



What We Saw

Ryan Casey

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Liam and Adam arrive at their grandparents' caravan site like any pair of young cousins: mischievous and fascinated by mystery and adventure.

But when the disappearance of their dog leads to a terrifying discovery deep in the nearby woods, Liam and Adam are plunged into a very adult world of secrecy and suspicion. As the story twists and turns towards a shocking conclusion, the secrets of the seemingly sleepy community begin to unravel...

What We Saw is a touching and thrilling British mystery novel with elements of comedy, friendship, fear and loss. Told from the innocent perspective of a child, it poses the ultimate question: if you stumbled upon a shocking discovery as a child, how would you react?

What We Saw Details

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Author : Ryan Casey

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From Reader Review What We Saw for online ebook

Becky says

What We Saw was an exceptionally well written look into adult issues as understood by young people. The authors ability to become a 12 year old boy to tell the story was uncanny. This was a good, quick read that explored major issues from an often unexplored perspective.

Liz Terek says

'What We Saw' is a tale of 2 young cousins. These boys, Adam & Liam, are spending a summer together that they'll never forget.

Both children have less than perfect home lives with their parents. Adam is dealing with his parents' double suicide. Liam's parents are separated. Gran & Granddad are their summertime chaperones at their caravan community. While trying their best to parent the cousins, the elderly couple are trying to overcome their own grief.

Like most young boys, they're inquisitive & energetic. Building a den to play in & palling around with a young lady are how they spend their days. Fancying themselves amateur detectives, they record unusual occurrences & evidence in their notebooks. Although they dream of achieving fame, they never really imagined that they'd come face to face with a real crime.

All that changes when the grandparents' dog takes off. Although they have a few adults they could ask, they want to do this on their own. Having no one to help them, they start off into the woods to search for her themselves. Once inside, they happen upon a crime scene. Will Adam & Liam be able to put all the pieces together to stop a killer?

From page one, there was something about this novel that caught me. I felt for these 2 young men & all they'd been through. I loved that they were cousins & stuck together. They reminded me of my youngest son & nephew in all their escapades.

While enjoying the boys' adventures, I had no clue where the story was going. What a great surprise twist! Our author did a fantastic job of blending the boys' personal stories with the mystery. Fabulous writing and fabulous characters coupled with an awesome plot make for one amazing novel. He has made me a fan of his work & I look forward to reading more offerings from him. You can find this incredible novel at book retailers including Amazon & Goodreads.

I was blessed to receive 1 eBook copy to write my review. No further compensation was provided & all opinions are mine.

Scot says

I understand what the author is trying to do here, and I wish him well in the future as a writer. He is trying to communicate the internal struggles three young children go through dealing with some harsh realities of life, while playing together at solving "mysteries" by doing undercover investigative work. The setting is a trailer park in the UK. The time period appears to be early 2000s: there is a Coldplay song on the radio that a character disdains at one point. Curiously, cell phones are presented as exotic--but maybe that is due to so many retired folks living in the trailer park. The epilogue is "ten years later" and it appears to be the present, so I'm guessing, yes, we are supposed to believe these young folks (and, actually, all the characters) interact the way they do in the early 21st century.

I get the context, I follow the plot (seen from the kids' perspectives, most notably the main character Liam's). What I don't believe is the way the kids are portrayed. The two fellows are cousins, 10 and 12 years old, staying with their mutual grandparents. Their dialogues don't ring true. To be frank, nobody's does. The boys shift back and forth from naive to the point of simpletons to brave and sensitive heroes, challenging the unknown based on the moral guidance of their consciences. No one talks to each other in a realistic way and there is a lot of inconsequential and repetitive conversation.

This is a good starting point as far as storyline and plot ideas go, but it appears to me to be a first attempt at something that would have benefitted from more revisions, deeper editing, greater flushing out of distinctive character development. I see almost all of the reviews here are raving about how incredibly excellent this story is. I wonder who writes those reviews, why they write them, and what range of literary works they are comparing this to. I do not mean that as a condemnation of this writer, but rather I am wondering what has happened to quality checks in literature with the proliferation of self publishing.

No artist paints a masterpiece every time, and few paint a masterpiece the very first time they pick up a paintbrush. Sometimes, instead of telling those we care about everything they have done is superb, we might do them a greater service by pointing out some areas where, just perhaps, there is room for improvement.

James says

Ryan Casey's debut novel *What We Saw* is a rare treat—one of those novels that refuses to be put down. I'm a fast reader to begin with and can average a novel or two a week, but when I can finish half a book in one sitting, I know I've got my hands on something special.

The story deals with these young friends as they get a little too deep into one of the mysteries they so like to solve. They're in well over their head almost immediately, but believe they can handle it—and things go downhill from there. The stakes quickly escalate to the point where there's no option but to go forward, and the reader is relentlessly carried along with them.

Casey's other releases are tense, but this one is a nail biter. The story starts out innocuously enough, but hits you like a brick by the end of Chapter 7. I've said before that Casey is good at creating tension, and this book is an excellent example. It never lets up—but while the plot races along, Casey still makes the time to get to know his characters, something that's easily overlooked in some thrillers. Liam, Adam and Emily are very well written, their dialogue and thought processes are spot on for their age, and it's easy to care about them. This makes their story all the more powerful, especially in the last half of the book.

There is one section of the book I thought could have been done without; without spoiling the plot, I'll say that Liam is taken away from the campsite where the novel takes place. While this episode gives some good background information about his parents and situation at home, I felt like it was simply an excuse to get Liam out of the campsite so an important plot point could take place. It does give an interesting bit of information on Liam's father, but other than that, the plot point seemed circumstantial.

That's a small speck of dirt, however, on an otherwise well polished book. The writing is mature, the characters feel real, and the book is peppered with just the right amount of levity to balance the tension. It's a wonderful first novel, and a sign of things to come for Casey. Definitely a name to watch out for.

James says

I read a lot of books. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry; epics, plays, novels and short stories. I average between one and two regular novels a week, depending on how easily I 'slip' into a book.

I finished What We Saw in two days, but only because I started reading it late on day one. Most of the book was devoured in one sitting. This is the best indication I can give that a book is exceptional.

I read this expecting a mystery/suspense novel, a genre Casey has some obvious talent in writing. I found that, but was pleasantly surprised to find a coming of age novel too. Liam and Adam are the main characters, but Liam takes centre stage; his arc over the course of the book is well plotted and moves along at a solid pace. The innocence of this ten year old boy lends a nice tone to the novel; despite the very 'adult' goings-on, Casey manages to give the mystery a great adventurous flair. The boys are so caught up in the mystery that they don't see the gravity of the situation until it's almost too late--which only gives their shattered innocence that much more of an impact.

The mystery at the heart of the novel is great. It kept me guessing, and though the book gives you some clear antagonists, nothing is exactly what it seems. I found myself surprised by every turn--yet looking back on it, there were enough hints that nothing came out of left field. But the mystery takes a backseat, I think, to the coming of age story, and this is What We Saw's greatest strength. It takes the novel out of the realm of just another detective story and highlights it as an important read. More than a story where two investigative kids see something they shouldn't have, it becomes about a crucial turning point in their lives, and how one little incident can inform the person you're going to become as an adult. Highly recommended.

Patrick Dorsey says

Ryan Casey's debut novel WHAT WE SAW is a good read.

It *is* slow to start, the story taking its time in establishing the characters and the setting. But once all the pieces are in place it becomes a solid mystery, with its two young protagonists battling the demons of their own lives (both the pains of adolescence/growing up and those life just drops on some people) while struggling to unravel a terrible mystery the two stumble across in the woods near their grandparents' home. Although the narrator's voice occasionally slips (at times more a 12 year old recounting his adventure but occasionally seeming more an adult looking back on his adventure as a 12 year old) the main characters consistently behave and respond as kids, never falling into the too-smart, too-competent, too-clever-talking cutouts that plague so many similar novels.

I've read Casey plans on a possible sequel. I'd definitely take a look when it happens.

Becky says

Great

A great book that kept me reading. I don't normally like mysteries but this was great and kept me on the edge of my seat.

Paula Cyrus says

Great book for pre-teens

It was well written with believable characters. The plot line was good enough to keep me reading even though the intended audience was pre-teens. The ending was unexpected. I never would of guessed the horrific act one character committed. The epilogue gives closure for the 3 main characters.

Jack says

I love Ryan Casey's writing blog, and so I was excited to give his debut novel a try.

Liam and Adam are two boys who love solving mysteries - perhaps not always mysteries that are actually real, but mysteries nonetheless. They're both great characters and I enjoyed their banter; it reminded me of the way my brother and I used to chat when we were out adventuring in the woods in our youth (even though the boys here are cousins).

Of course, the boys soon discover something utterly real and very disturbing indeed ...

A great read for any mystery fan, well done Mr Casey!

Laurie says

Two young cousins are spending the summer with their grandparents in a sort of RV park. The park is located near a wooded area and there is a beach nearby. Liam's parents' marriage may be ending. The arguments and discord between his parents have escalated to the point where they felt it would be better for Liam to spend some time with his grandparents while they decide whether or not to dissolve their marriage. Adam's situation is even sadder as he is grieving the death of his parents under truly tragic circumstances. The elderly grandparents are loving caregivers who are also struggling through the grief of losing their daughter.

The boys entertain themselves by playing games and exploring. Their favorite pastime is solving the mysteries they discover around the RV Caravan. They enjoy being fearless detectives and write their observations and clues in notebooks they carry everywhere. However, when their grandparents' dog runs off, they give chase. It's on a foray into the forbidden area of the woods that they see something horrible. What follows tests the boys' courage and forces them to face decisions for which they are unprepared. At times funny and then frightening, the author does a great job keeping the tension and suspense rolling. There is an innocence, and a delightful sense of camaraderie and (occasional) rivalry between Liam and Adam. I enjoyed the story and was surprised several times; especially at the ending. I loved that the grandparents and others within the small community had their own demons and secrets, as well. This was an easy read; beautifully written.

I received a digital copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest review.

Reviewed by Laurie-J

Will Overby says

In this impressive debut novel, two young cousins witness a shocking scene in the woods and must decide whether to report what they have seen or try to solve the mystery themselves. But as they continue to keep their secret, they begin to realize they are in great danger and the enigma runs much deeper than they first thought.

Ryan Casey has created a solid world of believable characters and vivid settings. I have to admit to being tripped up by a few British colloquialisms, but they didn't detract from the story. The plot itself moves like the first hill of a roller coaster - slowly and deliberately at first, building anticipation but never boring, then rushing headlong to the conclusion at a breakneck pace. Like the reader above, I finished the last third of the book in one sitting, thinking I would read "just a few more pages" but I was unable to tear myself away.

While this is only Casey's first novel, I hope there will be many more to come. I can't wait to read more from this fresh new voice of suspense!

Tiffany says

Adam and Liam are spending the summer with their grandparents. They are both facing difficult family struggles. Adam and Liam think of themselves as detectives and spend much of their time solving mysteries. This inquisitiveness leads to a shocking discovery. Adam and Liam are determined to solve the shocking mystery on their own. Will their secrecy lead them to solving this mystery or down a disastrous end?

This story began slowly for me but it gradually increased momentum as the suspense was building. The boys have to grow up quickly and make adult decisions. It was difficult to know who to trust as it seemed everyone had a secret to keep. Casey weaves an elaborate tale that builds the relationship between Adam and Liam while allowing them to grow and come to terms with their situations.

Christine Casbar says

Didn't like the ending, should have been more elaborate on the details of what her life was like afterwards. And should explained what happened with father, Donald and mother. More details on how the boys coped.

Jaylyn Styles says

The mystery will instantly catch up on you! This book is beyond awesome as I can say, I read this in a matter of days and I was just blown away by the details and how great the writing of this book is. Obviously the author caught me off guard with his picturesque writing and detailed depiction of the story. I rarely read mystery books since it tends to bore me wanting to know what will happen next but this one is a straight on read. I didn't suffer from the what-will-happen-next syndrome, I was patiently waiting for the story to develop with the author established at the beginning. I commend Mr. Casey for writing this novel. The

characters and mystery has a great mix of balance that you'll just want to read on, plus the fluid writing. I can't say much more, I just love the author could give little hints throughout the book. I was suddenly caught off guard after knowing what happened next!

Stephanie (the nerdy princess) says

Two young cousins are spending the summer with their grandparents in a sort of RV park. The park is located near a wooded area and there is a beach nearby. Liam's parents' marriage may be ending. The arguments and discord between his parents have escalated to the point where they felt it would be better for Liam to spend some time with his grandparents while they decide whether or not to dissolve their marriage. Adam's situation is even sadder as he is grieving the death of his parents under truly tragic circumstances. The elderly grandparents are loving caregivers who are also struggling through the grief of losing their daughter.

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