



Dispatch

Bentley Little

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Jason Handford has a real gift for writing letters that get results-from complaints to love letters to editorials. Then he's offered a job to do it for a living. It consumes his time, his mind, and eventually, his soul. Jason really should have stuck with freelance.

Dispatch Details

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Author : Bentley Little

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From Reader Review Dispatch for online ebook

Alexandria says

Loved this book! Although, I don't think that the main character got his "just desserts." Then again, maybe he did.....

Libby says

Surprisingly good. It reads like a well written memoir of a Letter Writer until it gets...odd. At turns funny and scary with a protagonist that you can both identify with and are horrified by. This makes me want to search out more by the same author.

Geoffrey Kleinman says

Bentley Little constantly delivers solid horror. Sure his books often spin out of control into wild carnage, but the journey there is always a ton of fun.

Alexandra says

I love reading a Bentley Little book that I haven't read before. It's just so exciting to open it up and know that you are going on a really fucked up journey into the dark recesses of his mind and have no idea what you're in for. Love. It.

Dispatch started out really good. Then it kind of got a little boring. It picked up again after awhile. Then got really good. And then it was meh. And usually that would be enough for me to give a book a not so nice review but with most Bentley Little books, an anti-climactic ending is really not so bad when you consider all the dark places you get to go in the book. It's really hard to explain to someone who has never read a Bentley Little book before, but his books aren't just books. They're experiences. I can liken them a little bit to the movie 1408. Not because the storylines are the same but when I watched that movie, I totally forgot I was in a movie theater. I became trapped inside the main character's head and inside the freaky hotel room and it was a mind fuck. That's how Bentley's books are. The book version of 1408. A lot of really strange things happen and even if they seem harmless, they terrify you. He's a really underrated horror author. I personally think he's the best I've ever read. Better than Stephen King who goes on and on with endless descriptions and doesn't move along fast enough. Bentley Little's books are fast paced and utterly creepy and terrifying.

Dispatch was about a man named Jason who loves to write letters. He loves typing them on typewriters, writing them on fancy stationery, putting a stamp on them and mailing them off to their destination. But he loves it a little too much. And he's a little too good at it.

The one thing that kind of dissapointed me was, I totally knew who the Letter Writers on the tenth floor were

when they were first introduced. The reveal was like....really? I already knew that. It's very rare that I ever guess anything or know anything ahead of time in one of his books, that's why I was like, come on!

Really creepy read for the most part and after you read it, and really look at the cover, it's terrifying. - shudder-

Norman Parker says

I appreciate this Bentley Little book every bit as much as Stephen King. This is my first taste of his work and I will read more from him.

I enjoyed the main character's development. Starting out in youth, laying the foundation of madness, to the last reaches of adult insanity, he reminds me of our tenuous hold on our own justifications, our excuses for our behavior.

Debra says

Stephen King recommended author and book. He says: "BEST OUTRIGHT HORROR NOVELIST. Bentley Little, in a walk. Don't know Bentley Little? You're not alone. He's probably the genre's best-kept secret, but at least 10 of his novels are available in paperback; you can pick up three for the price of that flashy new hardcover you've got your eye on. The best thing about Little is that he can go from zero to surreal in 6.0 seconds. My favorites are The Store (think Wal-Mart run by SAYYY-tan) and Dispatch, in which a young fellow discovers that his letters to the editor actually get things done. Bad things."

King blurb about this novel: "Little is the horror poet of ordinary things. In this surreal novel, a lonely young man discovers his letters to the editor — and to the famous — bring actual results. Of course he eventually finds out he's working in Satan's own office pool, but that's the fun of the damned thing."

1/10/06 Lilja's Library Stephen's Picks.

Bob says

Creepy take on the art of letter writing with a supernatural twist. Jason begins his letter writing in fifth grade, during a pen pal assignment and learns to manipulate situations that gain him and his friends free fast foods and movie tickets. This quickly warps into affecting the lives of others and eventually current world events. A bit slow in parts, but overall a fantastic read. Highly recommended.

7ulian says

I was amazed by this book. It starts off slow and may require some stamina. As the story progresses, the reader gets rewarded.

Especially the descriptions of the locations are great. The locations are getting more absurd as the story progresses, and so is the story itself. It really lacks realism, though the characters seem real enough. As the plot twists in really awkward ways, tension is built up. I raced through the story in the last quarter of the book.

It's really good, just try to survive the first quarter, it's a bit tedious, but necessary for understanding the rest of the book (though understanding is a bit relative).

Chris says

Chris

IP Address: 69.420.666.007

The Internet

Dear Goodreads,

Whassup Dirty Dawgs! It's been a while since I've been around, and I just wanted to say yo. Not much going on over here, I've just been reading and shit, you know the drill. So, since I've got nothing else to rap about, I might as well tell you about the last book that I read, seeing as that might pique your interest, you know, since you're on goodreads and all...

I wish I had something positive to say about Dispatch, the first novel-length story I've read by the much-heralded Bentley Little, after all, I did neglect actual responsibilities in life to make time to read this drivel, and it certainly wouldn't hurt to find a new author that I like whose body of work will entertain me for years to come. Last year I read a book of Little's short stories (The Collection) and wasn't very impressed, but figured that maybe the guy just needed a little more time developing the story to produce an engaging work, so when I came across this used copy I figured I'd give him a second chance. And isn't that what it's all about; forgiveness and understanding? So I'm told; hell, I just got my driver's license re-instated last week after 6 long years, in light of a varied record of alcohol-related arrests beginning at 15 and culminating with drunk driving and aggravated battery of an officer. So, shit, this is like my 14th chance, the least I can do is give Bentley Little a 2nd chance to sway me into declaring him a worthwhile storyteller, right? That's called Paying It Forward folks, that's how civic-minded people like myself operate.

Alas, there will be no recommendations from me encouraging you to waste your time in a similar manner; you'd be far better off spending your time inventing a language consisting strictly of tongue-rolls, hisses, and coos with which to communicate with your cats more effectively. This isn't hyperbole; Dispatch is pretty piss-poor despite the "Guaranteed Great Read" offer from Signet advertised on the cover. Let's face it, that's a pretty low ploy to shill your wares, with the time spent mailing it back and the associated costs of doing so complete with a S.A.S.E. for them to refund your money (and then potential check-cashing fees) you're not even close to breaking even. Of course, these guys know a lot more about marketing than I do, so I am going to steal that idea for my own diabolical ends when I feel so inclined.

As for the story at hand, it's got its fair share of drawbacks. The protagonist, allegedly the character we're supposed to show concern for, Jason Hanford, is no more than a flimsy archetype; the generic, nondescript, faceless gen-x slacker made a social pariah by a hostile, drunken father and a bitchy, uncaring mother. Not only has this sort of character long-ceased amazing me, but I couldn't pick him out of a line up, I couldn't get any sort of visual idea of what he looked like. Perhaps Little didn't provide a description of Jason to broaden future casting options when Lion's Gate decides to make it into a blockbuster film, seeing as I sadly noticed some studio actually made a film adaptation of his unimpressive short story "The Washingtonians". Anyway, it's apparent that unless something significant happens, Jason is obviously destined to be ushered into the routine of a dead-end life, drearily plodding along the road to nowhere, and guess what, something does come along to spare him this lowly fate.

As a child, Jason had a Japanese penpal named Kyoko, and in his letters to her he decided to fib a little in regards to his life; his parents were successful, respected, and caring, and he himself was a fantastic athlete and the most popular boy in school. His ongoing bullshit eventually led to declarations of love from Kyoko and a naughty photograph of the girl, instilling Jason with the belief that his written words had power. However, Kyoko's father eventually discovered the seedier side of their correspondence and made sure that shit came to a stop. It would be a while before Jason resumed crafting missives for his unscrupulous gains, which were generally harmless complaint letters to local businesses which were rewarded with free meals and tickets to movies and amusement parks. Eventually, he gets involved in a local rezoning debate, and when he somehow manages to turn public favor against the proposed gentrification, this confirms that he's got a real gift, and the world is his to shape as he sees fit. While this sounds pretty solid, don't be fooled; his unnerving talent serves as little more than transparent wish fulfillment on the author's behalf; if Little was a smidgen as competent as his character, I would have liked the book. The writing itself is pretty crappy, both the book and Jason's letters within, and that makes it somewhat hard to believe that his correspondence is taken seriously outside of an junior high debate.

While I speculated that Little might need more time to develop his story and characters based on his short story work, I certainly don't think he utilized the benefit of 300 additional pages very well. Jason's uncanny ability doesn't need much elaboration and Little spends way too much time and writing on unnecessary examples of this power in action. The fact that his family is a bunch of assholes could have also been handled in half the time he took reiterating it. So with a dime-a-dozen character you can find in any story written by a 20something author and 120 pages detailing his woeful formative years, it's time for Bentley Little to get into the thick of the story; blindly ripping motherfuckers off. Even though the story up to this point has been some half-assed paint-by-numbers shit, Little now moves into the shameless territory of borrowing generously from previous work and repackaging it as his own output.

Once Jason begins using his power to their fullest, Dispatch is basically a watered-down version Stephen King's short story "Everything's Eventual", and the character isn't really a whole hell of a lot different. This was somewhat bothersome, but Stephen King reuses enough of his own ideas that cats stealing his shit doesn't offend me too much (at least not on principle). But that's not the ultimate insult. Jason eventually joins the ranks of a nameless Company whose ultimate purpose is unknown, and now plies his craft at their behest along with countless other Letter Writers. Beginning with his first visit to the company, every element of his curious employment is completely stolen from the TV show "The Prisoner" (aka the best fucking thing ever aired). A few instances: after being drugged he wakes up in an exact replica of his room, the company is directed by an unknown, unseen, omniscient presence (Number 1, herein called The Ultimate), his neighborhood may or may not actually have people living in the homes, he has no idea if his co-workers have allegiances to himself of to the Company, and his first conversation with his boss steals lines directly from the Prisoner episode "Arrival". Upon reading that part, I told my girlfriend that this was a total rip-off and she said it's probably coincidence. Thirty three pages later my suspicious were confirmed when Jason is

told by his pal Stan “*You’ve got two choices: accept the status quo and live out your life as a letter-writing drone or put on your Patrick McGoohan Number Six face and try to find out what the hell is behind all this.*”

Dispatch is little more than what I’d imagine if Stephen King had written an episode of “The Prisoner”. But with a really bad ending, and I mean REALLY fucking bad.

Anyway, I hope this letter finds you well and in good health, and I’ll talk to you later. And it probably wouldn’t kill y’all to drop me a line either once in a while. Bastards.

Kind Regards,
Chris

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William M. says

In the style of Bentley Little's earlier work, THE IGNORED, this refreshingly original novel is not really a work of horror as much as a creepy and ingeniously crafted supernatural tale. If you buy into the premise, you'll have a great time. Bentley's main character is fantastically real -- flaws and all. The story is clever, bizarre, and mysterious. This is definitely a contender for this year's Bram Stoker award. DISPATCH has all the ingredients of a great novel. If you want something a little (pardon the pun) different out of your horror novels, give this a read.

Pvillehol says

This guy is great at can't-look-away horror! He's sick, twisted and facinating! Dispatch is a good read, keeps you interested, and actually pretty mild for Little.

Sam says

[It's one of those endings that you have to make up what happens, if it ends good or badly. Jason throw away everything for this Letter Writer thing; his friends, his wife and son. And when he was able to finally get out he had nothing. No house, no f

Adam Light says

Dispatch started off as a coming of age story, as only Bentley Little could possibly pen one. I enjoyed the first half much more than the second, but still found the last half quite engaging. I would have marked this one as one of my top five Little books, but it seemed to me that the second half of it was sort of a rehash of several other of his novels that I liked better. I will say that it could be the fact that I have read five or six of Little's books in the last several months that might color my overall rating.

One of my favorite parts of Dispatch was that it was written in first person, which Little does not do very often. When he does choose to employ this technique, it works very well. I really liked the narrator's voice, even though he was pretty much an evil bastard that didn't give two shits about anyone else in his life but himself.

Jason Hanson is in elementary school when he begins to realize that there is something special about him. He has a horrible family; his mother, father and brother are the epitome of shitty relatives. Jason has a crush on his Asian teacher, and when she tells the class that she is instituting a pen-pal program, Jason decides to take part in it.

At first, he doesn't want anyone else to know, especially because he wants to be pen-pals with a girl, which is embarrassing at his age.

He chooses an oriental girl to correspond with because he is so infatuated with his teacher, he figures if he makes friends with someone of the same nationality, eventually his teacher will take note, and more than likely, fall deeply in love with him.

As he goes along, he does some great things, and also some terribly evil ones as well. Jason's letters really get results.

We follow Jason's story as he grows up and realizes his talent in life seems to be writing letters.

As he enters junior high and high school, he begins writing letters to restaurants and other merchants, claiming he has had terrible experiences, securing free meals, free tickets to amusement parks, etc.

Then he begins to understand that he can do pretty much whatever he wants due to the power of his written missives, and he commits some acts that make him even more unlikeable.

At college, Jason meets Vicki, falls in love, and ends up becoming a father. Everything goes great until he gets caught writing letters by Vicki, who thinks that Jason has stopped writing them.

Over the years, Jason's letter writing proves time and again to produce results, good or bad.

Another thing I enjoyed was when Jason described the bands and albums he really enjoyed. He had tastes like mine! I noticed this in other books by Little, as well. He seems to have great musical taste.

The book really takes a drastic turn after the midway point. At this point, I will stop giving details, because I hate giving or receiving spoilers. Suffice it to say, the book takes a turn for the bizarre, yet it does not seem very original. There are elements from several of Little's other books that are explored again here - i.e. The Mailman, The Store, and The Ignored - which is probably my favorite so far, besides The Association).

Although it did tread through familiar Little territory, I was unable to guess the end of this one. The end is pretty damn good, just so that you know.

I would recommend this book to anyone who is looking for something different.

Daniel says

A book that would've worked twice as well if it had been half the size, Bentley Little's "Dispatch" gives us a glimpse into the weird world of Jason Hanford, a man who discovers at an early age that he has an affinity and talent for writing letters. He writes them in staggering quantities, and the results they get are equally staggering. It's almost as if they possess a certain indescribable power -- governmental policies change, people die, lives are altered. Perhaps it's just a gift ...

It's an intriguing premise, but not an intriguing novel. Never mind the redundant descriptions of Hanford's letters, never mind the almost comical (and hardly creepy) twist the novel takes 2/3rds of the way through, and never mind the glaringly obvious plot elements (half of which turn into holes). The weakest spot in this novel is, in fact, the central character himself, a man so despicable that it is hard to care about anything that happens to him, scary or not. The novel treats us to a healthy dose of his horrific childhood, so it's not hard to imagine how he became the man he is, but that's not enough to make him a sympathetic character, let alone an interesting one.

The novel's premise, however, IS interesting enough to make you wonder where it's headed, to keep you reading through the stalls and the padding, and the writing is deft enough to make the trip go quickly. The final destination, unfortunately, succumbs to too much silliness and is, ultimately, nothing to write home about.

Caro says

This was my first Bentley Little novel. He's a "big name" in horror, so I felt I should give him a read. My verdict- I won't be searching him out at the library, let alone the bookstore, anytime soon.

Which isn't to say I *hated* this book, or his writing. The prose is clean and the story moves along. Little is obviously a skilled craftsman who knows how to churn out 300-400 pages that will sell enough copies to keep his name in print.

But...for me, there's just something lacking. Like eating empty calories, except the junk food itself doesn't even taste that great. Nothing memorable stands out- no image, no idea, no use of language, no character. Even worse, the story itself becomes ridiculous and Little doesn't have the literary prowess to really sell it to me as a reader.

Something else that bothered me- as another reader has pointed out, the premise and story is very similar to Stephen King's *Everything's Eventual*. Which in-and-of-itself is fine, it happens. But I've also just finished reading the horror anthology *999: Twenty-nine Original Tales of Horror and Suspense*, and Little's contribution feels like a third-rate rip-off of one of Ramsey Campbell's old stories. So these two things combined have kind of put me off Little as an author, which I know may very well be completely unfair of me.

I'll probably give Bentley Little another bash someday, maybe *The Revelation*, which won the Bram Stoker Award. But after the disappointment of *Dispatch*, not not a priority.

Elusive says

‘Dispatch’ weaves an engaging story about Jason Handford who has a special gift whereby he can achieve results by writing letters. Soon, he becomes obsessed with writing letters or rather, he feels like he has no control over his desire to write and in the process, he realizes there’s a bigger force out there and what lies ahead is dark and unknown.

First of all, I was very interested in the storyline and I’m glad it didn’t disappoint (for the most part). It’s great that Little kicks off the story with Jason as a ten-year-old before proceeding to his teenage and adult years. This helped to give a great insight into Jason’s background such as his unstable home life, what drew him to write and how things gradually but eventually spiralled out of control. It’s evident that even at a young age, he was already aware of what girls in general found attractive, knew how to lie and had some sort of psychological grasp on things. Basically he was smart, not necessarily academically but he knew how to get what he wanted.

Jason isn’t a particularly likeable character. He enjoys writing complaint letters merely to get a reaction and especially receive free stuff – meals, tickets etc. He abuses his uncanny ability to get what he wants. He’s selfish and doesn’t care about the implications of his actions. Besides that, he has no qualms when it comes to getting rid of people that he dislikes or is unable to tolerate. In a nutshell, he’s cruel, cold and calculative. Oddly enough, I couldn’t dislike him. I found him to be a great writer as well as someone who’s calm, detached and again, smart.

Little’s writing style appealed to me as he got straight to the point yet he knew how to provide descriptions. As a result, you can imagine the places and people, you can feel the atmosphere in different situations and at the same time, it’s a very breezy, enjoyable read. The book wasn’t exactly scary though there were moments where if you think carefully about what was happening, they were sort of scary. What was fantastic was the build-up to the point where Jason got caught up with the mysterious company that’s recruiting him. There were also some unexpectedly funny bits especially the ones about some of his dreams.

Somewhere around the last third of the book though, the story took a slight nosedive due to the terribly disappointing (view spoiler). It was over too quickly and the whole (view spoiler) seemed too easy especially as the one he’s up against is supposedly powerful. I think it would have been better not to have a (view spoiler) and instead make it such that he becomes consumed by writing to the point where he loses any trace of personality he has, or something along those lines. Something that’s horrifying without being too in-your-face about it.

Overall, ‘Dispatch’ was a very fun read despite the letdown as stated earlier. Great storyline, intricate details and thought-provoking content.

Kellybrianna says

I found this book to be very fast paced and easy to get into. This is probably the fastest I've read one of

Little's books (except maybe Dominion which is one of my favs) and it only took me about 3-4 days to read it b/c I wanted to know what was going to happen. Like most of Little's books he takes something as everyday as writing letters and turns it into the plot of a sinister, weird tale. Jason is a Letter Writer (yes with capitals) who with the power of his letters get free food, entertainment, better jobs, school scholarships and even causes a few deaths along the way. When Jason is offered a job that opens his eyes to the fact that he is not the only Letter Writer, the story gets even more bizarre. Like many of the books I've read of Little, his build up is sometimes better than the conclusion, but overall it's still one of his more interesting books. Probably one of his weirdest novels, and goes well with The Mailman, which both make letters and mail frightening!

Carl says

I found this to be a very slow paced book. Although I must say now that it develops into an excellent finale. After 200 pages of a 386 page novel, I was still waiting for something to grip me. Maybe I have stuffed myself on gore too much recently in books but this was different to all the other horror books I've read. Seriously, at one point, approx 150 pages in, I was going to drop the book altogether. I'm glad I didn't because there was an excellent message in the book which I encourage you to read and fathom out. I'm still not sure that the message was worth the battle through the tedious first half of the book, but still it was one of those lessons to learn and think about.

I will read more Bentley Little novels but I will definitely need more from him to put him in the upper echelons of authors. I think I need to try The Store and His Father's Son next to see if I am really going to let Little into my Horror Novel Hall of Fame.

Adam says

Puerile junk. How does this guy even get published? Any teenage American slacker could write this. It's amoral and vacuous. The central character kills his father and a harmless girl without remorse and remains unpunished. Not a good role model for our youth today. Guns should not be banned. This book should. It sends a clear message to the Christless generation of young American slobs of today that it's okay to kill people who annoy you. No wonder they voted twice for that evil idiot Obama. Truly this author reflects and glorifies his evil generation.

Though the first half of the book builds interestingly, it suddenly changes, and the second half is pure 'make-it-up-as-you-go' fantasy. During the first half, I thought the author would intelligently develop the theme of contentious letter-writing in the 1980's and 90's and take it into the present internet age where trends and events in politics and culture are now steered by online flaming and social media, the logical extension of the central character's paper and ink 'Letter Writing' of twenty years ago. But the author misses this opportunity, and it seems clear that he ran out of inspiration and interest in his own novel at the halfway point and sought to save it by changing it into an aimless fantasy story instead. I only read this because I live abroad, and books in English here are rare, but be sure I will not be reading any other Bentley Little novel.

Kay Oliver says

Hook, line and sinker, I was eating this book up like a fat kid in a cake shop. It was a slow burn and nothing really happened until the midpoint of the novel and yet I could not put the book down. Once the action starts there was no letting up or break to catch my breath and it was so Bentley Little, the absolute bizarre and

nightmarish. I also loved the Easter eggs. Jason was a great character. I loved to hate him. Excellent writing as always.
