



Stranded

Bracken MacLeod

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In the spirit of John Carpenter's *The Thing* and *Jacob's Ladder* comes a terrifying, icebound thriller where nothing is quite what it seems.

Badly battered by an apocalyptic storm, the crew of the *Arctic Promise* find themselves in increasingly dire circumstances as they sail blindly into unfamiliar waters and an ominously thickening fog. Without functioning navigation or communication equipment, they are lost and completely alone. One by one, the men fall prey to a mysterious illness. Deckhand Noah Cabot is the only person unaffected by the strange force plaguing the ship and her crew, which does little to ease their growing distrust of him.

Dismissing Noah's warnings of worsening conditions, the captain of the ship presses on until the sea freezes into ice and they can go no farther. When the men are ordered overboard in an attempt to break the ship free by hand, the fog clears, revealing a faint shape in the distance that may or may not be their destination. Noah leads the last of the able-bodied crew on a journey across the ice and into an uncertain future where they must fight for their lives against the elements, the ghosts of the past and, ultimately, themselves.

Stranded Details

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Author : Bracken MacLeod

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From Reader Review Stranded for online ebook

Lisa says

Review from Tenacious Reader: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2017/0...>

3.5/5 Stars

No book has ever made me more afraid of the cold and ice and than Stranded. Seriously, the setting for this book brings a new and frightening definition to the word freezing. It also presents an interesting reading experience via a twist that comes about halfway through the book. The first half is a gripping thriller. One that will make you feel the frigid harsh world of the arctic.

Weather and circumstances batter the crew of the Arctic Promise from the beginning. Their situation quickly escalates from concerning to holy hell, things can't possibly get worse. But, well, things can often get worse, and they can definitely get more strange. That's what this unfortunate crew discovers out in the frozen arctic.

I found it incredibly hard to put this book down during the first half of the book, the story and atmosphere seized my attention from the very first page and held it unrelentingly. Until the twist. I feel like the sudden and unexpected reveal we get around the halfway point really shifts the tone of the book from gripping thriller to total WTF is going on mode. The speculative aspects of the book come out in full force and you can no longer call this just a simple thriller. Once I got over the shock, I worked my way to trying to puzzle out how everything could resolve (because it wasn't really a straight forward survival game any more).

I almost feel like it was the suddenness of the shift/reveal that pulled me out of the story a bit more than anything else. It took a little while for me to "adjust" and really start thinking about the path the story had taken. I found once I did this, it became more intriguing. Did I love it as much as I loved that first half? Maybe not, but I also feel like its nice to be completely blindsided by a book now and then, and that's what this one did for me.

One constant through out the book was that I enjoyed getting Noah's perspective. A deck hand that appears to be incredibly level headed and likable, but is challenged by working with a crew that seems to neither trust or like him, not to mention the incredibly tense/hostile dynamic caused by working under his evil father-in-law. As a reader, I was quite curious why this character I seemed to like could be so unpopular with his crew mates. And seeing as how this crew has more than there share of issues to work through, crew dynamics are incredibly important.

Overall, Stranded has amazing atmosphere and tension. It is also a book that gives the reader the unexpected, throwing a twist half way through that shifts the type of story it is. I may have been really unsure about the twist at first, but I did like how it challenged me to think of possible resolutions/endings. Overall, a good read.

Michael Hicks says

Stranded is the type of book that made me glad to be reading it indoors, in the known security and confines of my home, where I was nice and warm and comfortable, and had a nip of whiskey or Irish Mist to help keep the chills Bracken MacLeod was generating at bay.

Caught in an arctic storm, the ship Arctic Promise is thrown off-course from its destination and lost in the fog. Soon enough, the ship finds itself embedded in ice. In the distance, the flat horizon is broken only by the hump of an odd, indiscernible shape. The crew are sick with a mysterious illness, except for Noah, who finds himself constantly at odds with most of the crew. And the sick are seeing...something.

Right from the outset, MacLeod throws readers into the thick of things. His writing of the violent storm Noah and his shipmates find themselves in is phenomenally hair-raising and chaotic, and the unique threats of the arctic landscape itself are well posed and chillingly executed.

Much of the horror in Stranded is derived from the environment itself, as much as the crazed crewmen Noah is forced to contend with, and there's a heavy, freezing atmosphere that permeates MacLeod's writing. It's strong stuff, and reminded me a bit of another arctic powerhouse horror-thriller in Dan Simmons's The Terror. (If you want to know why I love arctic horror, this and The Terror are two books to check out for prime examples of environmental scares done right.)

MacLeod also does some great work with the characters here, although it is a bit of slow-boil to learn why Noah is so despised by so many of his shipmates. Noah catches a lot of flack, for various reasons, and I personally would not have minded getting a bit more information up front rather than having details parceled out piecemeal over the course of the book's first half. This is a minor complaint in an otherwise strong work, though, but the motivations behind the firmly anti-Noah characters make for rich conflict, particularly in the book's later segments.

Stranded is an impressive and visceral work of aching cold environmental horror with a nifty sci-fi twist, and a work that has ensured Bracken MacLeod is an author whose releases I will be watching out for.

[Note: I received an advanced copy of this title for review from the publisher via NetGalley.]

Sadie Hartmann Mother Horror says

I bought this book because it was nominated for a Bram Stoker award in 2016 and the plot interested me. Bracken is one of the best when it comes to character development. I read his collection of short stories called, 13 Views of the Suicide Woods and I was most impressed with how much I could invest in his characters in such a short amount of time with them.

I was eager to read a novel and see what the author could accomplish with more pages. The answer is: everything. Bracken MacLeod's novel, Stranded is equal parts Environment Horror and 'Men are Monsters' Horror. Our protagonist, Noah Cabot, is an interesting guy. I felt like the crew he works with, including his father-in-law, on the Arctic Promise, don't know him the way the reader gets to know him. It was so engaging to read as Bracken built up some complicated relationships between the crew members-the tension was already tight as the crew heads into disaster.

As the men of the Arctic Promise are tested under stress, Bracken expertly begins to weave in the supernatural horror and starts dropping these 'cliffhanger' moments at the end of every chapter. I'm such a cliffhanger addict and I knew around 150 pages, I was going to be finishing this book over one weekend. The pacing in this book is perfect. I can tell that outlining and plot planning is MacLeod's wheelhouse

because I felt that every piece of this story was placed with a very precise intentionality. I'm not an adventurous person in real life, so I love reading stories about high-risk excursions. Through amazing descriptive language, I felt like I was right there, navigating through a dangerous, icy Arctic Sea. This horror story even hit on my need to feel. My "heart box" was satisfied and relished in Noah's flashbacks, creating a complicated unlikely hero I could fall in love with. I even shed a few tears, which feels really good because I'll be honest and state for the record that horror with heart is truly what I'm looking for. I'm not really after the slasher-gore fest stuff if I can't invest emotionally. blame an early reading diet of Stephen King)

There are some really horrific, suspenseful moments that hit at all the right spots. A few times, I just sat back and thought, "Wow. This is so original!!" This is a must have for any fan of quality, character-driven, suspenseful horror. It checks all the horror boxes.

Ruiner says

First it was the blurb that got me interested:

"In the spirit of John Carpenter's The Thing and Jacob's Ladder comes a terrifying, icebound thriller where nothing is quite what it seems."

Well... that's promising.

Then I read about the setting of the book which is a stranded ship in the middle of nowhere. Nowhere in the most literal sense of the word surrounded by ice and endless horizons that all look the same. That's my bag already and the perfect setting for what is to come.

Author, Bracken MacLeod, does a fantastic job of describing the desolation that puts you there. Such an expanse so vast yet claustrophobia still sets in, both in the boat and on the ice and ocean.

Nothing is what it seems on their ship, Arctic Promise, or in the world that surrounds them. The crew is stranded. Our main character, Noah, an outcast amongst the group just wants to get home to his daughter and every possible outcome is preventing this from happening. The majority of the crew falls sick almost immediately and everyone is looking to the shadows.... that are moving.

I don't want to give anything else a way. The twist was not as I expected and was very interesting to watch it unfold in the most cinematic of ways. The first half is a fairly slow burner but MacLeod's crew, the setting they are in and the way his descriptors pull you into the scenario keep it moving at a fine pace until the last half when their world turns on it's axis. It's full speed ahead after that.

The only issue I had with the book is we never know the how or why any of what occurs actually happens but at the same time i'm ok with that as it's not what the story is intended to do. It's about the characters, about Noah, about survival, about madness, about acceptance and about keeping promises.

Tracy Robinson says

If you haven't read this DO IT. 5,000 stars. Review to come soon-ish

Review for Sci Fi and Scary:

“The void churned and welled, reaching up to pull them down into the frigid darkness, clamoring to embrace them, every one. A cold womb inviting them to return to the lightless source of all life, and die, each man alone in its black silence.”

Ah, winter reads. This was the first year I challenged myself to pick some December reads that reflected the season. I wanted horror, ice, monsters, and gore. So I picked about 13 to read, some more “winter-y” than others, and I got started.

As the weeks flew by this month, I had only three books left on my original TBR (to be read) pile. Stranded was one of them. I put aside Dan Simmons’ *The Terror* earlier this year (I’ll get back to it eventually) and I was a little apprehensive about another ship stuck in ice. I needn’t have worried. I began this on Christmas Eve and it killed me to put it down so I could wrap presents. MacLeod’s writing snapped me up – just look at the first two sentences of the novel written above – and did NOT let me go.

MacLeod’s world building is spot on. The tension is palpable as things go from bad to worse to WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING. There are twists and developments that I had no way of anticipating. That is important to me. Part of this comes from the massive amounts of scholarship he must’ve employed to make sure the ship and its inner workings were believable and as accurate as possible. This was such a real world to me; I was very glad for my warm and cozy reading spot to offset what was happening on the pages.

The rest, I think, comes from the characters themselves. MacLeod can write beautiful, poetic prose like the lines above. But men on fishing trawlers don’t tend to speak in lines of iambic pentameter. MacLeod, instead, is versatile enough to make the dialogue and the characters believable and authentic. This is a dark, gritty novel and the men in this novel reflect it well.

I will be actively seeking out the rest of Bracken MacLeod’s work. A wonderful blend of story, characters, heart, and terror, *Stranded* is one of my top reads this month.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2016/12/15/...>

If Dan Simmons’ *The Terror* and *The Fold* by Peter Clines had a lovechild, I’d like to think the results would look a lot like *Stranded*. At first this book reads like a suspense-thriller with heavy shades of paranormal horror, but then we get a twist around the halfway point that arguably plunges it into sci-fi territory. And that’s when things start to get really wild and interesting.

The story follows the crew of the *Arctic Promise*, a platform supply vessel for an oil rig in the Chukchi Sea. The main character Noah Cabot, ostensibly just a simple deckhand, also appears to be the resident whipping boy for everything that goes wrong aboard the ship, and we soon discover why: the ship’s master is William Brewster, Noah’s father-in-law from hell. The older man has never forgiven Noah for marrying his beloved daughter Abby, and has set out to make our protagonist’s life as miserable as possible by turning most of the crew against him. With few allies, Noah knows he has no other choice but to keep his head down and do the work.

But then one night, everything changes. After weathering through a particularly nasty storm, the Arctic Promise finds itself lost in a sea of fog with its navigation and communication systems down. What's worse, once the visibility clears, the crew discovers that somehow their ship has gotten itself beset in second-year ice that stretches as far as the eye can see—an impossibility, given how they were just sailing in open water hours before. Things keep going downhill as one by one, the men on the ship are incapacitated by an unknown wasting sickness. Even Noah, who has remained relatively healthy, is not immune to some of its side effects which include the ghostly shadows that men are reporting to see in the corner of their visions. With none of the equipment on the ship working, the crew's only hope is a mysterious structure they can barely spy in the distance, separated from them by an ocean of thick ice.

Stranded may have started with a heart-thumping opening sequence in which readers are thrown into the midst of a storm, but then the story pulls back a little as MacLeod gradually doles out the details of our maritime setting and establishes the protagonist's situation aboard the ship. This book is like a ride that starts off slow, focusing first on the element of human drama and making us wonder why everyone on the Arctic Promise seems to have it out for Noah. As it turns out, Brewster's grudge against him over Abby is only one half of the puzzle; the other has to do with a shocking incident that took place around a year ago while our main character was on the job. Hence the author spends a lot of time weaving the past into the present narrative, but seeing as how both points will come back to haunt Noah in a big way later on in the novel, all that measured build-up turned out to be worth it.

All the payoff is in the second half, there's no doubt about that. The turning point drops not long after the crew discovers their ship trapped and they strike off onto the ice to investigate, and I think for many readers this will be the moment that determines whether they like this book or not. Personally speaking, I took this "make or break" plot twist in stride and ended up really enjoying myself, and even though this story is far from perfect, I thought the way the author pulled it off was pretty clever and slick. Overall this is a very entertaining tale, especially once things take off at a breakneck speed, culminating into a suspenseful climax and conclusion. I also liked the calculated progression in genres as we moved towards the grand finale; so much could have gone wrong along the way, but somehow this bizarre mash-up of thriller, mystery, horror and science fiction elements ended up working in the story's favor.

That's all I can say, really, without giving too much away. I'll just close this off with a final piece of advice: try to read this in a warm place. Stranded is a good reminder humans are not meant for -40 degree temperatures; I swear I get chills just thinking about certain parts of the book (and it's not all just because of the cold setting). The cruel atmosphere, engaging characters, and an entertaining plotline all helped make this one a fast, fun read. I'd check it out if it piques your interest.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

['alternate reality' (hide spoiler)]

Chris Berko says

Not impressed. Pacing issues, disjointed in many areas, and absolutely no reasonable explanation for anything that happens. A real letdown for me as I had been looking forward to this one.

John McIlveen says

STRANDED is the story of Noah Cabot, a seemingly hapless deckhand aboard the Arctic Promise who must contend with an unprecedented amount of bullying and distrust from his peers, and from Brewster, the ship's captain. Brewster has ties to Noah, and a grudge so deep it could transcend realms.

A series of misfortunes unfold, starting with a devastating storm that claims one of the crew and leaves the Arctic Promise icebound, lost, and with no means of communication. Soon follows a mysterious ailment that plagues all on-board...except for Noah.

After failed attempts to free the ship and faced with a weakening crew and a dwindling food supply, those aboard are forced to do the unthinkable...rely on Noah, who must lead those still healthy enough to walk on a trek across the fields of ice. Ahead of the crew lies - unbeknownst to them - a reality that is terrifying beyond comprehension, yet all too familiar, and a conclusion so tense it will give you cramps.

Bracken MacLeod's STRANDED is a diamond with many facets and in many ways reminds me of early Jonathan Carroll novels where the ordinary is oh-so-sneakily turned on its ear, and transforms into a mounting dread that ultimately culminates in a crescendo worthy of a Mussorgsky symphony. Bracken can make boundless fields of ice seem claustrophobic. His craft is deft, his characters are true, and his imagery is stark and breathtaking.

Most highly recommended! Climb aboard!

Frank Errington says

Review copy

We often hear the words "eagerly awaited," but generally it just doesn't apply to me. However, I can honestly use these words to describe Bracken Macleod's new novel, Stranded. I first heard about this book at NECON (a retreat for writers and fans, held in Rhode Island, each July). When I saw the cover and heard the synopsis, I knew I'd have to add this to my TBR list.

"The Arctic Promise was headed in a bearing for the northeast Chukchi Sea, carrying supplies for the OrbitOil drilling platform Niflheim. The voyage would have been hard under normal circumstances without a hurricane force storm threatening to capsize their ship."

The storm leaves the sixteen man crew off course, isolated, and in an impenetrable mist, which seems to have effected both the navigation and communications system. Before long the Arctic Promise becomes ice bound and now they are well and truly Stranded.

Some of my favorite stories are about groups of diverse people and what happens when they are cut off from the rest of the world in the most dire of circumstances. What follows takes that familiar trope and turns it upside down. To go much further would be giving too much away. Best to discover the twists and turns in story for yourself.

Stranded is not quite perfect, I was left with some unanswered questions, leaving me to speculate on one aspect of the story in particular, but overall, I'd have to say this book was worth the wait and is one I would

definitely recommend.

Stranded is published by Tor Books and is available in paperback and e-book formats.

From the author's bio - Bracken MacLeod has worked as a martial arts teacher, a university philosophy instructor, for a children's non-profit, and as a trial attorney. His short fiction has appeared in various magazines and anthologies. In addition to Stranded, he is the author of Mountain Home, and the novella White Knight. Bracken lives in New England and is currently at work on his next novel.

Glenn Rolfe says

Stranded by Bracken MacLeod is a frozen tale that is, at times, part survival (ala Ronald Malfi's The Ascent or William Golding's classic, Lord of the Flies), while also adding in equal parts the cinematic mystery and paranoia of the Twilight Zone, The Mist, and John Carpenter's The Thing. All of which I love.

We start off with MacLeod's protagonist, Noah, getting his butt handed to him by just about everybody on board the frigid supply ship, Arctic Promise. We are very quickly introduced to my favorite antagonist of the year, the captain of the Arctic Promise (Noah's father-in-law), Brewster. You will loathe this mean SOB from the word "GO", but he only gets more menacing and scary as the tale goes on.

I won't give it all away, but the ship does get stuck and cut off from all outside communication, thus Stranded! The story starts out quick and does a terrific job of filling you in on the key players, I thought it briefly got bogged down with some monotonous bits, but when the story picks back up, you won't be able to catch your breath. One of the best third acts/endings you'll read this year. Every word made up for any lull by miles.

MacLeod does a wonderful job of injecting ample amounts of heart and soul into this novel, something that is lacking all too often in modern horror stories. Full of sharp, crisp prose and perfect dialog, Stranded is a must-read for fans of horror/thriller. Authors, read this book and take notes.

I give STRANDED 5 stars!

Mindi says

This is just my type of novel. I love survival stories. Characters who are lost in the woods, washed up on a deserted island, or beset on a ship in the Arctic, equally draw me in immediately. I have always loved stories about people struggling to survive in the elements.

It's so fascinating to me that we can live so comfortably in our modern houses with all the conveniences and necessities we can buy, but if we make one wrong move on this planet and end up too far from civilization and all of the things we need to keep us alive, Mother Nature will cut a bitch.

The idea that life is that fragile is so terrifying and fascinating to me. Everyone I know is able to meet their

basic human needs without really giving it any thought. We make money, and with that money we provide ourselves with food, shelter, warmth, and protection. Most people take that for granted every day. What utterly fascinates me is the idea that any one of us could potentially end up completely away from civilization and be left at the mercy of the elements.

Stranded is a solid sci-fi/speculative fiction/horror novel. The crew of the Arctic Promise are delivering supplies to an oil drilling platform when a bad storm hits and leaves them locked in icy waters with no communications or navigation systems. A few are injured in the storm, but worse than that, most of the crew of the Promise begin to suffer from an unexplainable illness, and start to see hallucinations of shadowy figures onboard the ship. Noah Cabot is the only man who doesn't seem to fall ill, and so when the possibility of escaping the ice on their own is no longer an option, Noah convinces the captain, who also happens to be his father-in-law, to allow a team of the most able-bodied men to investigate a shape on the horizon. The captain despises his son-in-law, (for reasons that are revealed as the story progresses), but he knows that the only way to find help is to hike to whatever that shape is, hoping that it is the drilling platform that they were nearing before the storm hit.

I enjoyed this one, even though I did have a few problems with the overall story. The writing is pretty good, but it lacked something. I noticed at one point that MacLeod used the word "ethereal" to describe three completely different things. I know this sounds nit picky, but when I notice things like that in the writing, it pulls me out of the story enough to bother me.

There is a twist toward the end that I really liked, but again there is just something missing here that keeps me from giving this one more than 3 stars. I often find that my initial reaction to a book can be a bit harsh, and once I have thought about it more and time has passed, I end up changing my mind about how I originally felt. If a story is good enough to stick with you, often times I end up forgetting the flaws in the writing and just remember enjoying the story. If you enjoy survival stories with a speculative/sci-fi twist, I definitely recommend this one.

Zakk Madness says

"In the spirit of John Carpenter's The Thing and Jacob's Ladder comes Stranded -- a terrifying, icebound thriller where nothing is quite what it seems by Bracken MacLeod"

That is the byline heading the synopsis for Stranded and I feel it does the book a huge disservice. Note, I understand the need to find a way to connect to your audience, but I haven't ever been a fan of a publisher (or movie studio for that matter) plastering "comparison" titles as a way to catch someone's interest. It tends to give a reader (or watcher) the wrong idea and expectation, it also tends to immediately make me weary and doubtful, which could be the reason it took me nearly a year after publication to read Stranded. How about...

"In the spirit of an awesome read and a book you'll think about long after you've set it down comes Stranded -- a terrifying, icebound thriller where nothing is quite what it seems by Bracken MacLeod"

That's better.

Because Stranded is an awesome read, it is also a book that you will think about after you've set it down. My first Bracken MacLeod read that in turn cemented me as a fan of Bracken MacLeod. A quality cast of entertaining characters drive this surreal narrative where the location holds it's own as a personality to deal

with. Those ingredients added to the layers of tension, enough ambiance to drown out the sun, and just enough room for interpretation make for a hell of a reading experience.

Stranded, one of my favorite books in recent memory.

Zakk is a big Dumb animal!

Nicholas Kaufmann says

I blurbed this! Here is my blurb in full:

"STRANDED is the work of a master storyteller at the top of his game. You'll smell the ocean air, hear the waves as they slap against the hull, and experience the white-knuckle terror of trying to survive in the face of the unknown. If Bracken MacLeod can't scare you, you're already dead!"

The Grim Reader says

I have been a fan of Bracken MacLeod since his novella 'White Night'. I loved his novel 'Mountain Home', and have been waiting patiently to see how 'Stranded' came out, especially since I read the blurb from Jonathan Maberry.

'Stranded' is a supernatural horror novel and it's one of the best novels I have read in 2016. One of the great things about this book is its pacing. From the opening scenes where we are thrust into an arctic storm to the sudden sicknesses of the crew members, MacLeod's delivery is sublime, descriptive and chilling. The frozen setting adds to the isolation and fear that shroud the crew and as we dig deeper into the lives of a select few deck hands aboard the beset ship the pieces of the puzzle begin to slot into place.

At the centre of the story lies Noah Calbot, a man with few friends, especially his father-in-law who is also the ship's captain. Tensions between crew members are already fraught even before they encounter the storm that leaves them trapped in the ice and things take an unexpected turn midway through the book when a team leaves the ship to embark upon a journey towards a mysterious object they see on the horizon, hoping for salvation. Nothing can prepare you for what the crew find there and this is where the book takes you on a whole new journey of survival.

Noah is a likeable character, he has his flaws but you can definitely empathise with him, especially when you find out what he has been through. Scattered throughout the novel are a few flashbacks where Noah sits at the bedside of his dying wife. These scenes are fantastic and see MacLeod pull at the heart-strings leaving not a dry eye in the house. The other characters are equally engaging and the twist in the tale is both unexpected and well executed.

There is something about arctic settings that works so well with this type of fiction. Dan Simmons 'The Terror' is another book I have a great fondness for and it is also one set in the frozen wastes and I also recommend 'Dark Matter' by Michelle Paver if you want to be chilled to the bone.

You sometimes hesitate a little when a book you have been eagerly awaiting is finally released. Will it be as

good as you hope? well, with 'Stranded' it was even better. I wouldn't be surprised to see this on a few "Best of" lists at the year's end, I know it will sure as hell be on mine.
