



Buffalo Lockjaw

Greg Ames

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Buffalo Lockjaw

Greg Ames

Buffalo Lockjaw Greg Ames

James Fitzroy isn't doing so well. Though his old friends in Buffalo believe his life in New York City is a success, in fact he writes ridiculous taglines for a greeting card company. Now he's coming home on Thanksgiving to visit his aging father and dying mother, and unlike other holidays, he's not sure how this one is going to end. *Buffalo Lockjaw* introduces a fresh new voice in American fiction.

Buffalo Lockjaw Details

Date : Published April 1st 2009 by Hachette Books (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9781401309800

Author : Greg Ames

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary

 [Download Buffalo Lockjaw ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Buffalo Lockjaw ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Buffalo Lockjaw Greg Ames

From Reader Review Buffalo Lockjaw for online ebook

Karyl says

A friend of mine started a book club blog and chose this book as its kickoff. Always looking for something new to read, and something to jolt me out of my historical fiction obsession, I ordered it from Amazon and started it the day it arrived.

This book has such vivid imagery. Every scene plays out in one's mind like a movie unfolding on the big screen. It's not hard to lose oneself in the novel, as bleak and depressing as it is, as James grapples with the pain of seeing his mother lost to Alzheimer's, of having a distant and chilly relationship with his father, of always coming in second place to his golden-child sister. Even the city itself becomes a character through the vignettes told by the residents interviewed by James in another time.

Some reviewers mentioned that the ending is weak, but I believe it's because they're not looking deep enough. Finally James is growing up, becoming a man the way he should have become years ago, realizing that he's screwed up his own life. There's a lot of self-realization throughout the book, and the end is the most poignant. With a simple, "Who wants coffee?" he finally begins to put others ahead of himself. I find it to be a positive and uplifting end, but then I've always been an optimist.

Casey says

This isn't a *bad* book, and I wish there was a way to give it 2.5 stars, but since there isn't, 2 stars it is. Someone else mentioned in a review that it was "a rewrite of *The Corrections*" and I see where they were coming from with that, but I think it matches up more closely to the movie "Garden State."

This sounds bad, but I think this book could have been much better. My biggest issue was the protagonist/narrator. He wasn't all that likeable (though I think he was supposed to be), and while an unlikeable narrator doesn't make a bad book, the fact that he is uninteresting does. The plot of the book isn't overly original, and that in and of itself doesn't make a bad book either, but coupled with the uninteresting and, honestly, overdone "slacker returns home to deal with family issues and grows up in the process" type of character, makes the book, at the very least, kind of stale.

There were some really funny, touching spots in the novel though, so I'll keep an eye out for what Ames does next.

J.A. says

The third and final of my pre-Winter Institute reads (since WI4 has already commenced), *Buffalo Lockjaw* by Greg Ames will be available in April. In some regard this novel is a fusion of two previously reviewed works, *Downtown Owl* by Chuck Klosterman and *Stalking Irish Madness* by Patrick Tracey. Ames delivers biting humor and a frost-bitten terrain like Klosterman, while the alcoholism and a family struggling with a mother's mental illness is compatible to Tracey's own experience. Beyond my reading experience, I was also able to relate to the long-suffering fans of the Buffalo Bills. I was a Bills fan through all four of the consecutive heart-breaking Super Bowl losses and the shocking playoff loss known as the "Music City Miracle." Even more heart-breaking and shocking to me was the team's outright release of Hall of Famers

Andre Reed, Bruce Smith, and Thurman Thomas during that off-season. That was the final indignity I suffered as a Bills fan. On a personal level my mother has been an registered nurse for going on 30 years, like the narrator's, but thankfully she is not suffering from a debilitating mental illness. I echo the narrator's sentiment of "Give me a good RN over a fireman or a police officer any day."

The narrator, a recovering addict and copywriter for greeting cards, returns to Buffalo to spend Thanksgiving with his stoic father, his Alzheimer's-afflicted mother, his sister and her girlfriend. As a nurse his mother supported assisted suicide for terminal patients, and now he's coming home to grant the final wish she is no longer capable of expressing. All he needs to do is avoid old acquaintances and stay sober long enough to screw up the courage to do something with his life, beginning with ending her's. It's never that simple in Buffalo!

Elizabeth K. says

I'm always eager to read novels set in Buffalo, and then really hyper-critical of them after. The narrator, James, is one of those guys in his late 20s with a job that he hates who lives in Brooklyn, and returns to his hometown (Buffalo) to visit his mother who is living in a nursing home with early onset Alzheimer's. His father is in the process of selling the family's home and moving into a smaller apartment, and his sister, the Most Favored Child, is also in town visiting.

The family dynamics were done very well. The characters and their relationships really developed nicely over the course of the book. At first, I was a little hesitant about the mother in a nursing home bit, I felt like I've read this story *a lot* recently. But this was well-managed and I was soon very committed to this aspect of the plot.

I was more mixed about the Can't Go Home Again threads of the plot - James's ambivalent attempts to reconnect with his Buffalo friends. There were some points that worked, I loved the writing in the passages that showed James aimlessly driving around town trying to recapture the geography of his past. However, there was something about the handling of these friends that I thought fell flat. They never took shape for me as believable characters, they felt too buffoonish and their only purpose seemed to be to set up situations which were intended to be humorous but were far too forced. The difference in tone between the family episodes and James's interactions with his friends is jarring and mismatched.

As always, the things that make growing up in Buffalo unique feel too contrived and expository when thrown out there on the page like that. However, I remain faithful that someday I will find the book that manages to succeed in this area.

Cyndi says

Sad, bleak and often beautiful...just like the city it's named for.

Lisa says

Poor James--his mother is in the advanced stages of dementia, a point she had never planned to reach having suggested to him several years earlier that she was going to commit suicide before it reached this point. He talked her out of it. Now he's come back to Buffalo for Thanksgiving and is struggling with the guilt of that, trying to decide whether or not he can commit euthanasia, dealing with his father, and trying to grow up (none too successfully). The book paints a very vivid picture of Buffalo and many of the characters are very well done (although a sister and her lover are never fully developed). The ending does not tie up all the loose ends which is very appropriate here.

MarySiedman says

Review of Buffalo Lockjaw

My father was born in Buffalo in 1915, my mother from Aurora in central New York on Cayuga Lake. As a child growing up in Buffalo in the 60's and 70's, I experienced contradictions. I lived in a freezing, harsh environment with a loving, supportive family. Buffalo is a city that was prominent at the turn of the 20th century until the steel and chemical companies that built that prosperity proceeded to contaminate Lake Erie with its industrial waste. When the authorities instituted pollution controls, those industries abandoned Buffalo and its blue collar workers, leaving it in a desperate economic mess.

Buffalo Lockjaw is a story which takes place in this declining town. It's about a writer coming to terms with changes in his life, and specifically dealing with his mother's Alzheimers disease. Ames is an amazing writer, vividly depicting his mother's condition so that although she speaks only a few words, she becomes a main character of the book. The book portrays a man devoted to his parents and his family home, his friends and his city.

Many of the passages resonated for me, but I was particularly impressed with the ending, which Ames elevates. Some of the most memorable images: The snow looking like rhinos, patting his father's bald head, watching his aunts sitting together under harsh lighting.

The writing is absolutely first rate. Greg Ames is a masterful writer. Excellent book.

Art Rodriguez says

Since leaving CO to come to LA, I have been in a reading slump. I've read thru many first chapters in search of that special book to pull be out of my reading recession...and then came Buffalo Lockjaw. It is a story of a 28 year old greeting card copy writer who returns to Buffalo to face his family. He's damaged goods, and he's in town to save his mother from her dementia. Black comedy at its best.

David says

This is the best book I've read all year. I kind of wish I'd read this in December so that this statement would carry more weight. Alas, it is only January, but I really think that this statement will hold up for the rest of

the year. Yes, it's that good.

There is such an obvious love for the hometown that comes out in the writing, coupled with the cold reality of facing a parent's dementia. It is so well-done and observant (without being too cute or too clever) that it is a pleasure to read.

Buffalo Lockjaw's main character and narrator is James Fitzroy, a near-30 year old who writes verses for a greeting card company in New York. His life, as it is, is probably not the success which all parent's hope for, or sacrifice their own lives for. He is spending his Thanksgiving break visiting his parents in Buffalo.

His mother, Ellen, is 56 years old and is suffering from a crippling dementia: she does not even know who James is anymore. His father is Rodney, who is stern and strong while dealing with his wife's mental disintegration, but James knows that it is killing him inside. This is a story that for many may hit close to home. James' love of his hometown, the obvious love that the author has for it, struck a chord with me. I understand what it is like to love something even when it is completely fucked up and in many ways, hard to defend. The fact that James/Ames can find the beauty in Buffalo and its people is one of the most endearing qualities of this book. His parents are unavailable, and for James, seeing his mother, the woman he loves and respects who spent years helping people now in such a helpless position, fuels his desire to try to seek a way out for her.

None of this feels phony. Every step of this journey toward middle age, and adulthood feels real, and that is what makes this such a satisfying read. I think any adult with living parents could identify with the perils of trying to relate to them on an mature level, especially the children of this generation (28-35). There is no World War 2 or Great Depression to define what this generation is, but Buffalo Lockjaw seems to suggest that it is more defined by a sort of slouching response to everything. Our occupations are meaningless (Greeting Card writing being a wonderful metaphor and foil for the more serious work of nursing that James' mother had done), and no one is counting on us to save the world. And if anyone is, God help them. Buffalo Lockjaw is a love story for a hometown and I loved reading it. I look forward to whatever Greg Ames writes next.

Mallory says

I found this book listed on my library's "Recommended Read" list and it made my head snap up a lot. Usually when I read, I don't want to be conscious of phrasing or paragraph construction or themes; I don't want to see the underpinnings. I just want to read what happens next. But with a few authors, Steinbeck, Stegner, Krakauer, Vonnegut, I am so startled by moments of brilliance that I have to take a break to applaud and honor the craft. This book had many of those moments for me, from the relationships between characters, the fullness of James' character (what a tender jerk), the vignettes of Buffalonians, the insights tucked into the narrative that felt like being gently slapped with a wet branch on a rigorous hike through the woods, refreshing and a delight to experience.

Regina Mclaughlin says

New York City is James Fitzroy's current home, where daily he confronts the gap between his aspirations and his ability. That is, until the native son returns to the Buffalo of his birth. Except, of course, things have changed. Both his parents and home town are dying in a white-out of superfluosness. But expect more than tainted home thoughts from abroad. This is a book that lives with death, testifying for the frail and the faulty, and treating them as equal communicants with the rest of us.

While it's fair to say that the Great Buffalonian Novel remains to be written, Greg Ames has certainly taken a heroic stab at it.

Stacey says

What a wonderful book! I love how BUFFALO LOCKJAW managed to be moving without being overwrought or sappy. I thought the letters from Ellen added a lot of substance to her character but to the book overall, not to mention that they made me misty-eyed on the train. They were perfect--spot-on. We really got to get a better feel for who she was before she got sick. Of course, James' memories peppered throughout the novel helped us understand the kind of person Ellen was and the chapter "the side effects of mercy" also revealed her character in an important way. I applaud Greg Ames' ability to write about her deterioration with such deliberateness. Not easy to read but raw and necessary.

Because I mostly read stuff by contemporary female writers, I'm not often exposed to the male mind from the male point of view. I was really impressed with the inner workings of an analytical person like James, and I appreciated his uh, assessment (for lack of a better word) of women he meets or is involved with. I thought it was a realistic portrayal of the 28 year-old male mind; it wasn't too much, but it was necessarily present. I almost felt like at times, it helped me understand what men in general are thinking! Perhaps that's going too far, but I've never been one to have very close guy friends, so I haven't been able to pick their brains on various things. I think James is, in many ways, unique as he is, a very universal character and therefore a likable one. He's got flaws and shortcomings and can admit his faults. It's the mark of an intelligent person to note his or her own failings, even if the power to change hasn't been fully realized yet.

Tim says

"Buffalo Lockjaw" is a well-written, enjoyable little book that can mark a nice respite from "bigger" reads. Nestle it in between two meatier books you just can't wait to read, and you'll enjoy it fine. In other words, don't be deceived by only three stars; it's on the plus side of being a pretty good read.

The basic recipe is one we've seen before: lots of local color and family dynamics weaved into a twenty-something's tale of his former hometown (Buffalo, obviously!) and his slacker friends from the bottom half of society. It made me think of Stephen Jaramillo's "Going Postal" for some reason. Ames' prose is tart, occasionally evocative, funny. Yes, "Buffalo Lockjaw" often is very funny even as it mixes the pathos of a parent with Alzheimer's and the gut-wrenching decisions of a son who can't stand to see his mother living that way and is determined to do something about it.

This is a very fast, though not an empty, read. I knocked this out in two days, which is unusual for me. It's a simple story with real-life problems and a minimum of forced literary props. And if you're from Buffalo, you'll probably enjoy its cultural references even more.

Brent says

Being a somewhat-recent Canadian transplant in Buffalo, this was a wonderful, almost "personal," read. Ames takes the city of Buffalo and more or less includes it as a character, with all its buckled charm. Living in Buffalo now, I recognize how much influence goes both ways for border towns and the Canadian-ness comes through more often than not throughout this novel. Ames writes deft and personable dialogue for his patched-up, broken-but-healing cast of characters, helping the reader to care more about these drifters than they realize. There was more story packed into these 280-pages than I thought!

Rick Harrington says

Everybody in Buffalo wants to find a way to be ourselves in the world in a way to be noticed as something not quite dismiss-able, the way that Buffalo is. To do that, you have to find a theme - a big theme, that will sustain an entire novel, or a life, without once seeming clunky or contrived or making the whole text one extended metaphor in any way that you've heard it all already.

Yeah, who would want to go there? What is it we all avoid? Could that be where the humanity is? Could it? Can we look hard at the City of No Illusions and retain any illusions for ourselves?

People give up, you know, fall back, from dreams and accept life in its fullest mediocrity, take pride in that to the point of delusional boosterism, so? But why would you want to go there if given the chance to go somewhere else? Lots of creative types get born here, but they call it their beloved home. They don't stay. Visiting celebrities, filming, say, love it here. Why would they stay? Maybe aging football stars find a place where they can remain a celebrity for the rest of their lives.

From the inside, Buffalo seems a place of might-have-beens, if-onlies. Petty politics, advantaging local bigshots, trump vision every time and so we build our perpetual wanna-be flagship university out of town, wipe out our waterfront with highways and dead industrial tracts, and conspire to route traffic around our natural transportation hub. Hell, we even sell our hydro-power down the river, downstate.

So, it's in the person of a once-vital Mom, a noted expert in the care of elderly demented patients, who herself becomes a living shell of who she once was, that Buffalo can come alive, in words at least, as something larger than its life.

Something about each of our lives, no matter how accomplished, no matter how smug or self-satisfied must remain in the world's capitals of mediocrity. You will find yourself less than you could be and at the same time find the lock-jawed striving in the face of white-out blizzards determination to find in yourself and in your life something still better. Something to make light of. Something to brood about, and mostly long long lists of friends who care for you as you are.

This is not the fictional Buffalo. This is the real thing, real places named and authenticated. Real characters. I live here. I know them. I am them. If you want to be judged by your proximity to beauty, to power, to accomplishment, then this is not your place. But you are not those things, and if you are, you won't be for long.

If you realize, as did de Kooning in an essay which was for me, the central figure in this novel, "Content is a Glimpse;" if you realize that perfect beauty is always only glimpsed, perfect accomplishment, no matter that the glimpse may last an entire performance. I haven't read that essay, but its title gives a glimpse, right? into its content.

In the end, that's all we are to each other, unless we make more of it than that. Unless we commit to stark beginnings and endings. Unless we understand that regret perpetuates the dissected stare, the bloodied guts-revealed loss of what might have been which is the city of Buffalo. Where only a glimpse is required for a father and son to bond, to conspire, to complete life.

Our natural disasters merit guffaws. No hurricanes, no oil to spew, just perpetual and powerful Falls. No Superbowl wins, ever, before they will inevitably move to another town more celebrated. More besieged by worse disasters. Ours are merely relentless. And of our very own making, if you'd like to have some excuse to pass us by.

But this novel makes of Buffalo what it truly is. A life. Worth living in and by and through. Stark. But not Carol-Oates stark. These are lives moving up, the way you feel when facing the Falls.
