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Posted on 17 May 2018 By Trent Dalton

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Well, what can I say, but Trent Dalton, you have left me speechless I've had Boy Swallows Universe on my shelf for several months now, not wanting to pick it up, afraid it wouldn't live

up to the hype It lives up to it, and It s the coming of age tale of Eli, growing up in Brisbane s western suburbs, raised by drug dealers We follow Eli and his brother August, through all the bad things life could throw at them, yet there are a lot of positives in their lives too Living in Brisbane I m familiar with many of the locations in this book, and knowing that it is semi autobiographical, it really comes to life Totally absorbing, I lost a day reading this book This book will make you laugh, it will make you cry It is simply magnificent Thankyou Trent Dalton 5 Lyle says he approaches a drug deal in the same way he approaches Mum when she s in a bad mood Stay on your toes Stay alert Don t let them stand too close to the kitchen knives Be flexible, patient, adaptable The buyer angry Mum is always right Oliver Twist meets The Godfather Those were the first books that came to mind Films and TV that came to mind were Breaking Bad, What s Eating Gilbert Grape, The Sopranos, and possibly a bit of Stephen King But it s 100% Trent Dalton, and what an absolute legend he is This is bound to be at the top of my favourites list for a long time Nothing connects a city quite like South East Asian heroin This is based on his life, his upbringing, his alcoholic dad, drug affected mother and drug dealer boyfriend Lyle of the opening quotation , and the whole violent, vicious drug scene where he grew up near Brisbane with three brothers The book, however, has only Eli telling the story and he has only one brother This is a novel, not a memoir, although if you listen to the author s interviews, you could be excused for thinking it is, and I m scared to think how many of these life threatening experiences may have been his Eli Bell is 12, one year younger than August Gus Bell, who doesn t speak We learn about the harrowing near drowning that triggered that, and as for the rest, I really don t know where to start It is a fabulous coming of age story like no other than I can think of Trent Dalton is already an acclaimed feature writer and journalist see below , but this is way beyond that He lets the character of Slim Halliday who was a real life convicted criminal teach young Eli how to deal with whatever life throws at you I know him only as the character in the book, although Dalton knew him in real life In the book, he was known for having survived Black Peter, the name for the solitary confinement most prisons call the hole Slim says half of his Boggo Road prison mates would have died after a week in Black Peter because half of any prison population, and any major city of the world for that matter, is filled with adult men with child minds But an adult mind can take an adult man anywhere he wants to go could do things with time in there, Slim says I got so intimate with time that I could manipulate it, speed it up, slow it down Some days all you wanted was to speed it up, so you had to trick your brain He would take himself fishing, mentally, catch fish, clean them, cook them, roll a smoke, watch the sunset and pass the time so busily he was surprised to see the end of the day But, when he had an hour in the sun in the exercise yard, he learned how to slow down time and stretch it out to feel like several hours What a great skill. Another trick he had made me think instantly of The Memory Code by Lynne Kelly about memory systems in civilisations around the world Slim says a good way for me to remember the small details of my life is to associate moments and visions with things on my person or

things in my regular waking life that I see and smell and touch often Body things, bedroom things, kitchen things This way I will have two reminders of any given detail for the price of one Slim would choose marks and scars and spots on his body as his memory points the way we might collect souvenirs to remind us of something or the Australian Aboriginal memory code actually stores memories in places and trees and landscape He'd thumb the peaks and valleys of his knuckles and they would take him there, to the hills of the Gold Coast hinterland, take him all the way to Springbrook Falls, and the cold steel prison bed frame of cell D9 would become a water worn limestone rock and the prison hole's cold concrete floor beneath his bare feet summer warm water to dip his toes into Dalton can write the longest sentences, and they are always just the right length for me His timing is great, his characters are wonderful and terrifying and the story is warm, and scary and thrilling and believable Eli adores his parents and his mum's boyfriend and his best friend Slim He is basically a good kid, but he does get up to that innocent childhood mischief, and no wonder We meet all of these people, not the least of whom is his mute brother Gus who writes in the air with his finger, which Eli reads easily, even backwards sometimes Gus likes to indicate he sees the future we're not so sure, but something is going on there The chapters begin with three word titles Boy Writes Words and Boy Loses Luck and Boy Parts Sea the kind of three word summary an editor he eventually works for demands a writer use to describe a story The drug lords, the heavies with knives and machetes, the really, really, REALLY scary dudes these are all part and parcel of growing up for young Eli Bell And apparently, a lot of it, including the seeing Mum in prison on Christmas Day were all part of life for young Trent Dalton I'm so glad he discovered that he was a boy who could write words, and not just in the air. Beautifully written Memorable characters, places you can see and smell, and that sense of time and space you had when you were a kid They're all here. Thanks to NetGalley and HarperCollins Australia for the preview copy from which I've quoted I haven't begun to do this justice Listen to the author here He comes across as irrepressibly cheerful and enthusiastic What a life What a story here <https://www.betterreading.com.au/podcast-guest-trent-dalton> Trent Dalton Trent Dalton is a staff writer for The Weekend Australian Magazine and former assistant editor of The Courier Mail He's a two time winner of a Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism, a three time winner of a Kennedy Award for Excellence in NSW Journalism and a four time winner of the national News Awards Features Journalist of the Year Photograph of Trent Dalton at the Better Reading podcast The key characters all draw on the people I love most in the world The most beautiful and complex people I've ever known, and I never even had to walk out the door of my house to find them I just wanted to give the world a story To turn all these crazy and sad and tragic and beautiful things I've seen into a crazy, sad, tragic and beautiful story Trent Dalton from an article by Dalton on why he wrote this book I read the above article after I finished this book and read the author's note about how much of this novel is based on his childhood experiences and the story became so much meaningful Knowing this

made me love these characters even , and in spite of a few reservations, Trent Dalton has absolutely turned all these crazy and sad and tragic and beautiful things I've seen into a crazy, sad, tragic and beautiful story I have to admit that there were times when some of the things that happened here just didn't feel realistic and some things towards the end felt over the top Maybe it was because I couldn't be any removed from this world of drug dealers in this Brisbane suburb where these boys are raised Yet, there is so much that I did love about this book and these characters that I couldn't help but care about There is a truth to how much love this story emanates The silent understanding between Eli and his brother Gus, the friendship between Eli and Slim, the real Arthur Slim Holliday, a criminal and jail breaker, Eli's unconditional love for his mother and her boyfriend Lyle, in spite of the sordid and dangerous life of drug dealing that the boys are in the middle of these are the things that make this such a beautiful story Dalton is an award winning Australian journalist, whom I had never heard of until now This is his first novel and he is definitely on my radar now, with my hopes that he will write another.I received an advanced copy of this book from HarperCollins through Edelweiss. Boy Swallows Universe is a coming of age story like no other Dalton's beautiful prose, compelling characters and emotionally tragic story was tinged with mystical elements that gave the book an almost otherworldly feel.Eli and August are brothers being raised amongst drugs, violence and poverty Yet amidst all these dangers these boys have such a special bond and connection, helping each other through heartache and tragedy Eli is the story's central character and his life is anything but easy His older brother August is a selective mute, his mother and her boyfriend are drug dealers, his babysitter is a notorious ex criminal and his drunken father is non-existent in his life Despite all the violence and wrongdoing around him, Eli has big aspirations for himself to become a journalist and above all be a good person The characters in this story were wonderful, probably because they were loosely based on people in Dalton's childhood You can tell he fleshed them out from the heart They were vivid, engaging and integral to the storyline Eli and August completely stole my heart what amazing boys Their sense of family and their desire to do something good was so strong You can't help but to root for them to finally have the kind of life they so desperately desire Thank you to Trent Dalton, Harper Collins and Edelweiss for the opportunity to read and review an arc of this book.

BOY
SWALLOWS
UNIVERSE



your end
is a dead
blue wren

TRENT
DALTON

At first, this sounded like another harmful story about the exploitation of a minor by an adult, but I was repeatedly told that this is not the case with this book. On the other hand, people keep finding excuses to defend these so-called romances I have seen it so many times in so many books. And I am so tired of it. So I will read this book and hope it won't disappoint.

Eli is growing up in a small Australian suburb in the 1980s. His mother is a junkie and in jail, his father is nowhere to be found, his stepfather is a drug dealer, and his older brother, August, is a mute genius. The only adult in his life is Slim, a former prisoner who holds the record for the most escapes. I truly love Slim because he truly loves August and me. Slim was hard and cold in his youth. He's softened with age. Slim always cares for August and me and how we're going and how we're going to grow up. I love him so much for trying to convince us that when Mum and Lyle are out for so long like this they are at the movies and not, in fact, dealing heroin purchased from Vietnamese restaurateurs. For a 12-year-old, Eli has the mind and heart of an adult. Even though his life is completely chaotic, he craves normalcy as much as he can get given the situation he's in. He wants to be a journalist, he wants to fall in love, and he wants to be a good man, better than those he's had in his life. Life keeps getting in Eli's way. It's up to him to care for his brother and to battle a truly dangerous drug dealer, and then work to save his mum. Through it all, Eli sees that there are two paths to follow: the right and the wrong, and although the wrong may be the easier one to follow, he knows he'll never recover if he takes that path.

What's fascinating and eye-opening about *Boy Swallows Universe* is that Trent Dalton based it on his own childhood and his relationship with his mother. Even though I know people find themselves in really dangerous, sad situations, it's still a bit of a gut punch to realize how closely this crazy story mirrors real life. I didn't know that going into reading this book, so it gave it a dash of added poignancy upon reflection. I found the characters and their relationships really endearing, but the narrative style of this book put me off. Part of it was the Australian dialect the characters used, and part was the truncated way some of the dialogue flowed. There were times I had to re-read some paragraphs just to be sure I knew what was happening, so that kept me feeling not quite connected. There is a tremendous amount of heart and charm in *Boy Swallows Universe*, and some very memorable characters. I know that many people enjoyed this book more than I did, so if it sounds intriguing, definitely give it a shot. It's a thought-provoking, heart-warming, and disturbing story.

NetGalley and HarperCollins provided me an advance copy of this book in exchange for an unbiased review. Thanks for making it available. See all of my reviews at itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com. Check out my list of the best books I read in 2018 at [You can follow me on Instagram at |Download Pdf ? Boy Swallows Universe ? A Novel Of Love, Crime, Magic, Fate And Coming Of Age, Set In Brisbane S Violent Working Class Suburban Fringe From One Of Australia S Most Exciting New Writers Brisbane, A Lost Father, A Mute Brother, A Mum In Jail, A Heroin Dealer For A Stepfather And A Notorious Crim For A Babysitter It S Not As If Eli S Life Isn T Complicated Enough Already He S Just Trying To Follow His Heart, Learning What It Takes To Be A](#)

Good Man, But Life Just Keeps Throwing Obstacles In The Way Not Least Of Which Is Tytus Broz, Legendary Brisbane Drug Dealer But If Eli S Life Is About To Get A Whole Lot Serious He S About To Fall In Love And, Oh Yeah, He Has To Break Into Boggo Road Gaol On Christmas Day, To Save His Mum A Story Of Brotherhood, True Love And The Most Unlikely Of Friendships, Boy Swallows Universe Will Be The Most Heartbreaking, Joyous And Exhilarating Novel You Will Read All Year Why I wrote Boy Swallows Universe About three summers ago on a blazing hot Boxing Day in South east Queensland I was standing at the back of a small blue Holden Barina with my mum The boot hatchback door was up and I was helping my mum load a bunch of Christmas gifts and cooking equipment into her car We d all just enjoyed a good family catch up in a shared Bribie Island holiday unit, one of those nice peaceful Christmases where nobody argues about who was supposed to make the coleslaw, and my mum was distracted for a moment by my daughter she must have been about seven then doing one of her impromptu interpretive dances through an avenue of coastal paperbark trees I followed her eyes and was, naturally, also quickly ensnared in this vision my girl s hair blowing in the wind, her bare feet making ballet leaps between those trees, a stick in her hand acting as a wand Then out of nowhere and for no apparent reason not moving her eyes for a second away from my daughter Mum said something beautiful I wouldn t change any of it, Mum said It sounds cheesy, I know, but that s what she said I wouldn t change any of it If I had to go through it all again to get to this, I would do it I wouldn t change any of it It s a blend of autobiography and fiction with a little magical realism and some severed body parts The title is from a story in the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna s mother sees the universe in her child As Dalton says in the Harper Collins blog, Love, above all else, is threaded through this novel I wanted to write about how it is possible to love someone who has killed How it is possible to love someone who has hurt you deeply How love is the closest thing we have to the truly profound Sure, It s tragic and sad, but it s also beautiful and funny I missed it after I finished That s some prize parenting right there, my friend, bringing your kids to a drug deal. So many good things about this book The totally perfect cover Not only the gorgeous colours but also its appropriateness to the story The writing Trent Dalton is a master of beautiful prose The characters I loved Eli and Gus and their solid and completely understanding relationship The story itself which was horrific and mystical by turns and always totally absorbing The ending which although a little far fetched was also satisfying. For me it was slightly spoilt by too much information about drug dealing and the unnecessary overuse of two words which do not need to appear so frequently in a well written book So not quite the full five stars A memorable book though Pleased to announce that this is the scaredsuspensebookclub choice for April Below is the discussion schedule via instagram follow along and join in with the conversation scaredsuspensebookclub. Check In 1 April 12th Check In 2 April 19th Many thanks to the publisher for providing my review copy.

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The Story of Ferdinand

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