

# Fragments of a Compelling Story

Oregon writer's debut novel a hack job, literally

Remember the old days of pulp fiction, when writers eschewed plotlines and pithy social commentary in favor of stories loaded with violence, gore and sex? In Natasha Stultz's self-published venture into fiction writing, *Fragments of a Social Conscience*, the Eugene author confronts the reader with far more brutality than any non-sociopath could ever dream up.

This macabre novella follows Saffron, a freelance journalist from Saddle Foot, Ore., as she covers the exploits of Angel, a serial killer/environmentalist seeking revenge for her dearly departed father. There is a plot, but it serves as little more than a vehicle for the reader to get from grisly murder to grislier murder. Angel's killings are meant to represent a kind

of poetic justice, as when a governor interested in deforestation is put through a wood chipper, but such violence goes comically overboard the further one gets into the story. Is being anally raped by a mastiff and then electrocuted truly a fitting end for a sex trafficker? Or a whaler having his penis impaled by the bone of a whale?

All the while, the author makes very certain just how frequently (and easily) the characters are sexually aroused, be it by committing a gruesome murder or being questioned by federal agents. The vast majority of the characters simply want to knock boots with every person they meet. The whole book reads like a pornographer's take on David Fincher's film noir *Se7en*.

*Fragments* is a very raw — by which I mean unedited — exploration into the “divine work” of a demented sociopath. The transitions between scenes are unmarked, rare double contractions are used, some terms are explained on the second reference, if at all, and frequent word choice errors mar the unnumbered pages. While there is a thirteenth chapter and a fifteenth one, Chapter 14 is strangely absent from the book — kidnapped, perhaps, by a serial killer.

This novel is a prudent reminder that, while anyone can publish a book these days, it's not an easy task: Take your time, and work with a good editor.

*Fragments of a Social Conscience* is available at Amazon.com for \$12.33 in book form, \$2.99 on your Kindle and is for sale at Blue Moon Books. **EW**



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