



## Go With Me

*a novel*

"A dinky furry mystery ride through the cold and forboding New England woods. In prose as sharp and cold as winter stars, Castle Freeman has rendered an unforgettable place and people caught on a story that won't let you go, first word to last."

— Bret Lott, author of *Jewel*

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*Castle Freeman Jr.*

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### **Go with Me** Castle Freeman Jr.

The Vermont hill country is the stark, vivid setting for this gripping and entertaining story of bold determination. The local villain, Blackway, is making life hellish for Lillian, a young woman from parts elsewhere. Her boyfriend has fled the state in fear, and local law enforcement can do nothing to protect her. She resolves, however, to stand her ground, and to fight back. A pair of unlikely allies – Lester, a crafty old-timer, and Nate, a powerful but naive youth – join her cause, understanding that there is no point in taking up the challenge unless you're willing to "go through." In this modern-day drama, a kind of Greek chorus – wry, witty, digressive; obsessively, amusingly reminiscent; skeptical, opinionated, and not always entirely sober – enriches the telling of this unforgettable tale as the reader follows the threesome's progress on their dangerous, suspenseful quest.

### **Go with Me Details**

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Author : Castle Freeman Jr.

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Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Crime, Contemporary

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## From Reader Review Go with Me for online ebook

### Trish says

This slim volume is a timeless classic. It is almost entirely conversation, though occasionally the author slips in a descriptive phrase to focus our eye. We listen while a bunch of old men sit around a ruined chair factory in rural Vermont with a case of beer. A couple of other people search for, and find, the town's local bad boy, providing the novel's only action scenes. Nothing quite like this around, and if there were, this would still be one of the very best. Good any time of the year, this one bears rereading. While the setting is Vermont, it could just as easily have been Arkansas. The sentiments and the characters are as universal as the day is long.

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### Havers says

Alle gegen Blackway, so könnte man die Ausgangslage von Castle Freemans Roman „Männer mit Erfahrung“ beschreiben. Und wer die grünen Hügel von Vermont kennt, kann sich die Szenerie bildlich im Detail vorstellen: ein kleines Dorf mit holzverschalteten Häusern, Männer verschiedenen Alters sitzen vor einer Sägemühle in der Sonne, die auch schon bessere Tage gesehen hat und führen launige Gespräche. Träge Langeweile bestimmt die Situation. Willkommene Abwechslung naht in Gestalt einer jungen Frau, Lilian.

Seit ihr Partner sie verlassen hat, wird sie von Blackway, dem „bad guy“ der Gegend gestalkt und bedroht. Und nachdem er nun auch noch ihre Katze getötet hat, fürchtet Lilian um ihr Leben. Da es nur Vermutungen, aber keine handfesten Beweise gibt, kann ihr der Sheriff des Ortes nicht helfen. Er schickt sie zu Whizzer und den Einheimischen, jenen Männern, die sich auskennen, nichts zu tun haben, aber wissen, wie man hier Probleme löst. Dort empfiehlt man ihr, Lester und Nate anzusprechen. Diese beiden könnten helfen, sagt man ihr. Aber als Lilian deren Bekanntschaft macht, beschleichen sie Zweifel. Lester ist ein altes Männlein, der keiner Fliege etwas zuleide tun kann, und Nate ist zwar jung und groß und kräftig, aber eher von geringem Verstand. Und diese beiden glauben, es mit dem Schurken Nr. 1 aufnehmen zu können? Doch ohne viel Federlesens ergreift Lester die Initiative, und so machen sich die drei Gefährten auf in die Wälder, um Blackway zu stellen...

Es ist die klassische Gut gegen Böse Konstellation, die Castle Freeman seinem schmalen Roman zugrunde legt. Eine Jungfer ist in Nöten und die edlen Ritter springen ihr bei, um das Problem zu lösen, wobei diese aus einem tumben Toren mit reichlich Körperkraft und einem schlaun Fuchs bestehen. Im Hintergrund kommentiert und reflektiert der Chor, wie in den griechischen Tragödien, das Geschehen. Das Ganze dann angesiedelt in der wunderbaren, ursprünglichen Landschaft von Vermont, des „Green Mountain State“.

Ein Thriller, eine Love Story und die Geschichte einer „Reise“ - kein Wort zu viel, immer auf den Punkt, mit einem Augenzwinkern erzählt, sehr weise und mit einem tiefen Verständnis für die menschliche Seele – eine kleine Kostbarkeit, der ich viele Leser wünsche!

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### Tori says

As a theater major in college, I spent plenty of time reading scripts and dialog, much of it not very good. That being said, Castle Freeman does an amazing job of building a novel around almost nothing but

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conversation as succinct as any David Mammet play. Strange, opaque and rich, this back-woods story of bro-mance (and I use that term with respect)and chivalry does it's job of glimpsing truth through sips of cheap American beer. An east coast Twin Peaks, less from the soap opera and more from the sports page... if the sports page was extremely well written and smart. A quick reading novella that makes you want to read it twice as the first time your driven to follow the story to the end, and the second enjoy Freeman's smart, memorable dialog.

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### **Annet says**

Great Read. Great dialogue, humor, witty, compact beautiful writing, to the point, easy read. Enjoyed this one! It made me think of Cormac McCarthy, that's why I picked this one up in London. But it doesn't have the gloomy views of McCarthy, however beautiful, this one makes you smile at every page, although some scenes are gloomy, the humor and wit wins all through the book. It's hopeful, it's the wild and small town space of Vermont, I really liked the character of the book. Great how the title of the book, Go with me, gets more than one meaning. Loved this book. It's about Lillian, a young woman who refuses to back away from a local villain, Blackway, who makes her life difficult. A local policeman advises her to go to a weird and witty bunch of men headed by 'Whizzer', assembled at 'the mill'for help and she teams up with Lester, a craft old-timer and Nate, tall and strong but not so smart it seems, to go face Blackway, in the wilderness of Vermont, meeting with weird individuals in strange situations and all the while in the background commented by Whizzer and his band of men. I picked this book up quite by chance and loved it! Hope this author publishes more work, this book is truly recommended from my side.

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### **Matt Spaulding says**

Very put-downable. Took me much longer to read than it should have given its very short length.

Still, the story wasn't awful even though it wasn't the most engaging and the author does write the best Vermonters I have ever read, which is a pretty amusing to me since he's a flatlander. But he's got woodchuck speak down pat and that's a win in my book.

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### **Margaret Ross says**

So at first I wasn't so sure about this book. I felt like the language used by the characters didn't quite match what I thought was the tone of the book, and that the plot of the book was too interrupted by chatter.

Then, about 40 or so pages in to this very short book, I read the back cover, which explained to me that this was actually a sort of greek drama set in the Vermont back woods, complete with chorus. Aha! The chatter makes much more sense.

Thinking about it in terms of what it reflects of modern American morality and sensibility made it a bit more meaningful to me, but it still didn't work quite as well for me as it did for my husband, who thought it was well-nigh perfect in pitch and tone and pacing.

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## L.M. Krier says

A comparatively short and somewhat quirky novel which will certainly not be to everyone's taste. I rather enjoyed it.

A young woman, getting grief from the local baddy and given the brush-off by the sheriff, enlists the help of two somewhat unlikely companions, Big Nate and Lester.

All of the narrative and action take place on one day, hence being a somewhat short book. The author uses the device of switching between the three companions as they go hunting for the bad guy, and the group of elderly, beer-swilling men up at the old sawmill where the woman went to find help.

The protracted discussions between the men, with Whizzer, the disabled ex-lumberjack as their leader, will doubtless drive some readers to distraction with its humour based often on misunderstanding. To that end, a lot of it is repetitive.

In my humble opinion, it is worth sticking with it to the end - and I have a very low tolerance with anything which isn't gripping me, so that is high praise indeed.

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## Still says

Finished this slim, superb novel around 11pm last night.

I read it a couple of years back and I believe I might have reviewed it.

At any rate, when I started reading this early Friday morning I didn't recognize the story for the first 20 pages.

I can't understand how I could have forgotten reading a book this exciting.

This is what I'd call a "Modern Day Eastern" as opposed to a "Modern Day Western".

It takes place in the mountains of rural Vermont - lumberman country.

As they've entered the 21st century all the long-time residents have known and taken for granted their entire lives -mills, stores, schoolhouses, jobs - has vanished.

The men who live there are all employed by lumber companies if they are employed at all.

A very sinister, very bad man has been tormenting and taunting a "newcomer"- a young, lovely, self sufficient woman. He has been stalking her. He's killed her cat and left it on her back porch steps. He's damaged her car, smashing out windows.

She goes to the sheriff for help.

The law can't help her, he tells her. They can't arrest someone for what a potential victim thinks he *intends* to do.

The sheriff suggests she go to the old mill on the outskirts of town and see an older gentleman named "Whizzer".

The mill turns out be a former factory where chairs were manufactured. It's a place out of time, something from a hundred years ago.

It's Whizzer's home now.

Everyday a group of men gather there - beer drinking, back-roads philosophers telling jokes, opining on the current state of affairs in America, in Vermont, and mostly talking about the past.

Whizzer is the de facto leader of this group.

**"This feeling that Whizzer and the rest of them are all sitting inside a space ship,"**

**Conrad said. "A rocket ship. They're in there, and the ship is traveling. It's moving. It's going so fast. It's going at light speed, you know? And so, the men who are on it don't get old, do they? That's what Einstein said. Isn't it? They don't change. Time doesn't pass for them. Time stretches. It stretches, or it shrinks. Or something. They're out of time. You know?"**

When the young woman appears before these men it's Whizzer who makes the decision to help her. He enlists two men he hires to do odd jobs around the mill: an old man named Lester Speed and his apprentice, a huge, strong young man called Nate The Great.

The three set off to find the villain who's staying way up in the mountains in a notorious place called The Lost Towns ... some lifelong residents believe this place to be haunted. Along the way they encounter assorted violent, dangerous hard cases.

Every other chapter is devoted to expanding the backstory on the villain and the girl by way of the Greek chorus of the duffers sitting around at Whizzer's mill, drinking beer and pontificating.

This slim volume is a terrific read. It is at times hilarious, action-packed and filled with an overpowering sense of dread and suspense.

I've driven through Vermont often -many times on the rural highways that cut through the mountains. The back country can be an especially eerie place to drive through.

On these rural routes you will occasionally drive past mysterious cinder block buildings sitting a couple of yards off the highway with cars and motorcycles parked outside and you can only wonder at what mischief could be at work there.

**The Fort was not the kind of bar where a good Mormon or a good Muslim could get a glass of water. It was not the kind of bar where you stopped for a drink on your way home from work. It was the kind of bar where you stopped for many drinks on your way to work, until soon enough they fired you and you could spend the whole day at the Fort. In converting the building from a garage to a bar... the owner hadn't given a lot of thought to charm. He had walled over the three bay doors using glass blocks at a height of six feet. These were the only thing in the building answering to windows, and each of them held an electric beer sign. You couldn't see into the Fort, and you couldn't see out - but in either case why would you want to?**

I was thoroughly engrossed in this book for 2 days. Maybe it was because I'm a little familiar with how forlorn Vermont can be between the bigger towns and cities but I think mostly I was staggered by the poetic writing in what was basically an old fashioned action novel.

I can't recommend this one highly enough.

## John says

When the local psychopath, Blackway, of a small and remote Vermont town takes it into his head to persecute small-time drug dealer Kevin and Kevin's girl Lillian, Kevin runs for the hills -- well, Florida. But Lillian's made of sterner stuff, and decides to stick around: why should she run when she's done nothing wrong?

Blackway's sadistic killing of her cat changes Lillian's mind enough that she takes her troubles to Sheriff Wingate, who explains to her that there's nothing he can do under law until Blackway turns one of his physical threats into reality. At the same time, Wingate tells Lillian she might go consult the legless old logger Whizzer as to her next course of action.

Whizzer, whose main activity these days is chewing the fat and the neck of a beer bottle with idlers of a similar vintage and inclination, instructs two of his acolytes, the young simpleton giant Nate the Great and the elderly trickster Lester, to help Lillian sort Blackway out. Terminally, if need be.

This is a fine slice of rural noir whose telling owes more than I imagine Freeman would willingly admit to the style of the great Ed McBain (whose passing a few years back is still mourned in my small part of the cosmos).

The *Kirkus* review quote on the back of my edition describes the book as "A small masterpiece" and adds that "If all novels were this good, Americans would read more." While I can understand the reviewer's sentiment -- this is indeed a good, well written and eminently readable novel -- I can't actually endorse it entirely.

Why not? Well, one part of my minor dissent concerns the McBain-esque conversations that, during some earlier parts of the book, turn up with formulaic regularity: We have a chapter following the activities of Lillian, Les and Nate, followed by another during which Whizzer and the other curmudgeons natter wittily but aimlessly, then back to Lillian, Les and Nate, then back to Whizzer and his chums, then . . . It all seems pretty rote, and very soon the Whizzer & Co. conversations, despite their undoubted wit, start to seem more like padding than fun.

My other reservation concerns the strand following the quest of Lillian, Les and Nate to locate Blackway. There's a slight feeling about it of what my old pal John Clute dubbed the plot-coupon story. He was talking in terms of fantasy ("First you must pick up the dragonstone of Doomville to open the Great Black Gate of the Superspliffers, therein you will find the thaumaturge of Gombat who will tell the secret route to Nombaspule where awaits the Rune of Sploot, which you will need if ever you are to contemplate the Cleavage of Naborn . . ."); in this novel there seem to be too many scenes in which Lillian, Les and Nate are conversing with some associate of Gateway's only to be instructed, if they want to find the man, to go talk to *another* associate of Gateway's . . .

Merely by mentioning these quibbles I'm magnifying them out of all proportion. If you enjoyed Zev Berman's 2003 movie *Briar Patch* (vt *Plain Dirty*), with Dominique Swain, chances are you'll adore this novel.

*Go With Me* is about 160 pages long -- about as long as many novels were back in the 1970s and 1980s. According to the gratuitous backmatter (I very rarely read such "added-content" crap because it normally annoys me so much with its risible self-importance, but for once I'm glad I did), various critics got uppity about *Go With Me* because it was "too short." In reality, it does everything it needs to do very well within its extent, and it could actually, I think, have been pruned a little. It's depressing when novels are criticized for having insufficient bloat.

So: mixed feelings, but mainly favorable ones, on the part of this reader. I'll be looking out for more of Freeman's work.

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### **karen says**

i'm not quite sure how to review this. on the one hand, it is a very slight book that occasionally has slices of terse profundity: "*gun's only good when it's the only gun.*" on the other hand, the whole greek chorus conceit comes across more like what i imagine those *sex and the city* broads sound like when they get together and talk about shoes and boys or whatever that show is about. its very gossipy and nearly estrogen-y for a bunch of backwoods boys. but i enjoyed the book - it's a good study break. although it's mind-boggling that not one, but two men have had to go through life with the first name "castle". goodness.

not as good as Serena, but similar, in a way.

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### **TK421 says**

I very seldom go into a book blindly. What that means is I try to do my homework before reading anything. I like to know who the author is; check to see if there is anything else in their oeuvre that has made any buzz, things like that. For the most part, I think I've been able to find some truly great gems this way, not to mention the good fortune of staying away from stinkers. (TWILIGHT I am still miffed at how you duped me.)

Anyway, I was in my favorite used bookstore the other day perusing the shelves when GO WITH ME caught my eye. I was instantly attracted to its cover: blood red images of an old barn and walkway with thick overgrowth on all sides. I looked to see who the author was: Castle Freeman, Jr. Never heard of him. It's probably a pseudonym, I thought. So I started flipping through the pages. It was sparsely written; short chapters. Then I looked at the cover some more and in the lower left-hand corner, Charles Bock compared this book to the works of Cormac McCarthy and urged Richard Price to read this book. Intereeeestttiiiiinnnggg.

I flipped to the front pages to see what other reviewers said about the book: wry, primal, epic, impossible to put down, taut, filled with corny irony and shrewd wisdom, an elegant little thriller, a masterpiece of black comedy. And then I came across what the Kirkus Reviews had to say about the book: "If all novels were this good, Americans would read more." That was it; I bought the novel.

When I started reading it, the blurb was right: I didn't want to put it down. The story held me captive, not like an invited guest; rather, I was its hostage. Every word and sentence and paragraph soon reshaped itself and the concept of reading this book vanished...it was like I had heard these stories before, from some old-timer on a park bench as he spit black tobacco from a toothless mouth.

The story itself is quite simple: a woman (Lillian) is wronged by a bad dude (Blackway); the sheriff won't help her, she's on her own; enter the two most unlikely candidates for the job, Les and Nate the Great. The three of them embark on a journey across locales of Vermont that could be anywhere: an out-of-the-way hotel where indiscretions of the flesh are a norm; a bar meant not for joviality but to render one drunk enough to forgot about the meaningless life they live; an abandoned logging camp that now only has a lone school bus as the only surviving structure. The villain, Blackway is more than just a villain; he is "what organized crime would be, if organized crime was in the area."

And then there are the added bonuses of the novel: a Shakespearean chorus of old men that contemplate life and the future of their small town, who add comedic moments in this dark and bleak tale; the setting itself: a thick and green world of tress and wild grasses that have never allowed men to tame it; there are conspiracies of life, ghosts, and the true reasons as to why the sheriff would not help poor Lillian. There are underlying messages of chivalry and courage; and there is the contemplation of time and what it can do to an area. There is the concept of change, and if change is even possible.

Ultimately, this is the type of story one searches for and is only lucky to find once in a great while. I will definitely be searching for more of Castle Freeman's books.

VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Best line in book: "Gun's only good when it's the only gun."

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### **Buchdokter says**

Seit den Analysen zur letzten US-Wahl steht der Typ des Hinterwäldlers dauerhaft im Mittelpunkt des Öffentlichen Interesses. Vermont oder West Virginia, bisher eher Ziel von Wanderurlauben, sehen Beobachter aus dem Ausland nun auch als Lebensraum des echten amerikanischen Machos mit unverrückbarem Weltbild. In so ein Biotop in den Bergen Vermonts ist Lillian geraten. Sie stammt nicht von hier, kann also bei Problemen über keine Hausmacht von kräftigen Brüdern oder Tanzstunden-Partnern verfügen. Lillian fühlt sich von Blackway verfolgt und bedroht. Sie hat nur dummerweise keine Zeugen dafür, dass es Blackway war, der ihr Auto demoliert und ihre Katze getötet hat. Und Leuten von außerhalb kann man sowieso nicht glauben. Als Lillian Hilfe beim Sheriff sucht, wächst beim Leser die Ahnung, dass Lillian so gar keine Vorstellung davon hat, wie hier in den Bergen Konflikte gelöst werden. Der schickt sie nämlich in die Stuhlfabrik und zu Alonzo, der nach einem Unfall im Rollstuhl sitzt. Der Lösungsweg des regionalen Männer-Netzwerkes ist ebenso einfach wie brachial. Wer weit ab vom Schuss lebt, muss sich nur zu helfen wissen. Auf dem Weg zur Lösung sind sprachlich simple Dialoge zu verfolgen, die ihre Komik u. a. daraus entwickeln, dass sie von der Henne aufs Ei kommen und eher von Einheimischen begriffen werden. Die Zusammenarbeit einiger Hinterwäldler-Helden und ein denkbarer Bezug zur Denkwahl in den USA konnte mich in dem sehr kurzen Text amüsieren ...

3 1/2 von 5 Punkten

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### **Etienne says**

Quand j'avais vu le film adapté de ce roman, je m'étais dit que le livre serait sûrement meilleur par la profondeur des personnages et tout... ce ne fut pas le cas. Le livre n'est pas moins bon, ni meilleur, c'était une adaptation très fidèle, d'une histoire simple, mais divertissante dans laquelle un trio particulier se voit «obligé» de prendre la justice en main. Thriller/policier assez lent, mais avec un rythme qui nous tiens accroché malgré tout. Une belle représentation de petits villages de bûcherons, comme on en voit tellement au Québec, dans le Maine et dans ce cas-ci, au Vermont, qui tombe en décrépitude dans notre monde moderne. Pas un chef-d'oeuvre, mais un livre qui m'a beaucoup plu et que j'ai dévoré.

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### **S.R. Dixon says**

A quick and entertaining read, but very much a middle-of-the-shelf kind of book. The book's best strengths for me were in the visual descriptions of the small New England towns and the natural landscape, which become as vibrant a presence as any character. Unfortunately, I also found the characters to be about as vibrant as the background. I enjoy minimalist writing like Hemingway or Cormac McCarthy (to whom Mr. Freeman has been compared in other reviews), but this book did not create the same sense of depth and texture. I found the characters in *Go With Me* to be rather flat and generic, and the plot itself loped along like a dog trying to find a place to lay down. When it finally did, the climax was rather anti-climactic.

In short, I don't mind the time I took to read this book, but I have a hard time imagining I would ever have the burning desire to read it again.

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### **Kayla says**

1 Star.

Finally! It took all my strength (and ocd tendencies) not to abandon this book. It was so incredibly slow. I was bored out of my mind. I didn't enjoy the style of writing, none of the characters were even the slightest bit interesting. I just didn't like anything about this one, I actually dreaded picking it up every time. It took me forever to get through this little 160 page book. Blah!

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