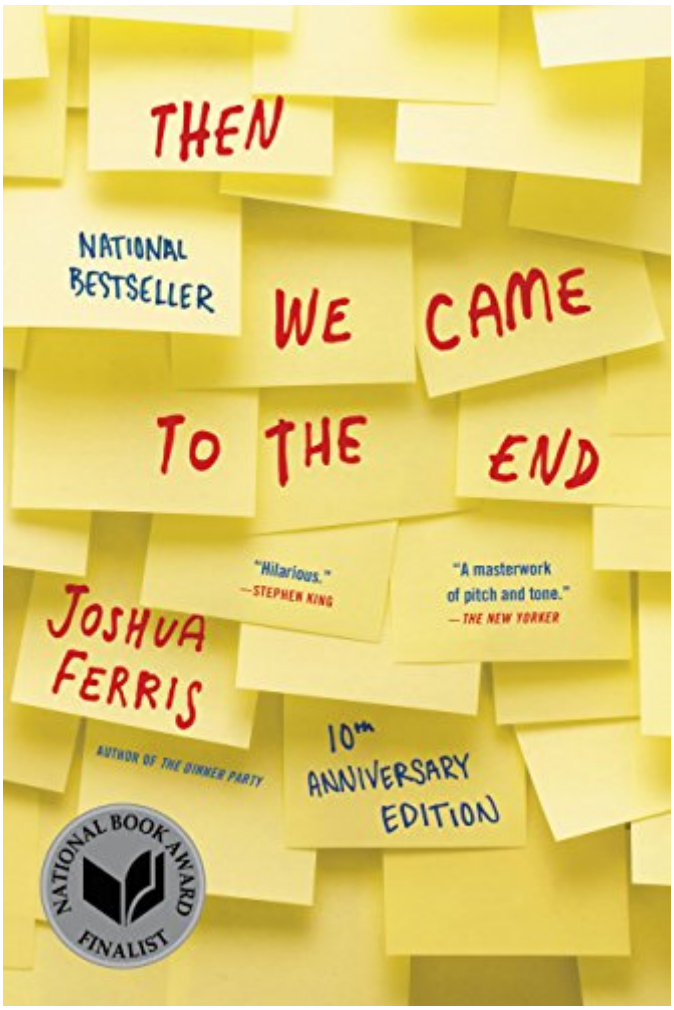
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Then We Came To The End: A Novel



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Synopsis

No one knows us quite the same way as the men and women who sit beside us in department meetings and crowd the office refrigerator with their labeled yogurts.Ã Â Every office is a family of sorts, and the ad agency Joshua Ferris brilliantly depicts in his debut novel is family at its strangest and best, coping with a business downturn in the time-honored way: through gossip, pranks, and increasingly frequent coffee breaks.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â With a demon's eye for the details that make life worth noticing, Joshua Ferris tells a true and funny story about survival in life's strangest environment--the one we pretend is normal five days a week.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is not primarily a work of humor -- although, as other readers have noted, it has some funny bits and a general thread of wit that runs throughout -- nor is it really about office politics and cubicle drama. It is not about advertising, though anyone familiar with the weird, pseudo-creative terrarium of an ad agency will probably get an extra chuckle out of it. This novel is about what it means to be

"we" in the modern world, with its ephemeral relationships and reluctant allegiances, about what belonging means, and about what happens when (as is practically inevitable in the hook-up, snapchat, gig economy, cul8r world) belonging comes to an end. The last two pages of this novel literally took the breath out of me. If you aren't prepared to invest some attention and empathy in the world Ferris conjures here, this book will feel like heavy lifting. But the attention will pay enormous rewards. This is a profoundly beautiful book.

This is the first book I've read that has been written entirely in the first person plural. There was a sense of unease throughout not knowing if I was looking out through the eyes of an almost mythical many headed creature or if there was a singular cowardly and malicious force lurking in the shadows, kneading us all together with its hands into a lifeless, amorphous mound of dough. The last sentence really shook me to the bone!

Joshua Ferris, relatively unknown in the world of Literature, comes up with one of the most audacious first novels in quite awhile. In my estimation, Then We Came To The End is the best literary novel of 2007, surpassing even Tree of Smoke, national book award winner of the same year. While the former doesn't even begin to touch the latter in terms of pure, literary ambition, it stands higher for me because of its immoderate amount of humor.Like most books (or other forms of mass media for that matter) focusing on the nuances of the working world, this one goes the comedic route. Reading through the first chapter, you get a vivid sense of where Joshua is going. The main characters were introduced and the overall tone was established. It is then that the humor kicks in.But it isn't the kind of humor that hits you as screwball or outrageous, the origin of the humor stems from the fact that every single one of these characters are caricatures of ourselves and of people we have perhaps met in our very own work spaces. That, to me, was what made the book funny. Work life, especially in commercial companies like the anonymous advertising firm described in this book, is funny in its very nature. The embarrassment of having your personal quirks on display for your fellow professionals to see, as is the urge to laugh at exhibitions of the same, constitutes much of the material in this book.Compounded with a good sense of structure, a wondrously modern prose voice and a deep feel for the characters, the story captivates you and brings you to a place of identification with both the characters and the situations they find themselves in. It is this sympathy that provokes us to turn the pages, even though at times we wonder where the plot may be taking us. But it does payoff in the end with no small measure of satisfaction.The satisfaction I get from this book cannot be understated, or overstated. It has given

me glimpses of myriad memories from my own working life. Sometimes, in life, we get caught up in our career and overlook the relationships of the colleagues we see day in, day out within the cul-de-sacs. This book does have that dÃƒÂ©jÃƒÂ -vu magic. And above all, it succeeds as an enjoyable piece of literature. Few books nowadays can claim to do that.

The unnamed narrator of this book kept me laughing and nodding my head for the whole ride as he took me through the final tumultuous weeks suffered by the anxiety-ridden employees of a Chicago advertising firm. Business is down and layoffs are on, and all of them are just clinging to the life-raft, praying they won't be next and agonizing over what they'll do if they are. For the most part it's a hysterically funny and usually unflattering inspection into each character, mixed in with more serious moments, from Tom and his unbearably verbose e-mails to Lynn's possible breast cancer (does she or doesn't she have it?) to Amber and Larry's sordid affair, to the tyrannical serial number system used to monitor the precise whereabouts of every single chair, bookcase and printer. It's a brilliant breakdown of why co-workers really ARE like family, in that you can love and hate them with equal passion several times over - just in the course of one day.Like the movie Office Space - one of my all-time favorites - this might be one of those "you had to be there" kind of things, meaning that to fully appreciate it you may have to have worked in an office environment; i.e., the world of horrific coffee, unproductive meetings, cheap carpet, unreasonable deadlines, ergonomic chairs, romance rumors, post-it notes, and the inevitable waves of layoffs. Since that's been my world for far too long now it was as familiar to me as if I'd written it myself. It's dead-on and in some ways even made me appreciate the little sub-culture created around one's workplace, one you're often not really aware of as its own special little world until you're suddenly booted from it.I enjoyed it and will probably re-read at some point.Then We Came to the End was shortlisted for the 2007 National Book Award.

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