



Mysterious Skin

By Scott Heim

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At the age of eight Brian Lackey is found bleeding under the crawl space of his house, having endured something so traumatic that he cannot remember an entire five-hour period of time.

During the following years he slowly recalls details from that night, but these fragments are not enough to explain what happened to him, and he begins to believe that he may have been the victim of an alien encounter. Neil McCormick is fully aware of the events from that summer of 1981. Wise beyond his years, curious about his developing sexuality, Neil found what he perceived to be love and guidance from his baseball coach. Now, ten years later, he is a teenage hustler, a terrorist of sorts, unaware of the dangerous path his life is taking. His recklessness is governed by idealized memories of his coach, memories that unexpectedly change when Brian comes to Neil for help and, ultimately, the truth.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"The summer I was eight years old, five hours disappeared from my life" so runs the catchy opening to Heim's impressive first novel. The speaker is Brian Lackey, now a troubled teenager, once an introverted kid growing up scared in the small town of Hutchinson, Kans. The reason for his memory lapse and his fear, as we and Brian learn during the course of the novel, turns out not to be the space aliens that he first suspects, but his molestation at the hands of his Little League coach. The key to Brian's reclamation of those lost hours is homosexual hustler Neil McCormick—the slugger on that Little League team and an accomplice to Brian's sexual abuse. Working its way over the course of a decade toward Brian and Neil's reunion, the narrative unfolds through chapters whose points of view alternate among Brian, Neil and a handful of their siblings and confidants. Heim makes numerous freshman mistakes, including a relatively static narrative, prominent characters who outlive their usefulness and occasional lapses in the writing. He also creates scenes of genuine beauty, however, and handles his complicated characters and delicate subject matter with calm assurance.

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From Library Journal

Brian Lackey and Neil McCormick are so different by nature that they might never have met except for a shared incident at age eight. One summer afternoon, a storm forces the cancellation of a Little League game, and Brian catches a ride home with his coach and Neil. Ten years later, Brian still can't remember that afternoon, although he suspects that it was a turning point in his life. His search for answers eventually leads to Neil, who helps re-create the afternoon of seduction and sexual abuse that Brian has blocked from his mind. Told from a variety of perspectives, this novel looks at the long-term effects of sexual abuse and the coping mechanisms employed by abused children. First novelist Heim deals frankly with a controversial topic without becoming accusatory or maudlin. The result is powerful stuff that every public library should have.

Thomas L. Kilpatrick, Southern Illinois Univ. Lib., Carbondale

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From [Booklist](#)

Brian Lackey and Neil McCormick come from very different backgrounds. Brian lives nicely with mother, father, and a sister, whereas Neil lives with a drunken mother and is responsible for himself most of the time. The boys also differ when they're on the same Little League team. Neil's a star, but Brian's not very good and quits. Yet, they have something in common: both are sexually abused by their Little League coach, Neil many times and Brian twice. Their reactions differ. Brian convinces himself that he was examined by aliens from a UFO, while Neil feels "honored" by the coach's attention. Later, a teenage Brian searches for answers about what happened to him and eventually, through Neil's friend Eric, meets Neil, now a teenage hustler, again. Heim's story of contemporary teens seeking to come to terms with their losses and their hopes is moving and rawly effective, too, in its disturbing first-person descriptions of pedophilia. Eric, Brian, and Brian's sister Deborah take turns narrating, a technique that in Heim's hands adds yet more realism to the novel. *Charles Harmon*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Colleen Holden:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always aim to and must have the free time or they will get large amount of stress from both everyday life and work. So , when we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to you of course your answer may unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the book you have read is Mysterious Skin.

Robert Hollinger:

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