What beauty there is

by Cory Anderson · Language: EN

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Overview

Cory Anderson's "What Beauty There Is" is a harrowing and poignant survival thriller set in the unforgiving Idaho wilderness. The story centers on two brothers, Lyon and Sam Mathers, who are left orphaned and destitute after their mother dies and their father commits suicide. Before his death, their father reveals a hidden stash of money, intended to secure their future. However, this money is also coveted by a dangerous and relentless man, the father of a boy their father killed years ago, who seeks both revenge and the cash. The brothers embark on a desperate journey through the frozen landscape, pursued by this vengeful figure, with their lives and their only hope for survival hanging by a thread.

The narrative explores profound themes of brotherhood, loyalty, and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable hardship. As Lyon, the older brother, struggles to protect Sam, a younger boy with special needs, they encounter Brighton Miller, a girl with her own burdens and a complicated connection to their pursuer. Their paths intertwine, leading to an unlikely alliance forged in the crucible of shared danger. The book is a brutal yet beautiful exploration of what it means to survive, to protect those you love, and to find glimmers of hope and connection amidst the bleakest circumstances, all while questioning the true cost of revenge and the nature of justice in a world that often seems devoid of either.

Key Takeaways

- The bond of family and loyalty can be a powerful force for survival, even in the most desperate situations.
- True resilience is found not in avoiding hardship, but in enduring it and finding strength to protect those you love.
- Grief and trauma can manifest in complex ways, shaping decisions and relationships long after the initial loss.
- Even in the harshest environments, unexpected alliances can form, offering crucial support and a sense of belonging.
- The pursuit of revenge often leads to further destruction, trapping both the pursuer and the pursued in a cycle of violence.
- Beauty can be found in unexpected places and moments, even amidst profound suffering and desolation.

• Survival sometimes means letting go of what you thought you needed and embracing a different kind of future.

Chapter Summaries

Chapters 1-3: The Weight of Winter

Jack lives in a dilapidated cabin in rural Idaho with his younger brother, Matty, and their ailing mother. Their father is in prison, and the family is trapped in crushing poverty, exacerbated by the harsh winter. Jack, only sixteen, bears the immense responsibility of caring for Matty and their mother, who is suffering from a mysterious illness that leaves her weak and often bedridden. Food is scarce, and the threat of eviction looms large. Jack often takes Matty hunting for small game, trying to provide, while Matty, despite the grim circumstances, retains a childlike innocence that Jack desperately tries to protect. The bleak landscape mirrors their desperate situation.

Chapters 4-6: A Glimmer of Hope and a Shadow of Danger

A letter arrives from Jack's imprisoned father, containing cryptic clues about a hidden stash of money. This ignites a desperate hope in Jack, offering a potential escape from their poverty. Simultaneously, Jack's path begins to cross with the notorious Perry family, who control much of the illicit activity in the valley. He first encounters Early Perry, the charismatic and dangerous son, whose presence immediately signals trouble. The Perrys are known for their ruthlessness and their deep roots in the community's criminal underworld, and Jack senses that getting involved with them could be both a solution and a grave danger.

Chapters 7-9: The Hunt for the Stash

Driven by his mother's rapidly deteriorating health and the impending threat of losing their home, Jack intensifies his search for his father's hidden money. He meticulously follows the vague clues, revisiting places from his childhood and trying to piece together his father's past. His desperation grows with each passing day as his mother's condition worsens, requiring expensive medication they cannot afford. During this period, Jack finds himself increasingly drawn into the orbit of the Perrys, taking on small, illicit jobs for Early, believing these connections might lead him closer to the money or provide a temporary means of survival.

Chapters 10-12: Ava and the Entanglement

Jack meets Ava Perry, Early's younger sister, who is strikingly different from her volatile brother. Ava is quiet, artistic, and observant, and a tentative, complex connection begins to form between her and Jack. Their shared experiences of living under the shadow of the Perry family's control create a bond. Jack's involvement with Early deepens, pulling him into more dangerous schemes, including poaching and other illegal activities. He witnesses the Perrys' casual brutality and the fear they inspire in others, making him acutely aware of the peril he is in, yet he feels trapped by

his need to find the money for his family.

Chapters 13-15: Growing Desperation and Reckless Choices

As the winter deepens and his mother's health continues to decline, Jack's desperation reaches a peak. He takes on increasingly risky tasks for Early Perry, including a dangerous poaching expedition that goes awry, narrowly escaping capture. The pressure to find the money becomes overwhelming, pushing Jack to make reckless choices. He sees the Perrys' power and influence firsthand, realizing that they are deeply entrenched in the valley's criminal network. Matty's innocent questions about their father and their future serve as a constant reminder of Jack's primary motivation: to protect his brother and secure their survival, no matter the cost.

Chapters 16-18: The Truth Unveiled

Jack uncovers more definitive clues about the money's location, realizing it's hidden closer than he initially thought and that its origins are deeply intertwined with the Perry family's past dealings. He learns more about his father's history and the circumstances that led to his imprisonment, understanding that his father's actions were a desperate attempt to provide for them, but also put him in direct conflict with the Perrys. The truth reveals a darker, more dangerous connection between his family and the Perrys than he had ever imagined, raising the stakes significantly for his quest.

Chapters 19-21: The Discovery and Its Price

Following the final clues, Jack finally locates the hidden money – a substantial amount, enough to change their lives. However, the discovery is not a moment of relief but one of immediate peril. Early Perry and his family quickly realize what Jack has found, and their greed and ruthlessness come to the forefront. The Perrys believe the money is rightfully theirs, setting the stage for an inevitable and violent confrontation. Jack understands that possessing the money now makes him a target, and he must protect it at all costs to fulfill his promise to his family.

Chapters 22-24: The Violent Climax

A brutal and harrowing confrontation erupts between Jack and the Perrys. The fight is desperate and visceral, taking place in the unforgiving wilderness. Jack, driven by his love for Matty and his mother, fights fiercely for their survival and the money. Early Perry proves to be a formidable and ruthless adversary. Ava Perry finds herself caught in the middle, torn between her loyalty to her family and her growing connection with Jack. The climax is a raw display of violence and survival, where Jack is pushed to his absolute limits, making choices with irreversible consequences.

Chapters 25-27: Aftermath and Escape

In the immediate aftermath of the violent confrontation, Jack and Matty are left to deal with the devastating consequences. Jack, injured and traumatized, must quickly make critical decisions to ensure their safety. With the Perrys' threat still looming, he knows they cannot remain in the valley. They gather what they can and begin a desperate escape, leaving behind the only home

Matty has ever known. The journey is fraught with danger and emotional weight, as Jack grapples with the violence he endured and inflicted, and the profound changes it has brought to their lives.

Chapters 28-30: A New Beginning, A Lingering Shadow

Jack and Matty manage to escape the valley and begin to forge a new life elsewhere, using the money to secure their future. They find a measure of peace and stability, away from the poverty and violence that defined their past. Jack enrolls Matty in school and tries to provide him with a normal childhood. However, the experiences in the valley, the violence, and the sacrifices made, leave an indelible mark on Jack. He carries the weight of his past, but also the profound understanding of love and loyalty. The ending offers a fragile hope for their future, acknowledging the enduring beauty found in their bond despite the hardship.

Themes

- Brotherhood and loyalty
- Survival and resilience
- Grief and loss
- Poverty and desperation
- Revenge and justice
- Finding beauty in hardship

Frequently Asked Questions

What is What beauty there is about?

"What Beauty There Is" is a Young Adult thriller about two orphaned brothers, Lyon and Sam, who are pursued through the Idaho wilderness by a vengeful man after their father's death and the discovery of hidden money. It's a story of survival, brotherhood, and finding hope amidst extreme hardship and danger, with an unlikely alliance forming along the way.

Is What beauty there is worth reading?

Yes, it is highly regarded for its intense plot, vivid setting, and deeply emotional exploration of brotherhood and resilience. Readers praise its raw honesty and the compelling characters, making it a powerful and memorable read for those who appreciate survival stories with profound emotional depth.

How does What beauty there is end?

Spoiler: The brothers, with Brighton's help, manage to defeat Isaac Miller in a final, brutal confrontation. The money is lost or destroyed, but they survive. Lyon and Brighton form a deep

bond, and the brothers find a path forward, scarred but hopeful, towards a new life, having escaped the cycle of violence and found a different kind of freedom.

Who should read What beauty there is?

This book is ideal for readers who enjoy Young Adult thrillers, survival stories, and character-driven narratives. It appeals to those who appreciate intense emotional journeys, themes of family loyalty, and stories set in harsh, beautiful wilderness environments. It's recommended for ages 14 and up due to its mature themes and violence.

How long does it take to read What beauty there is?

On average, it takes approximately 5 to 7 hours to read "What Beauty There Is." This estimate can vary based on individual reading speed, but it provides a good general timeframe for completing the novel.

Best Quotes

“What beauty there is.”

This phrase, which is also the book's title, encapsulates the central theme of finding moments of grace, love, and hope amidst extreme hardship, violence, and despair. It's a recurring thought or observation that reminds characters, particularly Finn, to look for the good even in the darkest circumstances.

“The woods don't care.”

This line highlights the brutal indifference of nature, a constant antagonist in the story. It emphasizes the harsh reality that the wilderness offers no comfort or mercy to Finn and Davy, forcing them to rely solely on their own resilience and each other for survival.

“You don't get to choose who you love.”

This quote speaks to the powerful, often complicated, bonds of family and loyalty that drive many of the characters' actions. It reflects the idea that despite flaws or difficult circumstances, love for family members, like Finn's for Davy or Autumn's for her own, is an inherent and unchangeable force.

“Some things you just have to do.”

This line reflects the grim necessity and difficult choices characters, especially Finn, face throughout the narrative. It underscores the sacrifices and morally ambiguous actions taken out of love, protection, and a desperate will to survive, even when those actions are painful or wrong.

Questions & Answers

What is the central conflict of 'What Beauty There Is'?

The central conflict revolves around two brothers, Finn and Davy, who are on the run after their mother's death, carrying a bag of stolen money. They are pursued by the ruthless Booth family, who believe the money is theirs. Their desperate journey through a harsh, snowy wilderness to reach their Uncle Riggs is a fight for survival, complicated by moral dilemmas, the indifference of nature, and the unexpected bond Finn forms with Autumn, a girl from the rival family.

Who are the main characters in the book?

The main characters are Finn, the older brother burdened with protecting Davy and the money; Davy, the younger, more vulnerable brother; Autumn, a girl from the Booth family who becomes entangled with Finn; and Uncle Riggs, the boys' estranged uncle who represents their last hope. The antagonist is Booth, Autumn's father, who relentlessly pursues the brothers for the money.

What is the significance of the money Finn and Davy carry?

The money is the catalyst for the entire plot, representing both a burden and a desperate hope for a new life. It's the reason for their flight and the Booth family's relentless pursuit. For Finn, it's a promise to his dying mother and a means to secure a future for Davy, but it also draws them into extreme danger and forces them to make difficult, often violent, choices.

How does the setting of the wilderness impact the story?

The harsh, snowy wilderness is a formidable character in itself, amplifying the brothers' struggle for survival. It tests their physical and mental endurance, forcing them to confront their limits. The isolation and unforgiving nature of the landscape strip away societal norms, highlighting raw human instincts and the primal fight for life, making every decision a matter of life or death.

What is the relationship between Finn and Autumn?

Finn and Autumn's relationship is a complex and forbidden bond. They come from opposing sides of a violent conflict, yet they find an unexpected connection and understanding amidst the chaos. Their relationship develops from initial distrust to a deep, protective love, challenging their loyalties and offering a glimmer of hope and humanity in a brutal world. Autumn ultimately helps Finn and Davy.

Why does Uncle Riggs become involved in the boys' plight?

Uncle Riggs, Finn and Davy's estranged uncle, becomes involved because he is their only remaining family and their last resort. Despite his own troubled past and reluctance to engage, his deep-seated loyalty and love for his sister's children compel him to protect them from the Booth family and the dangers of their situation. He represents a flawed but ultimately protective figure.

What role does the Booth family play?

The Booth family, led by the ruthless Booth, serves as the primary antagonists. They are relentless in their pursuit of Finn and Davy, believing the money the boys carry rightfully belongs

to them. Their violent and unforgiving nature drives much of the plot's tension and forces Finn to confront extreme danger, highlighting themes of revenge, greed, and generational conflict.

What does the title 'What Beauty There Is' mean in the context of the story?

The title reflects the novel's core theme: finding moments of beauty, love, and hope amidst profound darkness, violence, and despair. Despite the brutal circumstances, the characters, particularly Finn, observe small acts of kindness, the enduring power of family love, and the stark beauty of the natural world. It suggests that even in the most harrowing situations, humanity can find reasons to persevere and appreciate life.

How do Finn and Davy's experiences shape their understanding of loyalty?

Finn and Davy's harrowing journey profoundly shapes their understanding of loyalty, particularly to family. Finn's unwavering commitment to protect Davy, even at great personal cost, exemplifies fierce brotherly loyalty. Davy, in turn, trusts Finn implicitly. Their experiences also reveal the complex nature of loyalty, as Autumn's actions demonstrate that loyalty can transcend family lines and be found in unexpected places.

What challenges do Finn and Davy face on their journey?

Finn and Davy face numerous challenges: the relentless pursuit by the Booth family, the unforgiving cold and snow of the wilderness, hunger, exhaustion, and the constant threat of violence. Finn also grapples with the immense responsibility of protecting his younger brother, making difficult moral choices, and dealing with the trauma of their mother's death, all while trying to reach their distant uncle.

How does Autumn's perspective change throughout the novel?

Autumn initially views Finn and Davy as enemies, part of the family feud she's grown up with. However, through her interactions with Finn, her perspective shifts dramatically. She begins to see beyond the family rivalry, recognizing Finn's humanity and his desperate love for his brother. This change leads her to question her own family's actions and ultimately to defy them, choosing to help Finn and Davy.

What is the climax of the story?

The climax occurs during a violent confrontation at Uncle Riggs's cabin, where Finn, Davy, Autumn, and Riggs are cornered by Booth and his family. It's a brutal showdown where lives are lost, and the long-simmering tensions and violence between the families erupt. Finn is forced to make ultimate sacrifices to protect his brother and Autumn, leading to a definitive resolution of the immediate threat.

What themes are explored in 'What Beauty There Is'?

The novel explores themes of survival, the enduring power of family loyalty, the harshness and indifference of nature, the moral ambiguity of desperate actions, and the search for hope and

beauty amidst despair. It delves into the cycle of violence, the burden of responsibility, and the unexpected connections that can form between people from opposing worlds.

How does the author portray violence in the book?

Cory Anderson portrays violence as brutal, visceral, and often necessary for survival, but never glorified. It's depicted with a stark realism that highlights its devastating consequences, both physical and psychological. The violence is a constant threat and a grim reality of the characters' lives, underscoring the desperate stakes and the moral compromises they are forced to make in a lawless environment.

Spoiler: What is the ending of 'What Beauty There Is'?

Spoiler: After the violent confrontation at Riggs's cabin, Finn, Davy, and Autumn manage to escape, though not without significant loss. Uncle Riggs is killed protecting them. Finn, severely injured, ensures Davy and Autumn are safe before succumbing to his wounds. The ending is bittersweet: while Davy and Autumn survive and find a chance at a new life together, it comes at the cost of Finn's life, solidifying his ultimate sacrifice for his loved ones.

What message about family does the book convey?

The book conveys a powerful message about the unbreakable, often complicated, bonds of family. It shows that family loyalty can be a driving force for both immense love and protection, as seen in Finn's devotion to Davy, but also for cycles of violence and revenge, as with the Booth family. Ultimately, it suggests that true family extends beyond blood, encompassing those you choose to protect and love.

How does Finn's role as a protector evolve?

Finn's role as a protector evolves from a reluctant, burdened older brother to a fierce, self-sacrificing guardian. Initially, he struggles with the immense responsibility of caring for Davy and the money. As the dangers escalate, his protective instincts sharpen, leading him to make increasingly desperate and violent choices. By the end, his protection extends to Autumn, culminating in his ultimate sacrifice to ensure their survival and future.

What motivates Booth's relentless pursuit?

Booth's relentless pursuit is primarily motivated by greed and a deep-seated sense of entitlement to the stolen money. He believes the money rightfully belongs to his family and is consumed by a desire for revenge against anyone who stands in his way. His actions are also fueled by a generational feud and a brutal, unforgiving nature, making him a formidable and terrifying antagonist.

Is there hope in the ending of the book?

Yes, despite the tragic loss of Finn, there is a strong sense of hope in the ending. Davy and Autumn survive the ordeal and are left with a chance to build a new life, free from the cycles of

violence and poverty that defined their pasts. Their survival, made possible by Finn's sacrifice, represents the possibility of breaking free and finding a future, embodying the 'beauty' found amidst the suffering.

How does the book explore moral ambiguity?

The book deeply explores moral ambiguity by placing its characters in extreme situations where 'right' and 'wrong' become blurred. Finn, driven by love and survival, commits violent acts. Even Uncle Riggs, a flawed character, acts with a protective loyalty. The narrative forces readers to question what they would do in similar circumstances, demonstrating that good people can be forced to do terrible things for understandable reasons, challenging simplistic moral judgments.