



I Would Have Saved Them If I Could

Leonard Michaels

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Leonard Michaels (January 2, 1933 - May 10, 2003) was a famed American writer of short stories, novels, and essays. **I Would Have Saved Them If I Could** was his second collection of short stories, originally published in 1975.

"Leonard Michaels's stories stand alongside those of his best Jewish contemporaries - Grace Paley and Philip Roth." - Mona Simpson, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Leonard Michaels was an original... with a concise, pungent and pyrotechnic style that tolerated no flab." - Phillip Lopate, *The Nation*

"As good as any writer you're likely to run across." - Alex Abramovich, *Bookforum*

I Would Have Saved Them If I Could Details

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Author : Leonard Michaels

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Llopin says

Challenging stories from Mr. Michaels. Reading this bunch of tales, I get the impression he was an alienated, sad man. Not exempt of humour, since many of the fictions displayed here are heavy on irony, but they're mostly dark fragments of sixties NY life. Some are more satisfactory than others: the opening "Murderers" and the closing "The Captain" are exemplary works. What lies between is more dubious and confusing, and it's evident Michaels did not succeed in some of his goals. "Hello Jack", for instance, plays out as a detailed dream where anything goes; there's three pieces ("Eating Out", "Downers" and the title story) with a peculiar structure (based on brief snippets loosely connected) which are more "interesting" rather than intriguing. The title story strikes more deeply as a work of comparative literature than a narrative fiction; similarly, "Trotsky's Garden" and "Annabella's Hat", in all their postmodern glory, are the sweat of an obsessive scholar rather than the works of a writer. Still, all ups and downs considered, Michaels' prose always remains precise and blunt. Comparisons with Roth are not misguided, though I very much recalled Barthelme whilst reading some of the lightest entries here: "Some Laughed" and "In the Fifties". Michaels is not as playful as Don B., though. Inside his sentences run streams of sorrow.

Saff says

Some of these stories are real blinders, particularly the shorter ones. Like standing on a platform while a train rushes past and then the air clears and you can think again. But some of them I found to be less strong, and it seemed a shame to end the collection with 'The Captain' which I thought was weak.

Overall though, I'm glad I read this.

Núria says

'Los habría salvado si hubiera podido' fue el segundo recopilatorio de cuentos de Leonard Michaels y es muy parecido al primero ('De aquí para allá'). Estos cuentos siguen siendo cuentos que uno tiene que masticar mucho, con paciencia y constancia, y ni aún así está asegurado que uno llegue a digerirlos bien. Son difíciles, herméticos, y muchas veces sin línea argumental, pero Michaels escribe tan bien que te hipnotiza, no importa que no acabes de saber qué cuenta la historia, porque entiendes perfectamente de qué va. Más que contar hechos, quiere transmitir sensaciones, principalmente sensaciones angustiantes y pesadillescas, pero con una pizca de humor.

De los cuentos de 'Los habría salvado si hubiera podido' hay algunos que probablemente están entre los mejores cuentos que he leído nunca: 'Asesinos' es sobre el fin de la infancia a través del descubrimiento del sexo, la violencia y la muerte; 'En los años cincuenta' es un relato evocador de una época pasada, pero que sea pasada no quiere decir que forzosamente sea buena; 'El jardín de Trotsky' es un ejercicio postmoderno que toma prestado el asesinato de Trotsky para reflexionar sobre un tema totalmente distinto; 'Algunos se rieron' relata con humor amargo las penurias de un profesor universitario para publicar un libro; y 'Reflexiones de un joven salvaje' cuenta de una forma original una variante del típico tema del amante escondido en el armario.

Steven Logan says

There's a few passages that are really good, but you're better off watching Seinfeld.

Kevin says

I have the big Collected Stories book but I like the idea of reading the smaller collections one at a time. Even though I've read four of his other books, this is the first story collection I've read of his. I liked how the incisive character sketching and clipped, almost jumpy, narration style of his short nonfiction and journal writings is also present in a bunch of these stories. There were a couple of stories where Lenny seems to get too excited about academic posturing (a quoted letter from Byron about a beheading outshines him in the title story) but when he gets down and dirty about men and women and the way they behave together (or misbehave), his prose dances like a motherf'er. Two stories--the opener, Murderers, and the closer, The Captain, are awesome, especially the latter, where a character pisses into an urn of coffee and says, "We're born offensive, brother."

Amanda Winfree says

Beautiful collection of short stories

Matthew says

Go to hell. Every day I open my door and there you are, looking guilty and itchy and squirmy. How am I supposed to be an effective egotist if YOU'RE the audience? I feel too implicated. Bother someone ugly instead.

Coleman says

I don't know man. I read this on the bus and I couldn't really focus on tight little stories that don't really go anywhere. Maybe I was too busy listening to the conversations about which Hyatt my fellow rider had just been hired at, or too distracted by the shudder of the bus every time the wheels scraped up against the curb. I swear they're always hitting the curbs. But then again I was also looking outside a lot because it was such a beautiful day and I noticed the Walgreens on Morse and High and it just occurred to me then that they have a window up near the top of the building that reveals nothing but a big Walgreens "W". Why do they do that? Seems like a waste of glass to me. Probably not a good sign that I found that more interesting than the stories within *I Would Have Saved Them If I Could*. I don't even remember who recommended this to me.

Ursula Villarreal-Moura says

I'm in love with books written in the '70s.

Rachel Belloma says

This is hard to track down but such a worthwhile read. He does a lot of what Philip Roth does but in a more meaningful, evocative way. "In The Fifties", "Murderers" and "Hello, Jack" are especially amazing.

Greg says

There's a whole lot of five star stories here, and there are some that aren't so good, or maybe I'm just not getting them. There are some pretty brutal stories, and that's a good thing.

Denise says

Leonard Michaels has always been one of my favorite writers and this book is one of his best.

Steve Gutin says

Read in a day. very good, sometimes funny, very much of its time, which is cool with me.

Derick says

"touch these good things, i thought. let sublimation steel you. touch. let lech. love any hole that feels."

Paul says

8 Nov 2010: Really good. Definitely a product of its time, but Michaels is a really good sentence writer, and I enjoyed the humor. Sometimes I laugh out loud. Sometimes not-out-loud. This was really good.

21 Aug 2013: I started (re)reading this directly after *Going Places*, and it was a little too much Michaels. Put it down for a few months and came back to it. This is one author who actually can/should be described as "a force." Sometimes the structural whatever or the verbal fireworks get in the way of (or completely overshadow) any emotion, but I think this is fine with the author. Yes, a product of its time, and not really the sort of thing I'm into at this point, but the writing is extremely, extremely powerful. Forceful, etc. Very masculine, yet vulnerable. Certain stories are fantastic (the title story), others are sort of a trial to get through.

Like I said, I'm not much for the gonzo absurdist imagist thing, but, that's not really Leonard Michaels's fault
IS IT.
