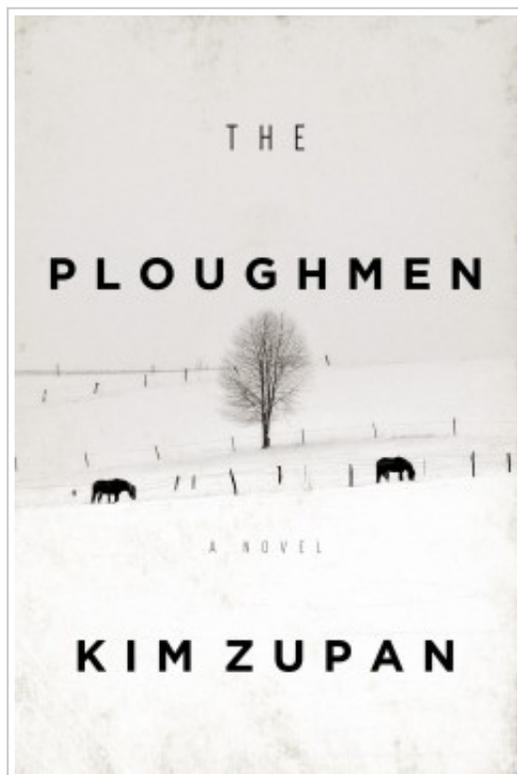


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The Ploughmen

by Kim Zupan

Price: \$26.00(Hardcover)

Published: September 30, 2014

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher:

An NPR Best Book of 2014

A Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers selection

A "bleak and brilliant" (Minneapolis Star Tribune) debut novel, "one of the finest evocations of life in Western America in recent memory, a book that stands alongside Richard Ford's *Rock Springs*, Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*, James Welch's *Fools Crow*." (William Kittredge)

Steeped in a lonesome Montana landscape as unyielding and raw as it is beautiful, Kim Zupan's *The Ploughmen* is a new classic in the literature of the American West.

At the center of this searing, fever dream of a novel are two men—a killer awaiting trial, and a troubled young deputy—sitting across from each other in the dark, talking through the bars of a county jail cell: John Gload, so brutally adept at his craft that only now,...

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What We Say

This modern tale of the West has tense scenes of violence and murder but above all it's a character study of two men. Young lawman Val is watching his marriage disintegrate over the dual pressures of his work and the bleak Montana landscape that is weighing his more successful wife down. John Gload is a prisoner in his jail who may finally pay for a lifetime of indifferent, soulless murder. Gload usually despises law enforcement but he takes a shine to Val and their late night heart-to-hearts become an uneasy dance as Val makes clear he'll report any confessions Gload might make and Gload tries to wrangle his way into getting Val to do one final act of mercy for this man who has never shown any mercy in his life. Their dance is magnetic, with the reader wondering if Val will be dragged down to Gload's level or perhaps Gload raised up to a moment of self-awareness and regret or perhaps both at the same time. The crimes depicted in flashback or as they happen have a matter of fact brutality that is unnerving and real but the main action takes place between these two men. In an otherwise strong debut, Zupan has a habit of using \$5 words when a more commonplace one would suit just fine. It's a quirk one often sees in bad writing but rarely in good writing; yet seemingly on every other page I'd find myself having to look up a word. A good editor will tame this odd feature of prose that is otherwise strong and clear. A strong, compelling debut. -- Michael Giltz

[Less](#)

What Others Say

"Mr. Zupan produces pleurably lush and baroque prose, especially when describing his setting's awesome and unforgiving topography."

—**Wall Street Journal**

"Passionately arresting... Even though Zupan's novel deals with grim topics, he plows the depths of grief and numbness with such a concentrated dedication that the prose is a character in itself. His sentences are unleashed in a furious splendor... bleak and brilliant — the best kind of book."

—**Minneapolis Star Tribune**

"Stunning...A remarkable novel... It's almost hard to believe that it's a debut.... It's a portrait of the West as a sometimes desolate and cold place, full of possibility, maybe, but also full of danger from every corner. It's a modern West, caught between the romance of the frontier and the mundane, harsh realities of living in the present day United States. And it's absolutely beautiful, from its tragic opening scene to its tough, necessary end. Zupan is an unsparing writer, but also a generous, deeply compassionate one."

—**NPR**

"Gripping... a strong debut for a talented wordsmith.... Zupan has that rare skill and we as readers are better off for it."...

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What You Say