with becoming parents. What happens if one parent doesn't want the kid? How does it affect the relationship? There's an interesting novel right there. Unfortunately for me, Ross doesn't explore these issues. Very little backstory is given, and the characters exist in a vacuum with no relatives, friends or co-workers around to react to the escalating madness (well, there's hapless Philip but he doesn't leave an impression). The relationship between Will and Julie is baffling. There are no clues as to how they ended up in this balance of terror. Julie throws the occasional punch, but why she doesn't pack her stuff and run like hell is a mystery.

Ok, so this isn't supposed to be kitchen-sink realism. But it's not a philosophical treatise either. Will is caught up in a sinister plan orchestrated by an evil elementary school principal, and lots of comments about the state of the world and the ethics of procreating are dropped, but there is nowhere for them to land. Instead, there is gore and horror, which could have been great, but the macabre aspects just seem to be there for shock value.

A very odd mix of ingredients, this one.

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### **Growing Up says**

If I could use just a few words to attempt to describe **Stranger Will**, I would choose:

- UNIQUE
- DARK
- PHILOSOPHICAL
- A-MUST-READ

Stranger Will was truly one of the best books I have read, in quite some time. I don't re-read books very often but this is one book in which I plan to do just that. Why? Because there are SO many layers contained within this story, so many meanings, and so many things to think more about. A second read, would be an opportunity to pull back some additional layers... layers you can't help but to have missed the first read through and even then... I think it is quite likely that you would still not reach the ultimate core of Stranger Will.

The author Caleb J. Ross, is definitely unique with his style, yet at the same time, his writing reminds me of other great authors such as:

- Chuck Palahniuk (author of Fight Club, Survivor, and Choke)
- Augusten Burroughs (author of Running With Scissors, Possible Side Effects, and Magical Thinking)
- George Orwell (author of Animal Farm and 1984)

Caleb J. Ross has a way of telling an edgy, odd story, with a serious dark side. He creates and brings to life, characters who you'd be afraid to know.

Stranger Will makes you think about those frustrating types of questions, those questions that don't seem to have the black and white answers you so desperately crave for them to have.

The main character William, is an insecure, depressed and cynical character, whose job as a human remains removal specialist has contributed to his lack of enthusiasm he is exhibiting for his unborn child. According to William...

He cleans the dead from the world and what's one more child? Just another body that someone will one day have to clean from the road.

and

“Just a parasite, Julie,” he takes a sip of coffee, cold but he keeps his face straight. “Tapeworms, children, we could all use fewer of them.”

His fiancée Julie, seems to deal with William's resistance to their fetus, which is already very well-established within her, by continuing to cross-stitch, shop for baby clothes, pick out names (one for a boy, one for a girl), sing lullabies and stay calm. Julie clearly feels she is already a mother. William on the other hand, continues to search for any solution in which they will not be the ones expected to give this child what little he believes that they can offer it. Those that feel desperate for solutions, often come to their solutions in dangerous and immoral ways.

There were so many things that intrigued me about this novel, including...

- William's employment as a human remains removal specialist. His job is to remove the 'stains' that human lives leave behind.
- The personality contrast between William and his co-worker, Philip. “Philip believes people deserve chances. William believes that people are the exact reason chances don't work.” The dynamic between the two is riveting.
- Mrs. Rose, the elementary school principal and the bizarre lessons she is teaching to not only her students but to many adults as well, including William. Even more astounding, is her philosophy behind these lessons. “Mrs. Rose has taught William many things, one of which is that the world is not worth fighting against. The world knows what it is doing.” and “Mrs. Rose taught William that children are a second chance

and that second chances are exactly what keep us from believing that we need only one.”

- Messenger pigeons and messages that are intercepted and how they can form their own story.

- The different meaning, purpose and value that the individual characters have for life and where that ultimately brings each of them in the end.

- The ability and need that some have to control and what that means. How is that accomplished? What is lost by those who are controlled? What may be gained and what may be lost by a group that is under a method of organized control? What is lost by the one doing the controlling?

If you are one who likes to ponder the meaning behind things – you will enjoy this book.

If you like dark, twisted, bizarre and sick characters – you will enjoy this book.

If you enjoy the writing style of Chuck Palahniuk, Augusten Burroughs or George Orwell – you will enjoy this book.

If you like a book that makes you think and then makes you think again – you will love this book.

I highly recommend *Stranger Will* to all adult readers.

I am very much looking forward to following Caleb J. Ross's writing career, for he is a noteworthy, significant and truly brilliant writer of our times.

### Some of My Favourite Quotes

William admires her will power, though he could do without her drive to use it against him.

When two strangers meet in the woods, they don't pass by with a nod. They don't pretend something greater lies just ahead. They smile at company and make room for a few words.

A body, a simple lump of blue skin, black hair, and features, sits molded to the corner. Not a stain, not a mess, but a real human being. Her eyes roll toward the light. In a final stretch for good news, William turns to Philip and shrugs. “At least most of her blood is still in her body.”

I've seen the desert our world has become, shredded with bullet holes in apartment buildings where nothing but filth exists. I've cleaned it from walls with a toothbrush stolen from the deceased's bathroom. I've believed in a world with good intentions for too long.

“She also told William that people who use the word fascinating, usually aren't.”

“Keep an animal locked up with nothing to do and eventually it will realize it is imprisoned.”

Though he's known for days that these games teach survival, he sees now that these skills are not the school's primary motive. Where once he saw a small tiff, children being as children will be, he sees now a gang initiation, or extermination of the weak, not for survival but to prove dedication. Where once a group of children might play rhyming games, clapping hands, smiles and chants, they now share blood via severed fingers and cut palms.

“What, I ask you, is less pleasurable to endure than permanence?”

“It might be years from now that these kids look back and realize that they’ve been controlled their entire lives, but it will happen. They might hate me, you, and all the others, but they will understand control — they will realize their life. It might take therapy, it might happen behind a giant oak desk in a corner office, but it will hit them, and they will have an entire childhood of proof.”

We live above defeated generations and search for all the ideas they must have missed.

William looks again, before the sun disappears, across his home, his life with Julie, and fits everything into graves.

She had been enduring his rants for months, staying strong to her familial ideal, and here was the end to what he had wanted all along: his weak fiancée fighting up hills of dirt dug in search of her child.

...he has the power to steer outcome. The trick is to keep anyone else from believing it.

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If you have enjoyed my review of **STRANGER WILL**, please visit my blog:  
<http://growinguplittle.wordpress.com/>

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### **Nicholas Karpuk says**

Though it doesn't appear promoted as such, to me *Stranger Will* is the most upsetting sort of horror story. The monster is a school principal with a notion of learning that owes a lot to eugenics and a really intense sort of Darwinism.

I'm not sure I've ever encountered a protagonist as disturbingly pessimistic as William. His bleak perspective pervades the very fiber of the story. This book presents a worldview where children are a necessary casualty in the disturbing games of adults. If you have an aversions to the deaths of children or infants, you should probably stay the hell away from this book.

It's fitting that I read this book in tandem with Kafka, because it possess some of the same surrealist traits. All the actions are clear, I was never at a loss as to what was happening, but character motivations were bizarre and at times barely relatable, which just made it more disturbing. Most people do not pull out a gun when they're having difficulty driving their car. Most people do not set a pigeon on fire and let it run around the room on flames. Most people do not coat a tree in dangerous chemicals to teach children lessons.

It's a beautifully written book, and I now feel slightly traumatized.

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## **Beth says**

Stranger Will grabbed my attention because it seemed like quite a different take on literary fiction than I typically read. After reading the cover blurb I remember thinking...carrier pigeons? Joining what exactly? Why would it be hard to leave the group?

Author Caleb Ross engagingly and consistently uses rich descriptive language throughout the novel..."William saunters through the mudroom door, the engine of his bioremediation cleaning van still ticking in the driveway. He flicks a spent cigarette filter deep into the weeds overtaking the house's north wall. Seen through romantic eyes the abode could be a cottage, but William suffers from universal practicality..."

The novel is centered around provocative social issues such as societal and personal pressures couples feel to reproduce and have children of their own, abortion, and the idea of a society of "perfect human beings." "William continued, however, using magazine articles, newspaper headlines, tabloid clippings, medical journals, and bar graphs all supporting his theories regarding the eminent turmoil associated with 'bringing a child to term in a world like ours.'"

Main characters in Stranger Will were chock full of human character traits --

William: Serious, depressed, mundane husband with emotional baggage from his own childhood, employed as a stain removal specialist, self-designated sleuth with stolen paper messages.

Julie: Quietly resilient wife, former waitress, chock full of maternal instinct, somewhat lazy.

Mrs. Rose: Elementary school principal, keeper of messenger pigeons, ambitious, demanding, opinionated, and controlling "adoption" advocate.

Frank - Fellow stranger - "It sounds like a title the way he says it: Stranger -- with a veiled mysticism. It comes out as a tactile breath, heavy, built with smoke."

In actuality, this book hooked me from the beginning and absolutely held my attention. I loved the quirkiness and excellent writing. This book will appeal to readers who like unpredictable books, psychological/horror, or odd characters (by "odd" I mean Geek Love by Katherine Dunn).

Teasers:

For a second William hears footsteps decrescendo, but they stop. Then, breaking the sky, the raccoon soars back over the fence and hits William on the cheek before falling into the stained grass. He tastes decay.

The bell rings and the children infiltrate the playground like maximum coverage is an inborn reaction. They cover sand pits and the soccer field, swings and the concrete basketball court in three frames of an instructional slideshow: Empty. Full. Organized.

Paul, the tapeworm.

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## **Simon West-Bulford says**

I already had a sense of apprehension when I bought this book. I know Caleb, you see. I've read a fair amount of his work and one thing I know: his characters give me the willies. So having read the opener a

little while back, I had a pretty good idea what I was getting into.

Stranger Will doesn't disappoint. It delivers a story which stirs up subject matter that's thought provoking and uncomfortable. William, the central character is - as the title suggests - a strange fellow (though the reason for the title is even stranger), and I often found myself bemused by his traits. Despite his pessimistic view on life, he has a curious sense of humour (if not a bit inappropriate) which made for an interesting personality. But the most beautiful and tragic (tragic because it comes too late) part of the story is his dawning realization in the latter part of the book that he has a lot more to understand about himself and what he actually, deep down, really believes.

Will isn't the only trouble character in the book. His closest friend has issues, but the real star of the book for me (because she is so sinister) is the woman that takes him under her wing. But it's more like the win of a vulture than a hen.

Yes. A fascinating story with unusual characters and plot turns that I just didn't expect.

A satisfying read with a satisfying ending.

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### **Abigail says**

THIS BOOK IS OMG awesome!

ANYWAY... WARNING, I use the F-word four times (which I thought I was restraining myself) and ASS twice.. but I don't think one of them counts, and a couple of the FUCKS were wonderful alterations according to my friends.. so I am down with it! CARRY ON!

F is for a frightening experience (and the F-word)

*This review rated M for mature as in Facebook said I swear more than 89% of all my friends. I am making sure I live up to their assessment in this review, and I promise, like Catch-22, it needs to be in here. I am still going "Whiskey Tango Foxtrot what did I just finish reading? WAIT not reading EXPERIENCING?!" Now, I am going to do something different, I am going to rate it first...*

Five hundred million Bottles of Awesomesauce - there is nothing more, not even bacon at this point

**If language offends you ... I really wanted to apologize ahead of time but I can't! I tried to write this straight, but I can't! I am still dealing with dropped jaw syndrome! So...\*shrugging shoulders\* this book would probably not be something you could handle if the occasional fuck bothered you anyway. It takes balls to take this book on! And I know a lot of you have them, so strap them on ladies and hitch them up, gentlemen and take it on, you will NOT be disappointed. Do not eat before you read, hug your children and be happy with your decision to breed and enter a world that extrapolates to the extreme 'WHAT IF' and, what the fuck! and most importantly? Be careful what you wish for,**

## **sometimes someone really can grant your wishes, even if you didn't mean it!**

Ever read one of those books that sticks to you brain pan like duct tape on a shaved cat's ass.. oh wait that may not mean something to all of you ummm OK that sticks like extra strength duct tape, let's leave it at that! It is the foundation for a myriad of messed up bad dreams and unsettled sleep for the last week. I am deeply and quite deliciously disturbed by this. It has darkness in it, it oozes and gushes epically awesome frightening darkness. All manner of messed up people live in this town where our protagonist Will now lives. And he is in charge of cleaning up behind their worthless lives.

He has a f-ed up but necessary job, he is a human remains removal expert. Car accidents, decomposing bodies stuck to their E-Z chairs... its.. fragrant and ripe with festive insanity. But the bodies are not there just what is left behind. We all wonder what kind of mark we will make in this world and I do not think any of you imagine it will be the puddle of decomp jelly where your fat ass fell asleep watching Jeopardy and stuffing Ho-hos in your gullet. Or spread across the scene that can be hosed away on the interstate. Give up your dreams and forget about clean underwear because it won't matter at this point.

**NOTHING** I have read can compare to this except maybe the *Story of the Eye* by Georges Bataille. Georges may have a 21th century brainchild in Caleb J. Ross and Georges is called the "**metaphysician of evil, specializing in blasphemy, profanation, and horror.**"

Throughout all of this Will is dealing with a pregnant fiance whom he is trying to convince to be rid of the child of before term or if at term to give up. It is full deep imbibing metaphors to immerse your psyche in. It has dark, cruel comedy, he is pretty much a top-notch prick to his fiance and she's obsessed with the belief everything he does and comes in contact with is a health risk to the unborn child. The cleaning supplies he uses coats his clothes, the cigarettes he chain smokes, now outside for her. Well for him, because he does not want to deal with her complaining. I haven't read a book like this, ever!

Yet, just when I hate this guy, just when I start climbing on my fancy feminist fuck-off wagon? He does something showing heart. He feels bad.. he doesn't talk about what he has to do or what his cleanup will be. He convinces himself it is because he doesn't want to deal with her wrath but there is a part of him that is soft enough to remember why they are together. At least that is my warm fuzzy place I have to think about so when he lights a bird on fire and I am right back on the feminist fuck-off wagon I do not pull both guns.

My mouth is still hanging open when I think back on what I read. There is one scene that will forever be burnt into my soul, wait a lot more than one..but the first really horrific scene is a house which has a perfectly maintained lawn in a neighborhood of perfectly maintained lawns and houses, but this house? It is falling to pieces like a forgotten and neglected elderly family member. There were so many symbols seeping from pipes and filling up the basement. Melville would have had a field day with the symbolic iconography in just the kitchen alone. I.. I... I want to tell you so much but I am afraid if I do you would miss out on the

shock, which like my swear words is necessary Oh Em Gee try it for yourself, seriously! \*mouth hangs open, head shakes, looks at the cat and whispers..." Seriously Asrielle, maybe I better take the squirrel in residence some folks may come after me but then again some folks may be sending me pounds and pounds of bacon!"

Now, I have to leave you here. I probably could go on another 1000 words because I have not even gone back over in my brain what happens a bit before you hit the halfway mark, or the playing catch with one of the short-bus kids and a decomposing racoon. (do not even go there, there is no way I can be politically correct while trying to explain this. Plus, the short-bus kid? He captures the heart of Will along with me!) Just trust me. Oh and I did not mention the twisted idea of a fairy godmother who leads all this merry mayhem. I would choose her as a fairy godmother mind you she is more like Satan's spawn of a godmother!

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*I received this book as part of a Novel Publicity Tour for a fair and honest review. I do not think it gets more honest than this... I then went and bought it for five of my friends and demanded under pain of death to read or I would send the ninja squirrel assassin, Fred, to their house..*

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### **Glenda says**

When my book club picks a book, it's because it's a really great book and we think all of the club will all enjoy reading a discussing it. Never and I do mean Never do we select a book to dissect.

So my guess is this will be one that will be a favorite!

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### **Paul Eckert says**

William Lowson is about to be a father, and that scares the crap out of him. Most fathers-to-be would be worried about how they could potentially screw up their child after it's born. But William is sure his child is already a goner, what with all the hazardous chemicals that cling to him from his work, of which his wife inhales the second-hand fumes. And besides, a baby will eventually be just another stain for someone to clean up, so could it really be worth it?

His elderly friend, Mrs. Rose, shares his concern. As principal of an elementary school, she sees what becomes of children that get left behind. But she is also the ringleader of a group that sends correspondence via messenger pigeon. William shoots these pigeons out of the sky for fun and collects their messages on his wall. But what do they mean? What is really going on in the town of Brackenwood? And what does Mrs. Rose want for the children of their town?

I'll warn you up front, this story is dark. If you want a story with heroes and villains and spoonfed morality tales, go read something else. *Stranger Will* combines nihilism, existentialism, and cynicism, guided by a

masterful use of dark wit, to produce the most chilling story of child raising and social engineering that I've probably ever read. Though the cast of *SW* is largely unsympathetic on the surface, they gain our sympathy by our realization that they are each an inescapable facet of ourselves, especially the parts that we hide from everyone else. In that way *Stranger Will* is a mirror, and in the reflection we see every hideous imperfection.

However, this is not some goth-boy polemic about depression and anarchy. Instead, it redefines hope and redemption into more realistic, bite-sized chunks. These characters may never find redemption, but in some way, they will be redeemed. The hope they cling to is not the kind we would want for ourselves, but it is what is left, and there is a possibility, no matter how bleak, for something good to happen.

William is a great character to follow through the story, especially since his occupation provides a nice 'reference point' for the story. His cynicism is contrasted by the optimism of his co-worker, Phillip, a man who cleans the same stains, who suffers his own maladies, yet still manages to assume the best in humanity. Throughout the story they play off each other quite well, and the scenes with them are some of the best examples of how Ross can really strike a chord with the reader in subtle, unexpected ways.

If there was anything this book lacked, it was page numbers. It was as if someone knew how I obsess over page numbers, every night checking to see how many left until the end of the book, and decided to mess with my head.

Missing page numbers aside, I highly recommend this book. There is a tone to Ross's work that makes the experience real, and his surreal towns seem all too possible, which is what good literature should do.

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### **Danielle says**

well this was an unexpected hit with me.! i follow Caleb on YouTube, and 2 months ago he gave away copies of his book for review, and i received a copy! GO ME!!

i read this book, and im not gonna lie, i had mixed feelings the whole book. I guess i feel like the lead character suffered from a long undiagnosed mental illness and needed help, before the murders, before the messages, hell before he got married.

i also understand that im probably one of the few people that will feel that way.

i hated the wife, loved the friend, regretted the lead, but most of all i liked the book.

I think this book was successful for many reasons but the most important is:

1. i want to read more of Caleb's books.

then END!

Video Review.....aaah i think so

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## **Richard Thomas says**

The authority that Caleb Ross brings to this story is unsettling. A haunting and touching story. I've never read anything by Caleb that I didn't like, and this book is some of his best work to date.

Merged review:

Caleb Ross writes lyrical prose that pulls you into the politics and morality of this story, *Stranger Will*. For most of us, children are the future, they represent hope and dreams. But in this novel they represent the fated, the already lost. Conspiracies only seem paranoid and insane if they have no base in reality. One of the most compelling images that has stuck with me in this novel, for years now, is the carrier pigeon, message tied to its tiny clawed foot, shot from the sky. The note stuck up on a wall, strings stretching from one place to another, one person to another, tying together layers of deceit, love, and failure. This is a novel you won't want to put down, and will compel you to check out more work by Caleb Ross. Keep a candle lit to keep away the stench, a light on to force away the dark forces, and a prayer in your heart that none of this comes anywhere near you. Or your children.

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## **Nai says**

Welcome to the Perfect Edge Trifecta blog tour with Novel Publicity. I read the first book in our tour the day after the lovely Emlyn Chand emailed me my complimentary copy.

Then life got crazy.

Then Easter weekend got even more busy, and what should have been a four-day holiday (during which I thought I'd get 4 days to write. HAH.) turned into a different kind of lovely weekend.

One AWAY from the inter-nest. (Yup, gonna leave that title for the internet in there. It'll link back to the book.)

Just you wait

There were cats, and various amusing videos and moments between cousins, aunts, uncles and families. I miss the farm, and I miss the quiet perfection that exists outside the south-facing window no matter what the season.

I like wordplay, and thus, the title of our first book. You may see me wander around this review a lot as I'm just sitting down for the first time at my computer in a few days.

It (the inter-nest) is shiny and distracting. So is the new car I'm driving - a large part of the legitimate reason this review is late.

Plus, as I do with most reviews, I jump back and forth between the book, the highlights I've made and various pictures that come to mind. I think very visually. I can imagine rooms in sort of the same way Ahbed imagines rooms on *Community*. *Stranger Will* is written in such a way that an entire universe is created, and all the rooms and settings magically unfold with each word.

Part of the reason I loved this book was the visual nature of the writing. Even when Ross describes something totally metaphysical, like the concept of perfection, the prose is somehow stunningly descriptive. That, and it was something totally different and unexpected from what I thought it would be.

He agrees that a blessing is a fair request considering the hostile nature of a life—where birth and death are the only guarantees. Faith embodies a certain level of helplessness and what if not helpless is he? He accepts that a blessing might be appropriate—he's extinguished every other possibility for Julie's conversion. She is a mother already, happily stitching plans into white fabric so that they can be hung, adored, and regarded as the end result of love.

Caleb J. Ross (2012-12-19T00:00:00+00:00). *Stranger Will* (Kindle Locations 120-123).

Perfect Edge Books. Kindle Edition.

William's inner voice is well, very real. It is what we imagine to be strange, but one day figure out that all people have the same hopes and fears at some baser levels. Note that choice in word, it's intentional. Caleb J. Ross' treatment of language is masterful, and sublime. I'm trying (to expand my language ideas), but if I'm failing, please let me know.

The subject matter is not easy. While exact situations were nothing like my own experiences, they did evoke similar emotions to my own feelings of motherhood, fatherhood, life and all the horrible things that can happen to people. They also made me think about all the polar opposites of those. Rather than be consumed by one train of thought, I was introduced to very real characters, and a wonderful story line that allowed for a conversation to take place in my own head about much more difficult concepts and constructs.

There's a very real plotted story and a beautifully nested over arcing philosophical discussion evoked within these pages. It reminded me so much of Phil Jourdan and Praise of Motherhood, I had to follow-up. I knew it wouldn't be a difficult read, but I also had a feeling it might be worth it.

Perfect Edge intrigued me. They're a small publishing house who, in their own words, are

....seek[sic] books that take on the crippling fear of other people, the question of what's correct and normal, of how life works, of what art is.

Our authors disagree with each other; their styles vary as widely as their concerns. What matters is the will to create books that won't be easy to assimilate. We take risks, not for the sake of risk-taking, but for the things that might come out of it.

I like it. In fact, I've become quite enamoured with their entire site, and put their other books on my GoodReads want to read shelf. I have read other Phil Jourdan books, and when I noticed him on the site with the other authors in this tour, I knew I had to have a copy of everything written by every other author. (I have big dreams I know, and probably an addiction to literature.)

The day the email came, I rushed to open *Stranger Will*. Somehow I knew it would be the book I wanted to read even though I couldn't quite remember what exactly it was about.

I knew I didn't want just another mystery, or something 'easy' to read. Once again, in book land, I always get what I want. Or I have enough choices to find something close.

I always get what I want in my star trek dreams tooo.

Thank you Caleb Ross, your book was exactly what I was looking for. Everyone else - go look him up then read everything you can find. Follow him everywhere, become his fan and help him do what he was born to do. *Stranger Will* is worth it.

About the Book - About the Author - Prizes!!!

*Welcome to Novel Publicity's first ever publishing house blog tour. Join us as three new titles from Perfect Edge--we're calling them the Perfect Edge Trifecta--tour the blogosphere in a way that just can't be ignored. And, hey, we've got prizes!*

**About the book:** The child he loves. The idea of a child, he's beginning to understand, is where everything will go wrong.

William works as a human remains removal specialist, removing stains left by the dead. Whether by a bloody crime scene or a quiet domestic death, William is reminded each day of the frailty of human life. As his fiancée, Julie, nears term with their first child William becomes increasingly desperate for a way to overcome his belief that to birth is to kill. But Mrs. Rose, an elementary school principal and messenger pigeon hobbyist, nurtures William's depressive outlook and claims to have a way to prove that William's hesitancy to accept fatherhood is not only natural but necessary.

In this novel of impending fatherhood, an idealistic teacher recruits a pliant protégé to join her group of Strangers – a devout collection of kindred minds who have dedicated their lives to cultivating a unique idea of perfection.

But joining is easier than leaving.

*Stranger Will* explores the human urge to reproduce via one man's struggle to understand his role as a father. As Rob Roberge, author of *More than They Could Chew* and *Working Backwards from the Worst Moment of My Life*, says "This is an original—unlike anything you've ever read before."

Pick up your copy of this Literary/ Psychological/ Horror through Amazon US, Amazon UK, or Barnes & Noble.

[youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMWznU...>]

There are other people who should read this book, or at least read about the author, or check out the website - so read the rest of this!

That's really only there because I don't like the way wordpress deals with images after embedded youtube content. :S Grrr. (Unless there's a border around the image come to think of it, but I don't put borders around the books or author pictures.) Wait, we're not dealing with my imperfections! Read about this instead . . .

**About the author:** Caleb J. Ross has a BA in English Literature and creative writing from Emporia State University. His fiction and nonfiction has appeared widely, both online and in print. He is the author of five books of fiction and is a core contributor to The BookTube Vidcast, a columnist at ManArchy Magazine, and is the creator of The Burning Books Channel, a YouTube channel featuring humorous book reviews, literary skits, writing advice, and rants. Connect with Caleb on his website, Facebook, GoodReads, or Twitter.

**About the prizes:** Who doesn't love prizes? You could win either of two \$25 Amazon gift cards, an autographed copy of *Stranger Will*, or an autographed copy of one of its tour mates, *Angel Falls* by Michael Paul Gonazelz or *The Sound of Loneliness* by Craig Wallwork. Here's what you need to do...

Enter the Rafflecopter contest  
Leave a comment on my blog.

That's it! One random commenter during this tour will win a \$25 gift card. Visit more blogs for more chances to win--the full list of participating bloggers can be found here. The other \$25 gift card and the 3 autographed books will be given out via Rafflecopter. You can find the contest entry form linked below or on the official *Perfect Edge Trifecta* tour page via Novel Publicity. Good luck!

**Perfect Edge Books** was founded in late 2011 to unite authors whose books weren't "obviously" commercial. Our books tend to sit in various genres all at once: literary fiction, satire, neo-noir, sci-fi, experimental prose. We believe that literary doesn't have to mean difficult, and that difficult doesn't just mean pointless. We prefer to cultivate a word-of-mouth approach to marketing, and keep production as simple as we can. Learn more at [www.PerfectEdgeBooks.com](http://www.PerfectEdgeBooks.com).

Learn more about *Stranger Will*'s tour mates [HERE](#).

Notes about liveblogging

I want a better way to archive this, whether it's screen shots, or simply creating a new post each update (which would actually be nicer for tweeting.) Either one though requires various amounts of offline work pulling things together in a coherent manor.

When I write, I don't often write in a straight forward manor. I also don't write the beginning ends or middles in order. Rather, I think from a larger perspective, and while it's all a stream of consciousness, it also happens to be a convenient way to proofread multiple times.

Dr. Who is far to distracting to be able to write a review to. :P

This is what I think can become some sort of hybrid online live book club. I like the idea of conversing (Thanks Leah!) while writing a review. Whether it's with friends near or far, online seems to be the place we meet most often, and I'm really glad it's about books.

They keep us all in line, whether we use them as a tool to cope with every day life or just to spend a few hours on a far off planet located in the depths of our own mind.

There's no recipe, only the knowledge that we ate various glorious forms of turkey, perogies, stuffing pie and cake and cinamon rolls and my mom's famous buns. I can't make them. I SUCK at using yeast. I'm convinced I somehow ruin it. My mom's dinner buns are perfection. If I ever learn I'll share - and LOUDLY.

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### Lea says

I keep procrastinating on writing a review for this book, mainly because I just don't know what to say about it. I'm not even sure how I feel about it!

Let's get the boring, nitpicky stuff out of the way -- as usual. Typos, which seemed to get worse as the book went along. Everything from misspellings to what seem to be misused words. Why?? I expect this in a goodreads win -- because they're most likely sending out proofs rather than finished editions -- but this wasn't a win, I bought this on Amazon, so I expect the quality to compare to any other book I'd pick up in a store. This kind of sloppiness just doesn't make me a fan.

Now that's out of the way . . .

This is a very interesting story. William and Julie are expecting their first child -- a child William is determined not to have. He works with heavy duty chemicals as a "human remains removal specialist", and fears the damage the chemicals may have already done to the unborn baby. In his endeavor to be rid of the child, he is helped by the mysterious Mrs. Rose.

This idea was so compelling to me that I had Amazon overnight a copy when I couldn't find it locally -- something I almost never do. I'm just too cheap to pay for that kind of postage, but I just had to read it as soon as possible.

Was it worth it?

I don't know. I found the characters and their lives grotesque and unlikable. Even Julie, who -- as a mom -- I felt I should have been most sympathetic to. They're all so mired in these ridiculously pointless lives, it's difficult to empathize with them. On the other hand, has any parent escaped having an instant (or more) of doubt and fear when faced with the reality of having children? It's such a huge responsibility, one I know I felt vastly unprepared for. So it wasn't like I couldn't understand William's reluctance to accept this new role.

I also found William's solution to his "problem" truly horrific -- even thinking about it now makes me feel upset, even nauseated.

I think I was looking for a different story, one in which William and Julie have their doubts -- about parenthood and about each other -- but work their way through the problems to reach a new point in their lives. This is NOT that story.

I didn't really understand what Mrs. Rose was striving to attain, or why so many people were willing to help her. I didn't understand William's passivity throughout the story. In the end, I did sympathize just a bit with Julie, but not enough that I ended up liking her.

Having said all that, though, I can't give this book only 1 star. I didn't like it, but that doesn't make it a bad book -- I think my reaction to it is indicative of how it challenged my values and my beliefs. The ideas presented would probably rate 4 stars -- they really are that intriguing.

So I guess I'll split the difference and give it 3 stars, subject to change as I ponder this book in the coming weeks.

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