BOOK RELEASE

Strange Heaven
With an afterword by Marina Endicott
Lynn Coady

New Edition of Coady’s Breakout Novel Now Available

“One of the most astonishing fictional debuts I have read. Authentic and unforgettable.”
— Kenneth J. Harvey, The Globe and Mail

If Hell is other people, 18-year-old Bridget Murphy has certainly been there. The hero of Lynn Coady’s celebrated first novel, Strange Heaven, would like nothing more than to disengage from the world. But nobody — especially the folks back home in Cape Breton — will leave her alone.

The doctors think she’s apathetic. After the traumatic birth of her infant son, they transfer her to the psych ward of the Halifax children’s hospital, where she spends her days listening to the rants of a manic teenaged stripper and dodging the sexual advances of a pimply megalomaniac with a Christ complex. Discharged in time for Christmas, she returns home to the same domestic bedlam and boozy social life that got her into trouble in the first place. As if living with a foul-mouthed 100-year-old grandmother and a developmentally delayed uncle weren’t challenging enough, Bridget also discovers that there’s no escaping the people who think getting pregnant should have made her "properly penitent" or the high-school friends who can’t understand that everything’s changed — not to mention the verbally abusive boyfriend who wants to sue her for giving up their baby.

Coady gives this story of teenaged pregnancy a sly comic treatment that mitigates the tragic aspects of Bridget’s situation. It’s impossible not to laugh at Bridget’s grandmother spitting out her Christmas dinner because "it’s full of the cancer" or a sex-starved wardmate "going for the taco" every time Bridget lets down her guard.

This new edition of the book features an afterword by Marina Endicott as well as a Q & A with Lynn Coady.

THE AUTHOR

Lynn Coady was nominated for the Governor General’s Award for Fiction for her stunning debut novel. She received the CAA / Air Canada Award for most promising writer under 30, and the Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction. She has since written three books of fiction, Play the Monster Blind, Saints of Big Harbour and Mean Boy, all national bestsellers.

Born in 1970, Lynn Coady grew up in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in the town of Port Hawkesbury which, she has said, combined the pollution of an industrial town with the fishbowl qualities of a rural one, where everyone knows one another’s business. She didn’t think like everybody else -- “For a long time I thought I was insane.” When she started writing, literary influences such as David Adams Richards showed her it was possible to write meaningfully about Maritime communities.

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However, the stories she read about Cape Breton were elegiac and rural, dominated by heroic men; hers were different experiences, and she would create what The Georgia Straight called “a Cape Breton unlike any we have seen before.”

Having written stories, poems and plays for as long as she could remember, Coady went to Ottawa in 1988 to attend journalism school at Carleton University, hoping journalism would allow her to turn love of writing into a living. But after the first year, she wasn’t invited back and ended up studying English and Philosophy. “I tend to do badly in things I’m not interested in. That’s why I started taking my writing seriously. I recognized that there was nothing else I had any real interest in.” So she headed to New Brunswick, where she spent three years reading and writing. Her full-length play, Cowboy Names, won a contest and was staged in Fredericton, and a story was picked up by The Fiddlehead’s 50-year anniversary edition.

Then Goose Lane expressed interest in her novel in progress. The book was nearing completion when she landed a fellowship to the creative writing program of the University of British Columbia in 1996. “I looked at it as a two-year writing sabbatical where I tried to avoid my obligations as a student and just write.” In 2000, she was invited back to be writer-in-residence at the University of British Columbia’s Green College.

Now, she is able to write full-time, without having to bother with minimum-wage jobs. She lives in Edmonton and is a regular columnist for The Globe and Mail.

Accolades

• “One of the most astonishing fictional debuts I have read. Authentic and unforgettable.” The Globe and Mail
• “Brilliant . . . It will make spending the holidays with your own crazy relatives seem like a cakewalk.” The National Post
• “Coady, with a Roddy Doyle-ish gift for punchy dialogue. . . . A coming-of-age story with bite, Strange Heaven shows that growing up is always a little hellish.” Maclean’s
• “A stellar first novel . . . both nightmarish and laugh-out loud funny.” Quill & Quire (starred)
• “This deft, dolefully funny first novel doesn’t accommodate bullshit any better than its main character . . . Coady possesses a splendidly humane and faceted comic vision.” The Georgia Straight
• “Delivers Cape Breton humour at its blackest, most profane and politically incorrect best.” The Chronicle Herald / Mail-Star
• “Written in truly lucid, hilarious prose . . . there is little excuse for you not to read it.” Shift Magazine
• “Strange Heaven straddles a fine fence. It is sympathetic without giving way to nostalgia, and often gut-wrenchingly funny without being disrespectful . . . Lynn Coady is a writer to watch.” The Edmonton Journal

CONTACT INFORMATION

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"Strange Heaven" is the band's debut album and magnifies the cacophonous lullabies of their four previous singles. This record is for connoisseurs of fuzz, distortion, echo and reverb who prefer their noise to be tempered liberally with minor key, bubblegum and (at times) haunting melody. Recorded and produced by John Reis (of Hot Snakes, RFTC, Night Marchers, Drive Like Jehu) in the same way of the old masters in order to achieve a more musical hiss and crackle. Strange Heaven is very well-acted but unaccomplished. The story of Polish emigrants fighting the pitiless machine of Swedish bureaucracy in Dariusz Gajewski’s film turns into a black and white fairy tale about good and evil. Basia and Marek are not a perfect couple.