



★ **Glory Days**

Melissa Fraterrigo

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A portrait of vulnerability and of the tenuous connections between people, Melissa Fraterrigo's *Glory Days* is a stunning tour de force centered in a small cattle ranching town.

Fredonia the Great is an endlessly fascinating character. A clairvoyant who is able to see the fates of the living and feel the emotions of the dead, she begrudgingly capitalizes on her skills at Glory Days, an amusement park, to provide for her daughter. She is tormented by knowing too much.

Each chapter is poignant, with moments that are eerie, playful, haunting, and mournful. In one, a character talks to a boy's corpse in the aftermath of a tornado. The scene is undoubtedly dark, but there is a haphazard, authentic beauty to the way the girl "combs his hair with her fingers, his hair as soft and fine as rain."

The text sometimes veers into magical realism, and occasionally delves into the supernatural. Such qualities weave in with the gritty hardships of country life so that the narrative stays grounded.

Prose is athletic, imparting an impressive amount of commentary on society and human flaws within a sparse, stylistic narrative with punchy, stomach-churning images. Narrators seamlessly shift from chapter to chapter, expertly moving between the first and third person. Despite variations in voice, tone, age, and chronology, all is related with cohesion.

Such shifts, even when disconcerting, allow focus on what characters have in common: they are broken, but they have good in them yet.

The title is a nod to Bruce Springsteen's song of small town disillusionment, and "I'm On Fire" is also quoted at a turning point. *Glory Days* brings new complexity to Americana through Springsteen's blue collar message, and it strongly resonates.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (University Press 2017)

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