

His Final Answer

Christopher D. White

Jennifer Curran

Mindstir Media

(230pp)

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Taking on the dark, difficult subject matter of a father's enduring grief, His Final Answer is a gripping novel.

Christopher D. White and Jennifer Curran's novel *His Final Answer* explores the ripple effect of prolonged grief and the restorative work required to assuage it.

Daniel is racked with guilt over the loss of his twenty-four-year-old son, Thomas. Still, he doesn't seek help early on in the process of his grief, and its implications deepen. After having a heart attack, Daniel is also forced to contend with his estranged wife, Doris, and his brother, Pastor Jon. He is nudged ever closer to a final acceptance of his grief. However, it takes confrontation, failure, and additional waning health to bring Daniel around.

The novel hopscotches between perspectives, and its prose is clear and often direct. It is set in the idyllic Icelandic landscape of Daniel and Jon's youth, which is described in cinematic terms that cover acres of farmland, glorious sunsets, and lavish nature scenes. Indeed, there's a peacefulness to the prose because of this setting throughout. This is at odds with Daniel's frenetic daily life, though, which is filled with meetings and stress over stock shares. Still, visual cues and long conversations drive a story forward, complemented by digitally manipulated images of the characters that fill in perceptible gaps between what's described and what's intended.

Despite the visual nature of the narrative and the subtlety of the prose, the novel's message is quite blatant. Religious themes run throughout, as does a sense that grief is curable. At times, the book reads much like a television script, with an informative bent that is pointed and a bit obvious.

Moments of brilliance keep the text from being too forceful, though, including when it comes to Daniel's characterization. While gruff, he's engaging—a workaholic billionaire who shuts out his family and places money, work, and his own desires above all else. His behavior seems selfish and mean at first, but as the novel progresses, this facade crumbles: his trauma and his grief have made him so. Comparisons between Daniel's life before his son died and his life after loss result in an empathetic portrait of his long struggle toward salvation.

In the succinct novel *His Final Answer*, a man navigates the lasting effects of his grief over the loss of his son.

NICK GARDNER (August 1, 2024)

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