



The Academy

Bentley Little

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Here's one good reason for staying home from school...

Something strange is happening at Tyler High. The laid-back principal has become unusually strict. The janitors no longer work nights because of what they hear. The students are frightened by what they see. And things are happening on school grounds that defy rational explanation. But there is an explanation. It's just nothing that anyone can begin to believe...or hope to survive.

The Academy Details

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Author : Bentley Little

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From Reader Review The Academy for online ebook

Debra says

Stephen King recommended author. 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."

7/22/16: Bentley is just plain twisted! Another fine ride by this author!

11811 (Eleven) says

This kinda sucked. It's only my second Bentley novel. I thought The Store was decent but this one was like a carbon copy. First, Walmart is evil. Now, charter schools are evil. Is the author always like this? I like my horror to be agenda-free. If a political statement is to be made, for the love of God, at least keep it subtle. There was nothing subtle here.

I rest my case with a quote from one of the main characters - "The only question is, is this a charter school because it's evil, or is it evil because it's a charter school?"

Tiffy_Reads says

Who would have thought that a high school turning into a charter school would be so nightmarish?! At the beginning of the school year the teachers and students are told that their school is being turned into a charter school. Strange things start happening first with the ones who opposed the charter school idea and then with the school and students. Murder, gore, batshit craziness all wrapped into one. This is not for the faint of heart. I had a hard time putting this one down.

Lori says

OK, I brought this as a trashy beach read. And ignoring the fact that it's too cold and wet for the beach, I should've been able to enjoy some pulp fiction, right?

The Academy was AWFUL. The plot made no sense. The characters were stupid. It wasn't at all scary. And the sex and violence were gross because they involved high-schoolers.

All of which might've been OK if the book had been in any way fun, which it wasn't.

We'll see if I can bring myself to try the other Little I brought on the trip.

Brian says

The storyline in this novel isn't nearly as bad as some reviewers here would have you believe. My main complaint is that the ending was fairly unsatisfying.

Like a number of Bentley Little books that I've enjoyed overall, this one ends too abruptly after spending 300 pages building an atmosphere of dread and downright creepiness, throwing together a conclusion with not much explanation and too many loose ends in an attempt to leave the reader with a sense of underlying mystery and unease.

Is it worth running out and buying new before it goes out of print? Probably not. But if you find it cheap online, at a used bookstore, or at a yard sale, go ahead and give it a try.

Stuart Nachbar says

A Charter School Horror Story

I am not a huge fan of the horror genre, but as an education writer I couldn't pass up the opportunity to read a horror story set in a charter school. That has to be a high-water mark for the charter school movement, to become a subject front and center in a mass-market chiller. *The Academy*, written by Bentley Little, is about a California high school, the fictional John Tyler High, that elects to go charter to get out of from under the grasp of a fundamentalist school board. Much of the politics of charter schools is covered in the novel, but there are several twists.

John Tyler High is not run as a democracy, but as a principal's personal dictatorship. There is forced parental involvement—with a financial penalty, as well as a loyalty oath to pledge allegiance to the school. The principal turns students into paramilitary scouts to spy on their classmates and inform on the teachers too. While the principal's totalitarianism reaches heights of fear and deceit, many teachers descend to the lowest lows; there is corporal punishment, sexual abuse of mothers and students by the faculty, and rebuttal of the separation of church and state—all condoned by the administration. Teachers and students in support of the principal behave like zombies and the school community crumbles in fear. The library and the basketball courts are the most dreaded public spaces at John Tyler and the place is locked down during the school day, like a prison. And, as always in horror novels: good people die.

Horror and the idea of a haunted school aside, Little has caught onto some of the most debated issues on charter schools: school uniforms (down to the underwear in this story); teachers exchanging tenure for more creative license and latitude in the classroom; the lack of a teacher's union to be a grievance manager for the faculty; the potential for teachers and administrators to direct the poorest students to leave because they will have a negative impact on the school's performance on standardized tests. These are the real-life scary parts, and they help steer the story.

The teacher hero in *The Academy* strongly believes in the thought behind charter schools however she is forced to team with three students to destroy the written charter in order to exorcise the demons from John

Tyler High. That was the place where the story went south for me; fortunately it was near the end. There is a history to the haunted nature of the place, though it took a while to get there.

The writing held my attention, but that was because I am familiar with charter schools. I don't know how the leaders in the charter school movement will react to The Academy, but I'd be curious to find out what they think. I can't take a horror novel too seriously, but I am aware of educators who would like to ban Harry Potter and similar stories from the classroom. I'd love to read their comments on The Academy now that they have the chance to read mine.

Anderson says

Nick Anderson

Mrs. Baltz

Pre-AP English 10

December 11, 2008

The Academy By: Bentley Little

John Tyler High School closed down last year. A lot of teachers were worried about what they were going to do for jobs. Luckily Linda Webster one of the English teachers received a letter from the Principal Jody Hawkes saying that the district was going to have a meeting about the future of Tyler High School. The meeting was about Tyler High becoming a charter school. They would be free to teach the way they wanted, not worry about the controlling school board, and the principal would be the one in charge.

Brad Becker and Ed Haynes have been friends since the third grade. They are now seniors at Tyler and were looking forward to their last year of school. Myla Ellis is the Vice president of the student council. She is Brad's girlfriend. Throughout the story Ed, Brad, and Myla encounter many strange and scary things about the school. For example, Brad and Myla were on a date and they decided to check up on a hunch they had about their friend Cheryl and the PE coach Mr. Nicholson having "intimate" encounters. They went to the school and while checking the halls they heard a loud BANG! It came from the lockers. It happened again, and again, until the locker finally flew open, but fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, nothing was in the locker.

Carlos and Rakeem are janitors at the high school and have been working the night shift for some time now. Here lately many weird things have been happening at night. Things are so bad that it is scaring two grown men to death. One night Carlos and Rakeem are cleaning up after a PTA meeting and they find a picture. The picture looks like it was out of an old Polaroid camera, but the picture itself was of the PTA meeting that evening. On top of one of the buildings in the picture was a small boy. The janitors thought nothing of it and kept working. While moving a table they notice something slide off and fall on the ground. Carlos grabs it and freaks out, as does Rakeem. The picture is of them moving that very table! In a frantic, Carlos and Rakeem take off to their cars on the other side of campus, but the school started "attacking" them. Let's just say Carlos and Rakeem "did not make it."

This book was probably one of the worst books I have ever read! I would rather "Slam my head in a car door

than read this again." It was extremely explicit and vulgar. I do not mind that sometimes, but it was on almost every page and the stuff gets old. I did not like the fact that it had three different stories going on all the time. You had the teachers' side, then the kids' side, then the janitors' side, until they were killed. You could be reading about the teachers in one paragraph and then read about the kids in the next. It was very confusing and I do not like that stuff in my book. I can handle it every chapter or something like that, but not between paragraphs.

The book did have some strong points though. At times, the book was somewhat scary. However, to be a horror novel it should be a little scarier than this book. All in all this book has more bad points than good and I will not be reading any more books by this author if I can help it.

Pages: 391

genre: horror/fiction

Erin says

I was a huge fan of the horror novel in the 80's, particularly during the Ruby Jean Jensen and William Johnstone years, but haven't really been reading many since then. According to other reviewers, this book is not up to Bentley Little's usual standards...well, I can at least agree that although this was a good premise, this wasn't a great book. It was far too littered with left wing politics (although that can certainly be a horror story in and of itself ;), but also, it just didn't flow. There was definitely a creepy undertone which made the book bearable, but it lacked that certain something which makes a horror story both chilling and believable. I have a few more of Little's books in my stack and I'll see how they are before I pick up any more.

Tressa says

OK. I'll admit that I've been a Bentley Little fan for years. I love how he shocks me with innappropriate action that occurs in an innocent setting, e.g. a mega-store; a postal route; a luxury resort. But his shtick is getting a little too formulaic for my tastes.

This book reminded me of so many of his others: The University; The Store; The Policy.

His The Ignored and The Postman stray a little from the formula and were enjoyable.

Keep writing, Bentley, but shake it up a little!

Athena says

This book was pretty bad and definitely too long. It reminded me of "After" by Francine Prose only Little included much more detail. Unfortunately none of the details made this story much better. After about one hundred pages I was still waiting for the book to get interesting. There were a few random incidents that happened, but the book just dragged on to the conclusion. It was when Ed took the key to the secret

collection that I thought would have been a great ending but nope, that fell flat too.

Michael Mallory says

Bentley Little is an author who has a definite style and format, bordering on formula, and "The Academy" definitely falls into it. The Little "shtick" is to create an entity--in this case a public high school that decides to become a charter school, and ends up being the charter school from hell--and then track how the people who have to deal with the entity become engulfed in its evil. Little builds the tension slowly and effectively, following a teacher at the school and a trio of students who all become convinced that something is seriously wrong, and set out to fight it. The problems with the book comes in the way of logic: there isn't much. Granted, horror novels are not the field for readers who seek iron-clad logic, but there are some gaps here, the largest being why no one in the general community, or even the school district, seems to experience what the teachers, students and parents at this particular school are experiencing. It appears to be set in a city in which there is no municipal government or police force. You also have to suspend your disbelief that the protagonist, Linda, the main teacher fighting the school, seems to view losing her job as far worse than enduring the horrors and fears with which she is confronted. Despite these caveats, "The Academy" keeps you turning the pages until the end, and Little proves again that he is a master at creating a pervasive sense of unease.

Lisa says

Bad. Really bad. I finished it just out of curiosity. Example sentence: "Even as creepy as she seemed these days, Jody would not have defecated in a book." AHAHAHAA! So, at least I got a laugh out of it.

William says

I am not sure where this book was aimed. I guess Mr. Little either hates, is scared of or does not understand charter schools. Maybe he is on a school board somewhere and is upset because a charter school cut him out of the decision making process. In any case, this book makes the charter system the horror villain with a school that has gone terribly wrong. The principal is possessed by the ghost of a previous school system leader. I think that is what the thing was about. Any way it was a quick easy read and I managed to finish it so it wasn't a complete waste of time!

William Dalphin says

Are you afraid of the principal's office? Do you have nightmares about your mother posing nude in art class? Does the thought of spanking your phys ed teacher's bare ass send chills down your spine? Are you frozen in terror by the word "feces"? Then maybe The Academy by Bentley Little will scare you. Maybe.

I bought the Academy to read after liking Little's previous work, The Burning. Unfortunately, The Academy is like it was written by a completely different author; an inept, confused, struggling author. It is so bad that it's difficult to put into words just how terrible it is. Let me put it this way: The Academy is so badly written

that it retroactively ruined all previous Bentley Little works.

Firstly, the characters. We've got a number of protagonists in this book, but sadly they are all so underwritten that by the end of the book, we still know next to nothing about them. We, the readers, have no sense of connection to any of these individuals, and thus have no interest in either their survival or their passing. The ones who live are the ones you know will live because Little spent the most time NOT telling us anything about them as people. The antagonists aren't much better. The principle antagonist (ha ha) is seen frequently for brief amounts of time, and she never seems to do more than scowl and scream. She and all the other dangerous entities of the story are merely caricatures, so outlandishly deviant that you feel more inclined to laugh at their antics than fear them. The rest of the story's characters are so ignorant or oblivious to everything going on, that any sort of torment or death seems a welcome change in their lives.

The plot is awful. I've said it as plainly as I can. The events that take place are neither convincing in their horror, nor rational in their motivation. When the book reveals the purpose and planning behind the happenings of the story, we are not terrified nor horrified, we are simply baffled. If the true nature of the beast is education, loyalty, homogenization and order, then why in God's name is the entire school campus in a rapid state of denigration and chaos? Everything that occurs runs completely contradictory to the eventual ending. It's an insulting journey, and when it's over, we are the true victims of the tale.

If you haven't already read *The Academy*, do yourself a favor and read ANYTHING ELSE. Hell, I would even rather read another Dean Koontz crapfest than this. I only finished the damn thing out of some insane obligation to time and money spent. Terrible. If Bentley Little actually went to school, his English teacher(s) are rolling in their graves over this book.

Lake Lopez says

Mr. Little - Somehow, this draft left your office and made it into print. Thought you should know.
