

The killer in their own minds

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



A novel set in Baker City? Now that would seem an unlikely setting for a literary endeavor. Or maybe the perfect one.

"I guess the story starts three years ago in a small town in Oregon," author Bobby Hall opens "Supermarket."

"I suppose every goddamn town in Oregon is small as towns go. Baker City, White as f***, surprise, surprise. Not far from Idaho. Barely 50 kids in my graduating class. You know what that means."

To Seaside, Baker City, population 15,980, might be a home away from home, or a stop on I-84. Seaside attorney Dan Van Thiel hails from Baker City. EO Media Group just purchased the Baker City Herald, a tri-weekly since 1870.

But as a location for "Supermarket," "there's no connection that we're aware of" between the author and the remote Eastern Oregon community, said Kelly Sullivan a publicity rep from Simon & Schuster.

Ultimately the book has far less to do with Baker City or supermarket operations and much more to deal with a modern psyche caught in a matrix of their own making: replete with demons, monsters, self-realization — and romance.

Rapper and an author

Bobby Hall, aka the rapper "Logic," is the first rapper to become a New York Times No. 1 best-selling author with his novel "Supermarket."

When I picked up "Supermarket" at Powell's, I wasn't familiar with Logic, whose "Black Spiderman" won an MTV award in 2017 and whose "1-800-273-8255" was nominated for best song in 2018.

The first and outer layer of the plot involves a writer unable to finish his novel, living at home with his mother, a girlfriend who unceremoniously dumps him. The character Flynnagin A. Montgomery — Flynn — has no prospects, no future, an author with a mountain of rejections.

When a high-powered publisher responds to his latest pitch — a "realist novel set in a suburban supermarket" — Flynn needs to follow through on a book that promises "to mimic how life is lived, in all its boring and profound mundaneness."

Let's put it this way: Flynn's adventures, as narrated from his days as a "floater" at Muldoon's Supermarket is anything but boring or mundane.

The author creates a world of precisely drawn characters that provide romantic possibilities and dark despair — with reality shifts, fourth-wall breakdowns between reader and author, and some heartbreaking soul-searching that ends in a mental health clinic and a battle-to-the-death with Flynn's



Simon & Schuster

Bobby Hall, aka "Logic," author of "Supermarket." The novel uses Baker City as its setting.

BAKER CITY?

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said Kelly Sullivan a publicity rep from Simon & Schuster based in New York.

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evil doppelganger. Frank.

"It felt like something out of a twisted movie," Hall writes. "But I guess even the craziest movie concepts stem from real life."

Into a 'fantasy' world

Hall isn't the only author whose characters literally jump off the page.

Haruki Murakami's "Killing Commendatore" is set on the North Japanese Coast, in the Sendai region, a terrain very much like the one we know on the North Coast, with mountains to the sea, with wildlife "including the wild boar and the monkey."

It is in the years before the March 11, 2011, earthquake that was to destroy much of the region and take thousands of lives.

A portrait painter makes a retreat from his daily world after a separation from his wife, to paint and regroup in the empty house of a childhood friend whose father is confined to a nursing home.

In the attic is a canvas, sealed and boxed — "Killing Commendatore."

As the protagonist gazes upon the canvas, a series of supernatural events begin that lead him into a "fantasy" world that slips in and out of what we might call normality.

"As if on cue," Murakami writes, "weird things have happened one after the other since I stumbled on this painting."

Murakami's dramatic odyssey ends with an underworld journey through stifling darkness and a flowing river "along the interstice between presence and absence."

As in Hall's "Supermarket," art doesn't imitate life, and life doesn't imitate art, but they become one. Each book reaches plot climaxes where the authors battle not other people — but creations of their own mind.

Each protagonist is forced to "kill" in order to survive. Unlike noir writers like Jim Thompson, who's "killer inside me" is a "sociopath with sadistic sexual tastes," these characters are well-meaning creative types (writer, artist) battling mythic inner demons in hand-to-hand combat.

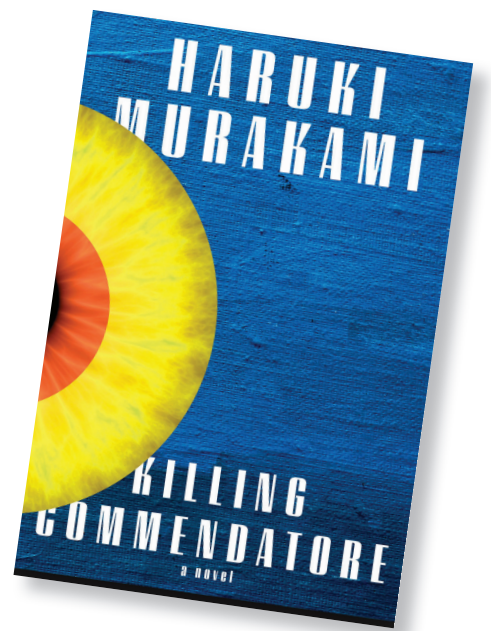
In "Supermarket," it is "Frank," a bedeviling voice in Flynn's head that appeals to his deepest insecurities; and in "Killing Commendatore," the character in the portrait must be vanquished.

"The Commendatore had died to make my quest possible. I had stabbed him with my own hands."

Meanwhile: "I had been Frank all along."



Haruki Murakami



Hall's narrator Flynn laments. "I made Frank up and made him real in my own head. He was a complete illusion, a hallucination, an apparition."

And that is the way it is for these two authors, who recognize in their structure that the plot is limited only by our layers of imagination and power of creation.

It's not that these authors are scoffing at our physical world and our conventional frameworks. They're simply asking, what lay beneath, and then, beyond that.

For writers, for portrait artists — anyone who considers themselves to possess the power of imagination — these are questions that lurk in all of us. If we open up our creative juices, if we look to the inspirations of the world around it, what will come in? And how will we handle it? Are we a match for our own imaginations?

Best for readers of these two contemporary novels: they keep you turning the pages. Both are filled with surprises of exhilaration and self-discovery.

"I wanted to write something I'd want to read," Hall writes. "And isn't that what art is about, anyway? Expressing yourself the way you want to."

Have you ever played Seaside-Opoly?

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



Growing up in the 60s, nearly every household boasted a collection of board games. My own family owned "Sorry," "Clue," "Concentration," "MouseTrap," "The Game of Life" and of course, "Monopoly," the popular board game where you could learn how to buy real estate, collect rents and build hotels. "Monopoly" was especially fun as it is set in the storied East Coast beach community, Atlantic City, which is where I grew up.

Board games were popular back then and they are again today, especially in beach vacation towns where they give you something to do when it rains.

Seaside-Opoly is a new board game released in July 2019 showcasing the favorite landmarks and most well-known parts of Seaside. According to its manufacturer, Late for the Sky Productions, people outside of Seaside know little or nothing about Del Rey Beach or The Prom, but if you're from Seaside or have spent any time in Seaside, just seeing those place names, or actually being one of those place names, is a thrill.

If you're wondering how the city of Seaside came to be a game, Bill Schulte, a principal of Late for the Sky, said the company researched multiple cities and communities in Oregon to make a very localized game.

"We always make sure the locals love

their town before we take on a project," he said, although he didn't specify how that love was measured. "We make the content as authentic as possible. To reach as many people as we can, we launch the sales exclusively at the local Walmart store. Naturally Walmart likes to connect to their local customers, and everyone appreciates the fact the games are made in the USA." He said other Oregon cities are on the drawing board for game development and manufacturing.

Seaside-Opoly is made in Cincinnati.

As far back as 1985, Late for the Sky began creating licensed collegiate board games with a property-trading theme. The company has no affiliation with Hasbro, the makers of Monopoly.

The company is proud to say they produce a completely earth-friendly product. All of the paper involved in making their games is recycled. The fiberboard used in making the set-up boxes and game boards is recycled material. Late for the Sky is an alcohol-free printing operation that uses only soy-based inks. Corn-based shrink wrap is currently being used, and will soon replace all petroleum-based shrink film. Plastic game trays that hold game parts, currently a high-impact styrene, are being replaced by a water-

bottle-grade #1 recyclable material. The metal game tokens are being transitioned from lead-free pewter to zinc. Recycled glass is becoming an alternative to styrene "house and hotel" game pieces.

Property locations featured in the Seaside-Opoly game were in part informed through public access sites like Google Maps and Trip Advisor.

"We also relied on information through the local chamber of commerce and a Walmart sales rep who knows the region," said Michael Schulte, the marketing manager for Late for the Sky.

"We took our notes and compared them to theirs."

Featured in the game are outdoor family attractions such as the Lewis and Clark Trail, Quatark Park, the End of the Trail statue at the Turnaround, as well as food attractions including Ruby's Roadside Grill and the Pig 'N Pancake.

No one from Seaside's city government was contacted regarding the making of the game. Mayor Jay Barber called it "a good marketing tool for the city."

So far, Seaside-Opoly has been launched exclusively at the Walmart in Warrenton. It retails for \$19.98.

Looking for a useful, fun gift for your Seaside beach house? This could be it.



PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monday, Aug. 26
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, Sept. 3
Community Center Commission meeting, 10:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, board workshop, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, Sept. 4
Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Thursday, Sept. 5
Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Monday, Sept. 9
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, Sept. 12
Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., Seaside Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave.

Tuesday, Sept. 17
Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside School District Board of Directors, 7 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., work session, City Hall, 989 Broadway.



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