



## Men Walking on Water

*Emily Schultz*

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**Men Walking on Water** Emily Schultz

**This utterly addictive, brilliant novel about rum-running in the 1920s is like *The Wire* transplanted to Prohibition-era Detroit, by a writer of whom Stephen King has said: "Emily Schultz is my new hero."**

*Men Walking on Water* opens on a bitter winter's night in 1927, with a motley gang of small-time smugglers huddled on the banks of the Detroit River, peering towards Canada on the opposite side. A catastrophe has just occurred: while driving across the frozen water by moonlight, a decrepit Model T loaded with whisky has broken the ice and gone under--and with it, driver Alfred Moss and a bundle of money. From that defining moment, the novel weaves its startling, enthralling story, with the missing man at its centre, a man who affects all the characters in different ways. In Detroit, a young mother becomes a criminal to pay down the debt her husband, assumed dead, has left behind; a Pentecostal preacher brazenly uses his church to fund his own bootlegging operation even as he lectures against the perils of drink; and across the river, a French-Canadian woman runs her booming brothel business with the permission of the powerful Detroit gangsters who are her patrons.

The looming background to this extraordinary story, as compelling as any character, is the city of Detroit--a place of grand dreams and brutal realities in 1927 as it is today, fuelled by capitalist expansion and by the collapse that follows, sitting on the border between countries, its citizens walking precariously across the river between pleasure and abstinence. This is an absolutely stunning, mature, and compulsively readable novel from one of our most talented and unique writers.

## Men Walking on Water Details

Date : Published March 21st 2017 by Knopf Canada

ISBN : 9780345811011

Author : Emily Schultz

Format : Paperback 552 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Canada

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## From Reader Review Men Walking on Water for online ebook

### DipShitBookClub says

Schultz tries to make the world of bootleggers and gangsters more woke but mostly makes them more boring.

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### TheKesser says

I liked this book! There were moments when it felt like it was a bit slow or there were parts of the story that didn't really necessary fit, but at the end of it all, I totally understand how it all came together and fit together.

This book is very much about the preacher, Charles Prangley. I found it very interesting to see how many people he ended up affecting and how far the ripples of his... everything went. For me it really made me think about how our own lives can affect so many people!

(view spoiler)

Anyways, this novel could probably have been a bit shorter, but I loved the list of characters, I loved the writing and I really enjoyed reading this one.

Pride really does go before the fall.

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### Sean Kottke says

A copy of this novel floated briefly onto my radar late last year, but I was unable to get very far into it before it had to go away. I traveled to Munro's Books in Victoria, B.C. to purchase a copy for myself, as it, criminally, has not been officially published in the United States. So, in a perfectly legal version of the illegal smuggling technique described by the title, I had to cross international borders to obtain that which is not available in my country.

And boy, was it worth it! This book has followed me around the continent over the bulk of 2018. It is a fantastic, sprawling read, depicting a rogue's gallery of smugglers, bootleggers, ladies of the evening, and assorted nefarious folks engaged in an increasingly complex web of double lives, double crosses, and bids for survival during the last years of Prohibition in the Detroit-Windsor rumrunning trade. The book crosses the great shady character-building and plot-juggling skills of Elmore Leonard with the confident omniscient narration and propulsive accumulation of coincidences of Dickens. It has the scope, cast and pacing appropriate for a winning multi-season cable adaptation. It's not an easy book to zip through, because the writing is so pleasurable and packed with nuance that it affords a leisurely reading pace. Blink and you'll

miss a key detail from a passing memory; go back and discover the pleasure of a narrative world unfolding across multiple dimensions. This book deserves a major release in the United States ASAP!

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### **Krista says**

A virtuous man once walked on water, but today men walk on the water surrounding our city, pouring in the poison and disease that dissolves the bonds of home, faith, and country.

Men Walking on Water begins with an intriguing scene: It is December of 1927 and one of the cars in a rum-running operation has fallen through the ice on the Detroit River; taking with it a full load of booze and twenty grand in cash. Not only will the motley crew need to inform the hapless driver's new widow of the accident, but someone will need to suffer the consequences of telling their iron-fisted boss as well. This opening scene and what immediately follows is *really* well done, and as author Emily Schultz's intent was evidently to explore the ripple effects of this accident across a wide range of characters, there was an opportunity for the whole thing to be exciting and complex...but it all just fizzled out for me. In the end, I found the characters to be flat, the writing to be dull, and the plot to be predictable. Just not for me.

We men believe we can walk on water. We think we are capable of anything. We are not. We are mortal.

I was so bored by this book that that's all I can muster up for a review.

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### **zoë says**

Characters had satisfying depth, history and motivation. They were distinct and well developed. The side characters were particularly great because they never felt like plot devices, but like full people who got tangled in with the whole for a short time.

The plot rambled on without much of a main climax because it was peppered throughout each character's story. Made it an enjoyable read that while it never grabbed me like a thriller, certainly kept my attention. It almost felt like a series of short stories, moving from associate to associate until the whole picture was assembled.

The walking on water metaphor builds throughout as characters push their limits of faith. Not religiously, but in themselves, in their associates, in the raw opportunities they find to meet their need or greed. And there's this contrast of bridge building and planes that totally changes the landscape they work in. Some stretch beyond the need to walk on water, entering solid ground. Others don't make the switch.

The ending struck me a tidy and trite; a jarring departure from the true to life feel of the book.

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I'd recommend this book.

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### **Robin says**

Really enjoyable story covering bootlegging in the prohibition era of Detroit. Fascinating details about rumrunning and smuggling with an added dose of human relationship struggles make it a great book worth your time reading. Nothing cutting edge or innovative but just a really well written book with an enjoyable story.

\*ARC/Netgally

The only difference between my ratings for ARC books and others is that ARC books reviews will be longer.

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### **Bahramo says**

Highly recommended! Set in Detroit & Windsor in the prohibition era, all bout how to get booze from the Canadians to the US. Great writing. Full of tension. Highly enjoyable.

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### **Tammy says**

I really liked this book. It was nice to read something that mentions the area & history of where you live.

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### **Kelsey says**

DNF at chapter 41

It took me forever to pick up this book, and when i finally did i found it boring. I didn't really like the whole mobster aspect, so i just decided to stop pushing myself to finish it.

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### **Maria says**

#### **TL;DR**

I have mixed feelings about this one.

On one hand - not for a second i regret reading it. On the other - i will definitely not be recommending it to anyone, or re-reading it.

Now long details to read.

#### **Why I chose it to begin with**

This was suggested by a fellow reader from one of my book clubs.

The description looked good, the Prohibition era is an interesting one, so we all eagerly agreed.

## **How the reading felt**

I had the weirdest feeling while reading this book.

When i was about half done, i texted a friend that "I am half done, yet nothing really happened yet!"

So without spoiling it much, i'd just say - it's a strangely, unevenly paced book.

You feel like nothing happens, then boom,

## **How characters are**

So lately the things i caught myself looking for are (in that order):

- well written female characters
- relatable characters

Female characters: even though you have a number of them, all of them seemed like a sketch, like a work in progress, even more surprisingly so, given how much time is dedicated to "nothing happens" aka explaining characters.

Relatable characters: none really. None of the "struggles" of the characters moved me, maybe because i strongly believe that characters just go with the flow most of the time

## **Overall impressions**

So i had higher expectations for the plot development. Given it's set in Prohibition times and given the blurb, i was expecting more action packed plot.

The things mentioned in the blurb happen in the passing, even though they could've made a great story - they don't really get developed all that well.

The short, sometimes too short chapters gave me an even weirder feeling pace wise.

The characters also felt a little underdeveloped, like the author started outlining them and then decided not to.

Jumps in time didn't help either - suddenly your characters are in a completely different status or place in their life and you have no idea how that happened, even though that would've been the most interesting part of it.

On a separate note - the recommendation from Stephen King on the book cover still puzzles me A LOT.

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## **Amy says**

So far, this is my favourite book of 2017. It is a well-written character driven story with mystery and intrigue throughout. I had a hard time putting it down, especially when a character ended in a way that indicated the next part was going to get even better. All the characters are flawed and struggling with their own demons. The ending was great as some characters storylines were wrapped up firmly while others just lead the reader to decide what happens for them next.

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## **Monique Polak says**

Loved this book. What an amazing cast of characters! Even the minor characters felt real. Especially loved the strong, courageous women!

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### **Darren Bradley says**

Never having written a book review before, I found my inspiration in the form of *Men Walking On Water*. Emily Schultz who, with her fourth novel, has exceeded all expectations against the successes of her previous works, and has achieved what most writers only manage in their twilight, if at all. Set during prohibition era and bounding across the frozen waters between Detroit and Windsor, MWOW takes a different approach to an otherwise romanticized age of gangsters and smugglers. By steering her eye away from the criminals who usual occupy the spotlight and focusing instead on the working class looking to make a few extra bucks, Schultz has managed to create a cast of characters both human and accessible, none of whom are greeted with ambivalence when we're shown this world from their perspective, and the author's cleverly woven tapestry of narrative perspectives. As Alfred Moss's car is sucked through the ice, so too will you be, as the ripples of that action affect everyone from his widow, to his fellow smugglers, to the anti-bootlegging preacher with as many ulterior motives as he has secrets. With Chabon-esque style and Munro's sense of humanity, *Men Walking on Water* is a thrill to read, written with equal parts ambition and restraint, Schultz leaves her readers with tension filled prose, each sentence a cautious step forward, as though she knew our risk of falling in.

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### **Melissa says**

If anyone's been missing *Boardwalk Empire* this is a great book! Not your typical 20s flapper/gangster romance- a great story following the repercussions for several characters after a swindler fakes his death in Detroit. A fresh setting for a well-documented era. Canada's featured as the "bad-influence" foreign neighbour.

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### **W.L. Hawkin says**

This novel verges on epic. Structured into four books, spanning two years and 549 pages, Emily Schultz splices the stories of several manipulators of the late 1920s Detroit scene into one intricate dance. It's a *South Lake Fizz. Rumrunners*. The water on which they "walk" borders two nations: the Detroit River. Like Jesus, they are in some ways saviours, as they shuttle liquor across the water from Canada to the dry United States during Prohibition.

It begins in December 1927, when the empty car of one of the rumrunners is discovered beneath the ice. The driver, Alfred Moss, is missing along with the load and the cash. Did he drown as everyone suspects? Or did he take the loot and run? The doors of the Model T had been removed to avoid just such a calamity, and no body surfaces. Still, there's a hole in the ice the size of a Ford. It doesn't take long before we discover that Moss promised to pay "The Doctor" Ernest Krim three grand to fake his death and ship a suitcase to one Alphonse Novarro in New York City. Moss is fond of changing his identity and is, as it turns out, the hub of this wily wheel.

It's a challenge to sort the good guys from the bad. The Purples are clearly antagonists and actually ran the scene in 1920s Detroit. A Jewish gang lead by the Bernstein Brothers, they rule by violence, like Negan's Saviours in "The Walking Dead" and give our small-scale hoodlums a hard time. But, they take such an

emotional back seat to the other characters, they don't seem so bad. Sure, they beat, shoot, steal, and take a "chunk of their cheese" but they don't conjure up much angst. They're just a historical fact. On the other hand; Alfred Moss and his partner, Reverend Charles Prangley are just plain evil.

Several strong female leads dominate the story and make choosing one protagonist impossible: Rosine, a charming French-Canadian woman who runs a brothel with her lover, Kitty McCloud; Prangley's clever and efficient secretary, Faye McCloud; Alfred's lover, Gin Ing, an intelligent woman from Chinatown with daddy issues; and Elsie Moss, Alfred's "widow" who has a baby (father unknown) and will do whatever it takes to survive.

The main character seems to be Krim, "the Doctor" (actually, a pharmacist) but I'm not sure. Krim is an honourable criminal. He only agrees to assist Moss because he needs the promised \$3,000 to put his mother into psychiatric care. She thinks her head is made of glass. He's a World War One veteran who fought two years in the trenches, didn't drink then and still doesn't. Then, there's young Willie Lynch who's only sixteen and seeks vengeance for his murdered father. Once Alfred's friend, Willie feels responsible for Elsie and her child.

This is a character-driven story that keeps me turning pages because I need to know one thing: how and when will karmic justice arrive for Alfred Moss and Reverend Prangley?

Emily Schultz is an acclaimed poet who paints pictures with words:

"Gabriel sighed and put down his fountain pen. His eyes were the color of rock underwater and, unlike his bridge-building brother Frank, his face was pale as a baby's, as though he never saw daylight. He was closing in on fifty, but proud of the tuft of reddish curls atop his face. He knew he was thin enough that there was something youthful about him. Someone had told him once that his cheeks looked as though they'd been permanently pinched. His eyebrows were like whispers, and like his older brother he had a strong, straight nose than ran down the center of his face" (399).

According to family legend, Schultz's great uncle Alfred went through the ice on the Detroit River with a load of whiskey. Perhaps, rumrunning is in her blood. Conjuring the grease and glamour of the 1920s, Schultz dances us through jazz clubs, brothels, garages, back alleys in New York City and Chinatown, and across the Ambassador Bridge from Detroit to Windsor. One of Elsie's lovers, Frank Brennan, is the engineer for the bridge which connects Canada and the United States and opened November 15, 1929, just after the crash. Mingling historical fact with intense imagination, Emily Schultz builds her own bridge over nine decades.

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