



## The Ice Harvest

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## **The Ice Harvest** Scott Phillips

As lawyer Charlie Arglist prepares to leave Wichita, Kansas, with a suitcase full of stolen money, he revisits the scenes of his past--his angry ex-wife, ex-lovers, cops on the take, and bars filled with secrets that others will do anything to hide.

## **The Ice Harvest Details**

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Author : Scott Phillips

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## From Reader Review The Ice Harvest for online ebook

### Lee says

I'll start by saying, I never have seen the movie ( I do remember the trailer). This is a dark comic, sometimes brutal hard-boiled tale. James M. Cain meets Elmore Leonard, to make a very good debut. Will be reading more from Mr. Phillips.

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### knig says

Reading this was a purely tactical choice to begin with. As in red alert, battle stations ready tactical warfare. Which best describes the cattle run on the London Underground where it is a no holds barred, take no prisoners, survival of fittest gladiator match twice a day. When wedged in the middle of this meat vice, headlocked under Big Bertha's eau de Baconnaise infused armpit, trussed up like a Christmas turkey and that had BETTER be only an umbrella poking my ass, reading material has to conform to certain standards. A certain size, weight and shape are crucial, so I can prop it centrifugal like over a love handle and beneath a double D. Trial and error are crucial here, my dear Watson, but after many sardine sessions I knew The Ice Harvest would snuggle right in.

A weird little book this: the first half is totally devoid of any action whatsoever. Instead, we have a slow, languorous layering of seedy character and their haunts descriptions. The main protagonist Charlie seems to spend an eternity driving up and down the main street in Wichita, Kansas on Christmas Eve, circulating between three strip joints, a bar, and two houses, in some sort of grotesque noirification of Pleasantville. He's clearly getting ready to skip town and seems to be killing some time before he goes. Everywhere he goes, some broad offers to blow him off or make him into a bona fide anal connoisseur. The cops all know him : they all toast whiskey flasks when they meet up on the highway. Sweet. Why would he even want to leave a place like this?

The second half picks up a bit, which in any event isn't hard to do considering nothing ever happened in the first half. Charlie still seems to be running around Main Street, except now there's a noticeable body count stockpiling in each of the places mentioned above. This frenzied rushing around is supposed to blind us to the fact that there is absolutely no plot cohesion whatsoever in this alleged crime thriller. Things seem to happen randomly, nothing makes any logical sense, the narrative descends into mish-mash. With one saving grace at the very end: a delicious little twist at the finale, which, however, in no way makes up for the disjointed rambling before.

'A venture into white noir' it says right on the front cover. But wait, what the hell is white noir, apart from an oxymoron. I usually know my blek end uait but not this. White trash noir is more likely. Noir what you read: next time I'll stick to pinot noir.

(I'm not kidding, what is white noire?)

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## **Sarah says**

What a fantastically-dark wicked book. I was hooked from the beginning until the very end. I'd seen the movie many many years ago but couldn't recall much except that I enjoyed it and it had John Cusack and Billy Bob Thornton in it. And it was cold out. The characters are all unsavory and nasty and I loved every single one of them. The ending was outrageous and perfect. Read this book!

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## **Paul says**

Quote:

"He took a deep, frozen breath. "That about hit the fucking spot. You know when you have that one drink

that takes you to the exact perfect stage of drunkenness? That was the one. I feel like God. Let's hit it."

He took one step off the icy sidewalk & into the parking lot & slipped. "Fuck Charlie, I fell."

"You hurt?"

"I'm too drunk to get hurt." He struggled to get back on his feet, slipping & falling repeatedly as Charlie stood watching. He finally managed to get up on his hands & knees. The car was only seven or eight feet away.

"You going to make it?"

"Fuck yes, I'm gonna make it. Don't tell anybody you saw me do this," he said, and he crawled on all fours to the door. He pulled it open, leaned his head & shoulders in, and began spewing nine hours worth of booze & bar snacks onto the floor of the passenger side."

A nice blend of wry humor & violence make this a must read.

Highly recommended. 4 stars from this reader.

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## **Kevin Helmick says**

About as rural noir as it gets, and I love the sound of that, "rural noir". Fast. funny, dark and deliberate. The Ice Harvest delivers, in rich charasmatic characters, clever, hilarious dialouge, and a wrap up that completes the package. It's one you'll revisite again and again.

I also have the awsome good fortune of being invited by Phillips, to read from my latest release, Heartland Gothic, at Noir Bar in St Louis Feb 28th 2012. But that has nothing to do with my review. I've read the book several times before that and watched some of the filming of the movie in 04.

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## **Johnny says**

A quick, little immorality tale. I actually appreciate that Phillips makes no effort to make any of his character's likable, but rather just shows them for who they are. Because of it, even the slightest sign of humanity has weight.

My one gripe is that although we are told that the book is set in Wichita in 1979, you wouldn't know it from reading it. For most of the story, Charlie (our hero) drives through the city and its outskirts, but it might as

well be set in Anchorage for all the character of the city it invokes. Placing the story in the 1970s seems to be to remove the pesky cellphone from the story, which would have solved too many problems for the characters.

Fast and cartoony, I thoroughly enjoyed the read.

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### **Sam Reaves says**

It's hard to put your finger on just what's so great about this noir classic: is it the utter bleakness of spirit, the word-perfect evocation of middle-American anomie and alienation (not to get too scholarly about a sordid tale of vice and crime), or is it the deadpan black humor, which has us laughing out loud at appalling things? Great literary skill in the service of all of the above, anyway.

It's Christmas Eve in Wichita in 1979 and the snow is coming down as families hunker down for the holiday; Charlie Arglist, a failed lawyer who handles payoffs for the local strip joint boss, is planning to skip town with his partner and a satchel full of cash they have abstracted from the vicelord's empire. Permanently numbed with alcohol, Charlie is also a failed husband and father, and his faint pangs of yearning and regret for the family he is about to forsake forever provide just the touch of humanity we need to appreciate the yawning abyss of inhumanity he has opted for. Needless to say, things are not likely to go according to plan. Why do we love noir? Maybe we like the glimpse of forbidden thrills, maybe we like to feel morally superior. Those who protest the amorality of the genre fail to notice that there are no happy endings; a better morality tale about the wages of sin would be hard to imagine. And the damn thing is hilarious to boot.

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### **Toby says**

#### **Mostly read whilst killing time waiting for English public transport to turn up**

Compared to Cain and Thompson this novel seemed to have a high pedigree of hype going for it, having recently thoroughly enjoyed the John Cusack movie adaptation there was a little added pressure when I found this in a war zone/book shop in Brighton.

Sadly this debut from Scott Phillips failed to live up to expectations. It's a solid piece of noir writing told without resorting to embellishment and extremes of plot to engage the reader. It's the kind of book that is a pleasure to read to pass the time but no more than that, with a denouement perfectly in keeping with the greats of the genre he was compared to.

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### **Sidney says**

A bleak yet frequently funny noir novel in the Jim Thompson or Gold Medal school. This is the book that became the basis for the John Cusack-Billy Bob Thornton film.

It's a brisk, readable tale that follows failed lawyer Charlie Arglist on a farewell tour of 1979 Wichita as he contemplates an escape with money skimmed from his mobster boss.

We get a look at Charlie's spartan existence, failed relationship and desolate outlook before brutal twists send his plans awry and pit him against friends and foes alike.

The novel unfolds almost totally with Charlie at center stage and very simple events are kept lively by off-beat characters, grim humor and a fairly brisk pace.

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## J says

I like me a good down and dirty crime novel as much as I like just about any other read. No one is going to mistake Scott Phillips' *The Ice Harvest* for great literature any time soon, and that's a shame because books this enjoyable often get overlooked by the literati. This crime noir moves fast and straight out of the gate with profanity and nastiness. We meet Charlie Arglist, corrupt lawyer and sleazy club owner who spends Christmas Eve moving from strip club to crappy bar and back to another strip club, sucking down the booze and snorting coke when possible.

By chapter two, a man's been clubbed with a bat, we've learned Charlie's blackmailing some local politicians, and we hear of a bouncer's plans to break a guitarist's hands for blacking his (the guitarist's) girlfriend stripper's eye. It's just that kind of book.

The bouncer makes good on that threat, which is no surprise from what we've read previously, understanding just what it is we're talking about here. Care for more? Well, here's what the bouncer sounds like sweet-talking someone on the phone:

*"Well, if this isn't the rat-fuck of the century, I don't know what is! ...As far as I'm concerned you can grease up that Yule Log of yours and shove it up your shithole!...You'll rue the day you thought you could pull this shit on me, you toothless old whore! I promise you will regret the day you were fucking born!" He slammed the phone receiver down, then picked it back up and screamed into it at the top of his lungs, then slammed it down into its cradle again and again, until finally, breathing hard, he looked up at Charlie and Pete. "Sorry," he continued, "that was my mom. She wants me to pick up my kids tonight instead of tomorrow."*

Portraits of moral corruption don't come any cleaner and dirtier than that. If there's a character with a redeeming feature, I must have missed it. Though I suppose a couple minor incidents — a man asking if Charlie's all right after he slips on some ice or an ex-roommate of one of Charlie's old girlfriends — could count as two drops of the milk of human kindness amidst all the darkness and filth. Just barely.

Often books with despicable protagonists are hard to get through. Your natural inclination to sympathize with and like the main character gets constantly sidelined. Here, you don't technically "like" Charlie Arglist — you just dislike everyone else so much more that you do find yourself rooting for his success. He's not a bad guy per se, even if he does, drunkenly, snort a couple lines of cocaine with his brother-in-law prior to dropping in to the Christmas celebration of his ex-wife's family. He justifies this to himself by thinking he should see his kids one last time before he leaves town and by not wanting to slur in front of his them.

So you see, he's considerate in his debauchery. He even goes so far as to waive stage-fees for strippers

screwed over by Christmas Eve's slow turnout. Occasionally you might worry that Charlie's softer side is going to get him killed, but combinations of dumb luck and unimaginably moronic bravado carry him through mostly. When he breaks into a friend's home around 4am Christmas morning, the resulting scenario is partly the Grinch confronting Cindy Lou Who and partly slapstick of a nicely broad physical kind.

Exactly what Charlie is up to isn't entirely clear until The Ice Harvest has made it to past the halfway mark, but public and private corruption play major roles, naturally. While he clearly needs to get out of town at some point in the relatively immediate future, Charlie dawdles, and, in the process, manages to burn every bridge, to make a series of bad judgments and to nearly give away all his hole cards before his ticket is solid and his cash is in hand. As the speed of the double-crossing begins to heat up, Charlie loses more and more safe havens and resources.

In that last respect, the book could almost present itself as a kind of allegorical deconstruction of a man, peeling away each successive layer of social and psychological wrapping until he's left with only his own unadorned selfishness and ego. Phillips likely isn't going that far, but to watch Charlie Arglist move ever further down, down, down is in itself a thing of black and amusing beauty. The conclusion of this comedy of disaster makes everything spectacularly worthwhile.

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### **Austin says**

Scott Phillips knows exactly how to Make Kansas Great Again! I don't know the official title of this genre but I call it Country Pulp Western Noir. He makes Kansas sound like an exciting, crime filled, drug fueled, passionate, sexy, destination full of life and adventure. In reality it is a boring, backwards, redneck, Koched out, Brownback hell with deteriorating school districts, ubiquitous strip malls full of Target Stores, Chipotle, Whole Foods and high end Chick-fil-a outlets, auge prairie with a few small towns full of tweakers and one college town with education snobs and another with Monsanto sponsored agriculture cowboys and a DHS laboratory full of the deadliest viruses known to man. I prefer Scott's version better and so he is one of those rare authors whom I will run out and read everything he has written.

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### **Ipsis says**

Scott Phillips apresenta-nos uma história muito bem escrita.

Não precisou de ser sufocante para ser interessante e entusiasmante.

Grande parte do enredo passa-se em apenas algumas horas, com pouco mais do que a duração de uma noite.

E a vida pode mudar tanto em tão pouco tempo. Os planos de anos, os projetos de vida, os sonhos e as ambições pode alterar-se tanto entre o por e o nascer do sol.

Uma história de gente desonesta... Uma história que nos mostra que o crime não compensa, que a desonestade obriga ao pagamento de um preço demasiado caro e que, como diz o adágio popular, "cá se fazem, cá se pagam".

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### **Cynthia says**

This book is not for everyone. It's dark, violent and disturbing. However, it is positively intriguing and horrifying in a 'can't look away from that train wreck' kind of way. The plot moves at a rather leisurely pace, quietly setting up what turns out to be a jaw dropping set of events. The story is told in a very neutral way, which gives the violence the ability to knock the wind out of the reader. The conclusion is surreal, dark humor at its best.

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### **Will Johnson says**

Brutally simple and effectively grungy/filthy/anti-sexual. I really loved this book ... from the lewd characters, to the sexiest femme fatale I have had the pleasure to imagine in my head (Oh, Renata ... I wish you were real. Wow.), to the pretty shocking twists and turns in the final quarter.

A little disappointed to hear there is a side-quel of sorts called The Walkaway. I thought the ending, which I won't spoil here, was pretty unique but remarkably consistent with the universe. Sad to see it expanded in its own book ... oh well ...

I haven't seen the film this was the inspiration for but the late, great Harold Ramis directed it so it might be pretty good, though I can't see any of the actors who star in it fitting the parts I imagined in my head.

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### **Ed says**

A nasty, ripe little Christmas noir, THE ICE HARVEST is in the rich vein of Charles Willeford and Harry Crews. Charlie Arglist is a corrupt attorney who's embezzled a satchel of money from his employer and plans to skip town on Christmas Eve. Of course, things don't call as planned, and unravel fast. This fast-paced, short novel reminds me of the best from the Gold Medal Books imprint. Lots of dark humor and pratfalls included. Enjoy it.

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