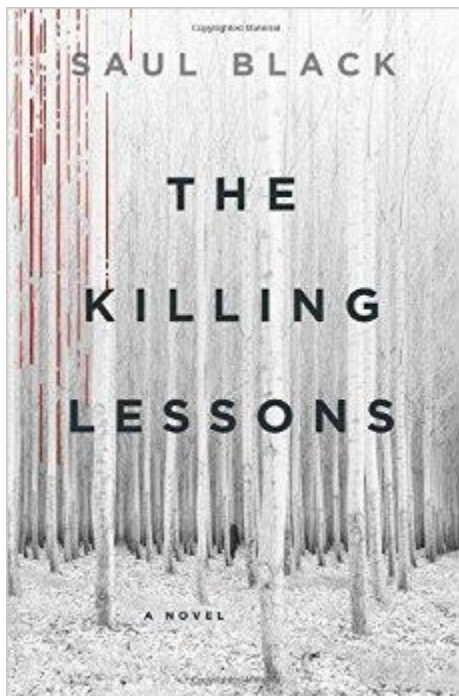


The Cause of a Hacksaw Manicure

Amanda Beswick



Saul Black tells the throws his readers to two merciless

killers as he spins a tale full of victims in The Killing

Lessons. His story begins with Rowena who finds herself

in the presence of two very dangerous men in her home.

The story follows the tribulations of Nell and her desperate

attempts to survive. As the book unfolds, new characters

are introduced, including; the two dangerous men turned

killers (Xander and Paulie), the detective trying to solve

the mystery behind these men (Valerie), the elderly man

who is desperately fighting to save Nell (Angelo), and the

mens' new victim (Claudia). Black follows the array of characters, allowing the reader a chance

to see the situation through said many different sets of eyes. This proves for a deeper connection

and understanding of each character. The characters find even though they are states apart, and

incredibly different from each other, that their lives are connected. This connection leaves the

reader breathless and wondering how such a thing could have happened.

One important aspect of this book are the points of view it takes on. Each chapter is focused on one of the characters, but are all seen through the eyes of an omniscient third person.

It's almost as if Black intended it to be read the way a horror movie is watched. Black jumps from character to character, sometimes leaving one character in a deadly situation without returning until a handful of chapters later. Though this allows for an interesting view on the characters, sometimes his movements from characters felt jerky and forced. In some parts I had to return to earlier chapters in order to figure out what setting or action I was in when we last saw the character. Though this was hard to get used to, in the end I thought that it worked in the book's favor. It added a sense of incredible suspense as you fumbled to get through the chapters to see the whole picture.

Black shows the reader very closely how the killers, specifically the "alpha" Xander, do what they do and why. This perspective gives the book an ominous feel as you fight the urge to cringe at his actions as he goes through his spree of viciousness.

"Your whole life could turn out to be nothing but you waiting to meet your own giant stupidity."

This line rings true throughout the entirety of the piece, which gave the book a string of dark humor in every scene. The sequence of events not only further unravels Xander's plans but continues to cost the other characters' precious time, furthering the mistakes made by each one. This caused me to constantly gasp and say "No! Why would you do that?!" as I scrambled to keep reading.

"But the ropes were the ropes. The knife was the knife. The men were the men. Physics was physics. The world was the world, filled with obedient necessities. If you do x, then y would follow. The world was completely innocent. Evil was solely human."

The villains in this book were not “monsters” they were human. They had childhoods, tough childhoods, that affected them. It’s the fact that Black shows these villains as human throughout the entirety of this book that makes it so terrifying. Their acts seem more heinous when you think of them as human beings, and Black makes sure you remember that they are just like everyone else.

This book was written to be read in one sitting. It captivates you with its complexity of character and plot. This book doesn’t allow you to put it down for a moment for fear that you might miss something integral. If one is looking for a book to keep them up late into the night while nervously biting their nails, this would be the book. Black spins a horrifying tale of love and death, making it one of the best psychological thrillers that I have had the pleasure to enjoy.

The Killing Lessons:

Author: Saul Black

<http://www.riversendbookstore.com/book/9781250067555>

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Amanda Beswick is an avid reader of thrillers that cause her nails to suffer from biting and the lights to be kept on at night. She is currently working towards a Zoology major with a minor in Creative Writing. Though she is an unpublished writer, she nonetheless strives to create pieces of art in her writing.