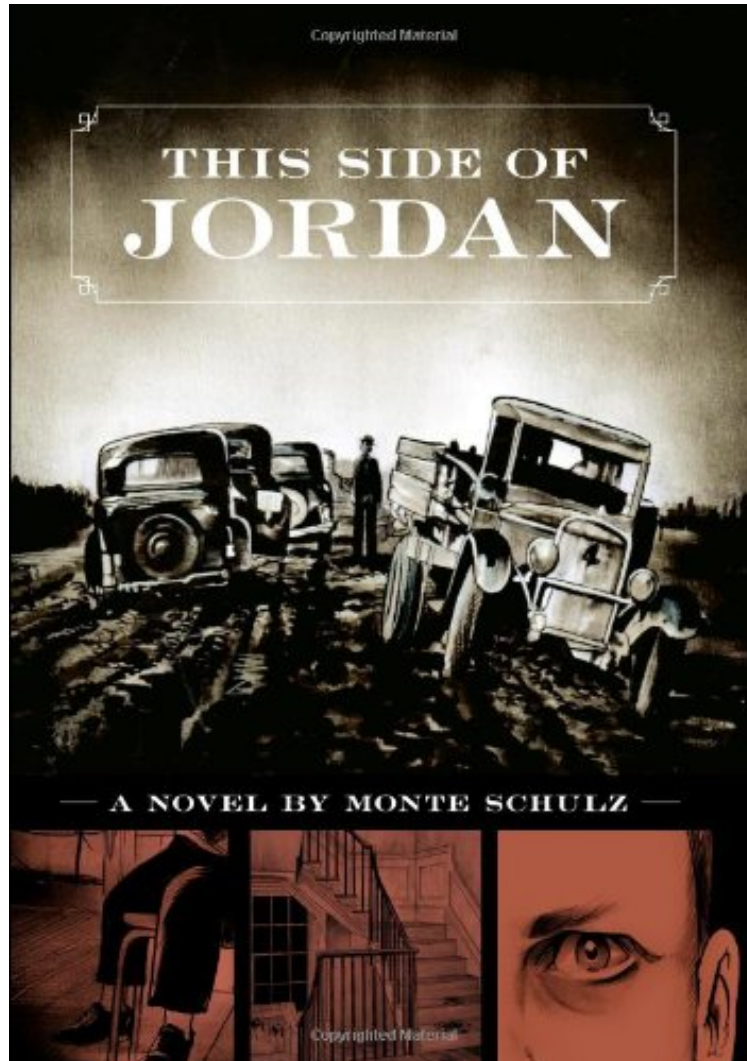


This Side of Jordan

Monte Schulz

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Monte Schulz : This Side of Jordan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised This Side of Jordan:

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful CircusBy N. NicoleThis Side of Jordan is a beautiful Midwestern historical that captures the very essence of 1929.Nineteen-year-old farm boy, Alvin Pendergast fears he will be sent back to the sanitarium for his relapsing tuberculosis. Enter sweet-talking, fancy-suit wearing, Chester Burke who offers Alvin a piece of pie and "a job." Soon Alvin has picked up Rascal, a towheaded dwarf (my very favorite character whose outrageous lines alone make this book worth every penny), robbed a bank, and felt the end of a gun barrel thrust against his spine. As the body count rises, the farm boy's health sags, the dwarf spins another tale-- and the gangster picks up another woman.Monte Schulz is a writer who loves language. His characters fold so gently

into the story, their own deceptions and motivations become that of the reader's. If it weren't for the ironic fact that Alvin's traveling circus comes to a bizarre end under the tent of another's circus, one might forget this is all construct of the imagination. There are no shortcuts in this book, no tales left untold, and no characters left hanging (though I, personally, would have liked shy Alvin to kiss sweet Clare). It's been a while since I've read a book by an author whose dedication to the story was so self-evident. I look forward to the sequel, released next year. P.S. Look up the St. Valentine's Day Massacre and maybe you'll get a glimpse into the villain's past.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. I tried, but I couldn't get into it. By TrishNYCI acquired this book about a year ago and every time I would start to read it, I found that I could not continue. I finally forced myself to finish it and though I am glad I did, it is probably not my kind of book. Schultz's description of depression era America is beautiful, his imagery accurate and his recreation of the period is excellent. His research into this era definitely paid off as he was able to capture the voice and sentiment of an age past with great aplomb. But while I believe the author worked very hard at this book, the unfolding story proved too slow and mostly meandering for me. The wordiness of the book, its inability to formulate an idea and keep it interesting eventually made me realize that this book would not be one I revisit.

Alvin Pendergrast's escape from the drudgery and sickness of his current life into the promised excitement and adventure with Chester Burke never quite lived up to its promised potential. Chester as the villain of this piece lacked a certain nuance that would maybe have made him a bit more believable/enjoyable outside a Dickensian tale. He was evil and violent and he does not deviate much from that. I wish this character had more depth, even if it was all bad but at least gave me an insight into his other facets. I think that my inability to fully appreciate this book may be more a matter of taste than any deficiencies on the author's part. The synopsis of the book drew me in but was unable to sustain my interest. But I do believe that fans of this genre will love it for its ability to elegantly capture a by gone era with amazing accuracy.

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Amazing Tale of The Jazz Age By C. Irish 'All that glitters is not gold and all that's mysterious is not ghosts in this world of wonders.' - Rascal - This Side of Jordan. This Side of Jordan by Monte Schulz is a masterpiece. I forgot I was reading a book and became completely entranced by the writings and the story in this book. The setting takes place before the Great Depression but it is still in a time of trial with the hard work and rough way of life in the late 1920's. 'This Side of Jordan,' is ripe with atmosphere: dusty roads and small towns, characters good and bad that you'll love or despise. You'll certainly become emmersed in the grand writing and descriptions set out before you as you read. Alvin is a consumptive young man who wants to avoid another stay at the sanitarium where he'd spent a fearful year of his life living among those like himself struck with tubuculosis. At a crossroad of indecision he sets off across the river with someone he probably would have later chosen to avoid but goes nonetheless and gets himself knee deep into trouble. Along the way he meets Rascal - one of the most amazing characters I have encountered in my world of books. The three set forth across the South in one heck of an adventure. I have lived in the South and found it as magical and lyrical as described in this book, as lively and depressing and enchanting and shattering as Monte has set pen to paper to describe. Granted this story takes place in another age and this makes the story even better. There are many branches to the story and it's a lot like looking into a prism; there are glimmers and colors, smells and moods, blossoms and backroads and shadow and light much like in a painting you'd like to just sit and study and absorb. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading Carson McCullers, Cormac McCarthy, John Kennedy Toole, Flannery O'Connor or early Capote - writers such as these who capture so completely and deftly the tales of life and the human condition and who could and can knock out such a darn good story that it makes you feel sad to see the end coming.

A seductive novel of southern lyricism. Monte Schulz's prose novel opens in the spring of 1929, as the 19-year-old consumptive farm boy Alvin Pendergast attends an ill-fated dance marathon he's too sickly to participate in. After a year of his life has been stolen by a sanitarium, Alvin knows he's relapsing, and dreads not only the drudgery of his family's homestead, but a return to the hospital. In this state of mind, an invitation for a late-night slice of pie is too seductive to pass up and before he knows it, Alvin crosses the Mississippi River and finds himself working for a slick con artist named Chester Burke. Alvin is no match for Chester, who's not merely a con man, but a gangster from Chicago, following the bootleg liquor trade through the small towns of America's middle border. With Alvin in tow, Chester's insouciant disregard for life serves him well as he embarks upon a series of bank robberies and senseless murders. All summer long, Chester assumes the role of a dark angel on Judgment day, cleansing the scrolls of those whose sad fortune had drawn them across his path. Too ill to flee, too morally weak to object, Alvin resigns himself to what seems like certain doom somewhere down the road. Fortunately, Alvin finds another companion on his journey, a lonely, eccentric, and grandiloquent dwarf named Rascal, whose own infirmity binds his and the farm boy's destiny together. Drawn deeper and deeper into Chester's murderous frolic, they come across a curious assortment of characters, from small town businessmen and religious kooks to wayward girls and dance contestants, spiritualists and sideshow freaks. Caught between Chester's villainy and Alvin's own physical deterioration, the young farm boy must make a decision: stick with Chester, who would surely kill him at the slightest hint of betrayal, or muster the courage to stake his life on faith in Rascal's clever plan to save them both. Tired of being afraid, Alvin finally grasps the need not only to outwit the gangster but to find another road to travel. What he discovers about the meaning of home offers

a solution to escape and freedom. *This Side of Jordan* is a thoroughly American novel told in the voice of a lost generation hurtling toward the Great Depression, and evokes a long ago America of crowded Main Streets and tourist camps, miles of cornfields, rural churches, and musty parlors. It ends on the fairgrounds of a traveling wagon circus that beckons gangster, farm boy, and dwarf toward a startling resolution, and a hard-fought absolution for the two young, frightened collaborators. The narrative of this novel has the momentum of a freight train, but told in the seductive, rhythmic tradition of Southern lyricism reminiscent of Flannery O'Connor and Truman Capote, and filled with vivid, outsized literary characters. If Jim Thompson and Carson McCullers went on a collaborative bender by kidnapping Holden Caulfield, Perry Smith, and Ignatius J. Reilly, they'd have come up with something like *This Side of Jordan*.

From Publishers Weekly The author of *Down by the River* and son of Peanuts creator Charles Schulz returns with the first in a planned series of three novels that attempts to delve into the American psyche during the Jazz Age, starting in the pivotal year of 1929. Schultz has done copious research about the period for this tale of Alvin Pendergast, an Illinois farm boy who survives tuberculosis. After a local dance marathon, Alvin becomes the easy prey of con man Chester Burke, who persuades him to come along on travels and capers that will take them on the road and up against manifold dangers. Unfortunately, the story is so weighed down by patched-together country and old-time vernacular, long stretches of aimless dialogue and detail and background data about irrelevant characters that the story never takes off. Does it mean to be a tall tale, historical novel, road caper, fantasia, cornpone satire, crime thriller or some combination? Random and unconvincing in every way, it's obvious that when Fantagraphics asks, how does the publisher of *The Complete Peanuts* reject a novel by Charles Schulz's son? the answer is, sadly, they could not. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Schulz proves himself to be a handy wordsmith in this literally ambitious novel of pre-Depression America. Hand this straight-faced and multifaceted almost-satire to fans of the southern gothic tradition, all the way from Flannery O'Connor to John Kennedy Toole. - Booklist Monte Schulz proves that his father was not the only talented storyteller in the family.... Monte has carved out his own stake with *This Side of Jordan*, the first novel of a planned trilogy.... Even though there are moments of brutal violence in the vein of Cormac McCarthy, *Jordan* is more about the young man facing his future with uncertain terms.... You'll find yourself enraptured by his style, fittingly written in honor of his father. - Bruce Grossman, *Bookgasm* Did I mention how good the writing is? The writing is excellent... The setting is so vivid I felt like I could fall into the book and lose myself there, landing on some dusty road in a tourist camp where the hicks waited to be fleeced or killed by Chester. - Cory Doctorow, *Boing Boing* Monte Schulz has proven that his father isn't the only Schulz with considerable storytelling talent. Schulz manages to capture a moment in history, a piece of humanity in transition. It's bleak, but funny, and smartly written. [R]eaders of good fiction should appreciate what Schulz has accomplished. - Michael C. Lohr, *Newsarama* About the Author Monte Schulz received his M.A. in American Studies from University of California, Santa Barbara. He published his first novel, *Down by the River*, in 1990, and spent the next twelve years writing a novel about the Jazz Age. His father is the late cartoonist Charles M. Schulz. He lives in Santa Barbara, CA.