



A Pagan's Nightmare

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Who's ever heard of a reverse Rapture? Larry Hutch may have a few loose screws in his head, but he's determined to create a hit with his latest manuscript. While dealing with personal crises, he conceives of a strange new world: on a routine Monday morning in Atlanta, an unwary "pagan" finds himself one of the last remaining unbelievers in a world populated by Christians. Christians can buy gas for twelve cents a gallon, while everyone else (the pagans, that is) has to pay \$6.66. The radio stations alter all song lyrics to conform to "Christian" standards-the Beatles belt out "I Wanna Hold Your Tithe"; Abba's "Dancing Queen" becomes "Dancing's Wrong." Even French fries, newly labeled "McScriptures," are tools for evangelism. Larry's novel is a big hit with his agent, Ned. But Ned's wife-a committed Southern Baptist-is less than amused. And Larry has yet to show the manuscript to his new girlfriend, even though he's made her the unsuspecting heroine. It will take deft handling from both men to keep their lives and their relationships intact when the world witnesses A PAGAN'S NIGHTMARE.

A Pagan's Nightmare Details

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From Reader Review A Pagan's Nightmare for online ebook

Niteshayde says

Wow! Was this bad! I think the book is supposed to cater to non-believers as it tries to show the scary side of what the world would be like if it was run by christians. I'm not really sure who the author intended his audience to be, but the self aggrandizing fourth wall stuff is irritating. I get that it's a satire, and as an atheist myself I have no qualms with poking fun at religious zealots, but it could've been done much better. The characters were shallow, the plot was "meh" and frankly I was bored. It had an interesting concept, it just fell flat in the execution. As a personal note, I saw that someone wrote that it would've been more fun in reverse; i.e. The last christian on earth vs last non-believer, but honestly, where would that story be? Most "non-believers" I know don't give a crap if you are or are not religious.

Marliss says

This was kind of a fun book. It uses humor to make a very important point about how the world views Christians because of how some behave. I found myself reading to find out what happened, and then was caught unaware and impressed by the point that was revealed at the end.

Joy says

I stole this line from someone else's review: "This is religious satire, masquerading as a post-apocalyptic comedy, disguised as social commentary."

I chose this book (on CD) based on the unique premise - the last remaining pagan alive is trapped in a world where he is constantly punished after religious "zealots" take over the world. As an "unfortunate," he pays more for gas than believers, signs from God are written to him on billboards, and a reward is set for his capture and conversion. It's actually a story within a story - the zealot story is a screenplay, and the interaction between the agent and writer parallels the screenplay. It is set primarily in Atlanta - which was fun since I listened to it on the drive from Nashville to Athens (through Atlanta), and I think it is probably an easy read (although a little too slow moving for a book on CD). I was disappointed through much of the first half of the book, and although it redeems itself at the end, I still have some reservations. I'd love to talk with someone about it - it has real spiritual (not necessarily zealot) undertones - which are interesting and have kept me thinking about it. But at the same time, I probably wouldn't recommend it.

Marcia says

While it wasn't Flabbergasted, Delirious Summer, or Lost in Rooville, A Pagan's Nightmare definitely allowed Blackston to explore his literary creativity. While I expected more humor and laugh-out-loud moments, I admire his attempt to poke fun at the religious commercialism that has exploded in past years. He also surprised me with the ending, in which he suggested that the story was "a non-Christian's comic allegory of hell disguised as apocalyptic spoof." I concluded the reading of the novel by looking inwardly and asking

myself to which character do I most strongly relate? So, in that regard, Blackston achieves his purpose through the novel, which is not to bash on non-believers or condone the movements of the extreme zealots but to spark "afterlife discussions."

Worth reading, but definitely different from his previous works. I love the cover on this novel and the spoofs within its pages. He truly nails some of the depictions he has created in presenting the efforts of the zealots. Actually, in some cases, those efforts probably to send the "unfortunate" as Blackston calls them to "run for their lives."

Blackston inspires me as a writer. One reason that I enjoy his works is the fact that he left his employment on faith that he could successfully complete a novel. As a result, he has published four books and is most likely gearing up for more. Now, if I could just sit down and begin writing.

Mamabee says

I think this book tried to satirize just a few too many things, and ended up missing the mark for virtually all of them. The self-referential story-within-a-story could have been amusingly ironic, but came across as mildly irritating, especially by the end - if it was a movie, it would have featured the director entering the scene in a cameo experience and saying, "So, did you like it? Should we make a sequel? I knew you'd like it! This was a fantastic movie, wasn't it?!"

I was halfway into the book before I could figure out whether the book was intended to satirize commercialized Christianity to unbelievers, or to believers. I think he was trying to market it to both, and it didn't quite work. By the end, it was much more evident that it should have been aimed toward Christians who are wearied and sickened by the multi-million-dollar "put a dove on it" industry that sells a sanitized, Americanized Jesus-y lifestyle. There were a few good zingers aimed at that industry, but not nearly enough to atone for the frankly unbelievable plot - the "movie script" story-within-a-story read like a not-funny-enough takeoff on Dave Barry's "Big Trouble", and the plot line about the agent and the writer didn't have enough credibility to provide the needed contrast between "reality" and the hopeful movie script. On the other hand, if it was aimed at the Christian market, the final inexplicable descent into preachiness in the last chapter might not have been needed. He'd made his point already, and it was disappointing to have the usual Christian fiction altar call tacked onto the end, particularly since that is a staple in exactly the kind of literature purchased by the culture he's satirizing.

A couple of flat-out typographical errors confirmed my suspicion that this hadn't gone through a rigorous enough editing process. It's too bad - Blackston has some funny moments and his writing has real potential, but this seems like it might have done better if it had been more clearly directed toward a Christian audience, or even possibly written for the YA Christian market. The title should have gotten axed first thing - "pagan" doesn't mean "non-Christian", it's a specific category of religious belief. That alone would be off-putting to more informed readers, and makes it obvious from the outset that the book is written from a perspective that isn't quite aware of the non-Christian market.

Meredith says

I dig the tag on this book that says "quirky", it sums it up. The idea of a book within a book could easily be

confusing but the segways he uses are brilliant. The middle of the book did get a bit repetitious and that caused it to drag a bit. My one real issue, and I can't tell if the author did this to highlight the ignorance of the general populace in his book or if it was his own misunderstanding, is the use of the word "pagan" as a catch-all name for anyone not Christian or unreligious. The main character is NOT a Pagan....maybe an agnostic, but not a Pagan....but he is referred to as one through the whole book. The satire of the Christian zealots (who aren't really Christian either but some weird cult) is worth a chuckle. Overall, it was a pleasant listen (I heard it on audio disc) but you walk away from it wondering if the author is a confused as Larry Hutch.

John says

While I was reading this book, I became nearly obsessed with it, because it is without a doubt the worst book I have ever read. It is a tour de force of shallow characterization, insipid plot development, and hackneyed writing. You've got to read this book to believe it. It is super, super awesome.

Angela Kinder says

I actually hated the book. While I couldn't put it down, I found it very insulting. In no way is the main character Pagan. In my opinion, he seemed more like an atheist. The story didn't seem to fit, and it was filled with missing plot holes and crudely drawn characters. Some Pagans might find it insulting for using the term when it has nothing to do with true Paganism and some Christians might find it insulting for alienating others because of their religion. But I guess you can't please everybody.

Danielle says

I randomly picked this book because of the title and the short description I read about it. I had no idea that this was supposed to be Christian fiction until I started listening and it said "Recorded Books Inspirational". Nevertheless this was a mildly humorous story that just got stupid after a while. Actually I don't really see how this is Christian fiction, it definitely didn't make me want to convert, the opposite actually. I also have a problem with the author's use of the word "Pagan". Pagan does not equal non-Christian people! Grrrrrr.

Erin says

Ray Blackston wrote one of my favorite novels ever in "Flabbergasted." His writing style is unlike *anything* I've seen before... and "A Pagan's Nightmare" was exceptionally unique. It is a world where the 'religious zealots' have taken over the world, changing the lyrics of pop songs and deporting 'pagans' to Cuba if they refuse to convert. It was written as a spoof, and a gentle reminder to be genuine rather than just religious, but it was pretty wacky.

Tina says

If you have ever wanted to see 1984 done with a religious Big Brother, this is the book for you. (It sort of reads as a 1984 for dummies as it is.) I would have given this book 5 stars if the preachy wife would've kept her mouth shut at the end. The book made enough of a statement on its own merits, I did not need the invitational at the end. It did nothing to convince me. I remain an atheist not, as the author would have you believe, because of lack of clues, but rather because of lack of evidence.

I highly recommend this book for all the religious. If when reading it, you find any similarities between you and any zealot, let it stand as a lesson to you to stop! You will not win people over to your way of thinking tactics like that.

Beth Miller says

While well-written, the twist at the end doesn't justify all the blasphemy of the rest of the book. And although I don't usually spend my day's in worthwhile pursuits, I regret the time I spent reading this.

Gina says

It actually wasn't bad. The story within the story was great, the outer story was ok. But it wasn't too preachy. I especially loved the parts about Southern religious ideals. He really got a lot of that right. But I do have one HUGE issue with the book. A Pagan is not someone who is just unchurched or a non Christian. Paganism is its own religion & not just a catch all for anyone who doesn't believe in Jesus. And if Christian writers are going to use the term, they ought to use it correctly. But then again, *A Non Believers Nightmare* wouldn't be as catchy of a title.

Kate says

I bought this because I like the author. I enjoyed it but it feels like it goes on too long. I think it would have done better if it had been shorter. But the end really does justify the story, you just have to stick with it. If you start reading it, I highly recommend finishing it.

Kelly says

I mentioned this book on GoodReads tonight and realized I'd never reviewed it here. I did review it on Amazon, though, so I'll paste that over with minor edits. A caveat: I had no idea it was Christian fiction when I found it at the library, or else I'd have just avoided it; the library sticker covered the FaithWords logo so I couldn't tell.

The main narrative of *A Pagan's Nightmare* is a dystopia in which the most legalistic form of Christianity runs the country. This is interspersed with a frame story in which an author is trying to sell this dystopian tale

to a publisher.

Unfortunately, I couldn't get into it at all. There are occasional moments of humor, but for the most part the writing is choppy, and the frame story seems like Blackston tooting his own horn. I could only take so much of the authorial voice (in the form of the readers of the dystopia) telling me just HOW AMAZINGLY GREAT the dystopian story was. After all, literary smoke and mirrors aside, they were of course written by the same guy. The self-hype seemed a little disingenuous.

The novel wraps up with a preachy scene that was the icky icing on an already unappetizing cake. I must admit, I didn't like this novel much.
