

TONY ARDIZZONE



The Whale Chaser

A NOVEL

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The Whale Chaser is the story of Vince Sansone, the eldest child and only son in a large Italian-American family, who comes of age in 1960s Chicago. A constant disappointment to his embittered father—a fishmonger who shows his displeasure with his fists—Vince finds solace by falling in love. Classmate Marie Santangelo, the neighborhood butcher’s winsome daughter, entices him with passionate kisses and the prospect of entering her family’s business. Yet he pursues Lucy Sheehan, an older girl with a “reputation,” who has also been victimized by the adults in her life.

When Vince abruptly flees Chicago he ends up in Tofino, a picturesque fishing town on the rugged west coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. First he works gutting fish, then is hired by Tofino’s most colorful dealer, Mr. Zig-Zag, and joins the thriving marijuana trade. Ultimately, through his friendship with Ignatius George, an Ahousaht native, he finds his calling as a whale guide.

Vince must come to terms with the consequences of his actions as well as his family’s version of *la storia segreta*, the unspoken story of how his grandfather, like thousands of other Italians and Italian-Americans, was evacuated from prohibited zones on the West Coast and, along with hundreds of others, interned in a prison camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Set in the turbulent decades of the Vietnam War and the drug and hippie counterculture, *The Whale Chaser* is a powerful story about the possibility of redemption.

The Whale Chaser: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review The Whale Chaser: A Novel for online ebook

Mandy says

This moving and beautifully written novel tells the story of Vince Sansone, eldest child and only son in a large Italian-American family in 1960s Chicago. A disappointment to his embittered and abusive father, Vince nevertheless grows into a gentle and caring but somewhat ineffectual young man and when events seem to have conspired against him, decides to flee to Canada. Here he has to come to terms with what has happened and find some sort of redemption for his actions. This is a powerful story, expertly paced, well-crafted, often lyrical, and totally engaging. From 1960s Catholic Chicago to the counter-culture of 1970s Vancouver Island, Ardizzone's depiction of times and places is evocative, atmospheric and convincing. Vince himself is a sympathetic character and the reader roots for him in his struggle to rebuild his life. But the book is not just about Vince's' odyssey. It's also about exile, World War II and the internment of Italians, the Vietnam War and the growing hippy culture. I loved it. I'd never heard of Tony Ardizzone before, and am thrilled to have discovered him. I will certainly be reading more of his books.

John says

How powerful the urge to escape! At home the teenage Vince Sansone struggles for space among three damaged immigrant generations in a single Chicago brownstone, yet out in the streets the '60s have begun to exert their own pressures, even more formidable. The American dream seems a specter. The clueless Marie may cuddle sweetly in the back seats of the cars awaiting repair in her brother's garage, yet she's more of the same "big mousetrap" of a neighborhood, snaring Vince more tightly. Yet once the boy escapes -- how powerful the remorse! So his story cartwheels back & forth between 'Nam-burdened America & flower-power Canada, between monsters from the last World War (the deportations & confiscations that still haunt Italian Americans) & the freaks of the late '60s (the blonde & willowy Harmony may take Vince to bed, but she also, firmly, puts the "greaser" in his place). It's all a big, two-hearted odyssey. Whatever our voyager's port of call, he comes up against a leviathan. Each time our young man comes more of age, better yet, he renders these discoveries w/ an avidity that shifts & matures but never loses its receptivity to awe. Whether Vince is taking a punch, tripping on good Pacific NW acid, or simply out hatless in the wet & cold, he can break rousingly into Kerouackian incantation. With THE WHALE CHASER Tony Ardizzone has achieved his masterpiece, & at the same time — off-handedly, with true *sprezzatura* — one of the two or three greatest novels ever of the Italian-American quandary.

Marty says

I received this book as a first reads giveaway from Goodreads. I enjoyed the story and cared about what happened to the characters.

Patricia McNair says

Tony's use of time--moving back and forth through the main character's life before and after the pivotal

event--is skillful and compelling. It is hard not to want to hang out with the people in this book, even as they make bad choices and hurt one another all too often.

Joseph says

Wow, I wanted this to be so much better. I remember hearing Ardizzone read a version of the first chapter in 2001 when I had him as a professor, and couldn't wait for him to finish the book.

I never really felt invested in the character even though we have much in common (Italian, recovering Catholic, wanderluster, an adopted Chicagoan) and the things that did happen to the character couldn't have been more obvious. I never felt like new grounds were being discovered, in fact there are some moments that literally cause the eyes to roll in disbelief.

Madden Traylor says

Somebody bought me this book. I don't think I've ever read his stuff before. The Tofino stuff was my favorite part, though the childhood attacks and their fantastical representation was a great aspect, too.

Ramona Honan says

I really wanted to like this book as the premise is remarkable, but I just couldn't get into it. I thought the protagonist was a lout and trying to make amends at the end just didn't send me over the edge.

But it also could be I was a child of the 60s also but didn't go in the same direction as the author. Therefore, my interest wasn't there.

It was well written, though, and very readable.

My thanks to Net Galley and the publisher was letting me read this book.

Alice says

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads . I enjoyed reading this book .I will be looking for more books from the author in the future , Great book !!

Dr Penner says

The character of Vince Sansone must have existed beyond the imagination of the wonderful Tony Ardizzone. I am confident of this; he just seems that real. The Whale Chaser is worth the read simply to meet

this man. Not because he's magnificently charming or particularly admirable but because he is broken; broken but fixable. Definitely recommend.

Ellen Cherry Charles says

Loved it! Read it one sitting. I'm surprised it took me so long to find it, it should definitely be out there more.

Jason Hillenburg says

Commitment. In some ways, this is a work about commitments - taken on, broken, revised, forgotten, remembered, cherished. But a writer's commitment stands out amongst them all. This is a novel where the novelist's commitment is palpable in every important character and significant detail. The non-linear narrative is expertly handled and imbues the work with an appealing cinematic quality that never subverts or trivializes the characters, set pieces, and subjects.

At the center of it all, however, is Vince Sansone - a superb, layered creation. Far from being Ardizzone's mouthpiece, Sansone is a compelling, three-dimensional force. The character is likewise well equipped as a vehicle for Ardizzone to explore the novel's thematic concerns.

Novels like this are increasingly rare. As in life, something is always at stake, even if the characters can't always put their finger quite on what those stakes are. From a craftsmanship standpoint, Ardizzone is working at or near the peak of his powers here and his unerring instinct for what constitutes significant detail is delightful.

Highly recommended.
