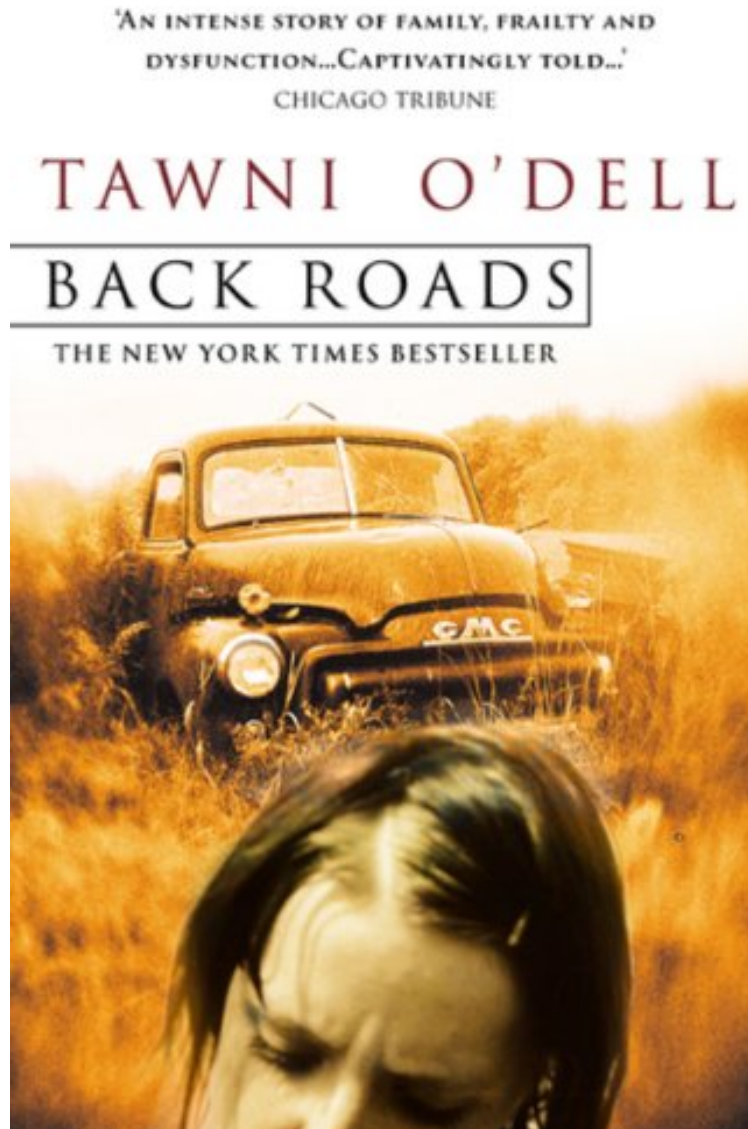


Back Roads

Von Tawni O'Dell

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Von Tawni O'Dell : Back Roads before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Back Roads:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. AN ABSOLUTE TRAGEDYVon Michael M.Always fearful that the next Oprah pick might be the best one, I try to read them as soon as they're announced. Back Roads is once again Oprah's typical survival against all odds type of book but I'm not sure I could call any of these characters survivors. They are all tragic in their own right -- even the poor dog

Elvis. O'Dell is certainly a gifted writer challenging the reader to dare to stop reading her book and consequently taking the chance of never knowing how it ended. While it was dysfunctional at best it was also riveting. I would have given it 5 stars if I would have liked the subject matter a little more. I found so much of it disturbing but I kept on reading and have to admit, I'm glad I did. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Very good Von Candace Siegle, Greedy Reader If there's any theme to the books Oprah chooses, it would have to be dysfunctional families. Don't get me wrong-she's made some interesting and daring picks, and has probably done more to promote decent literature than anyone else since who knows when-and here's another choice on that theme. It reminded me of earlier choice "White Oleander," and like that novel, "Back Roads" is memorable and worth reading. The family in this book is probably the most out-of-whack in any in the Oprah oeuvre. After his mother kills his father and is sentenced to life in prison, nineteen-year-old Harley Altmeyer is given two choices. As he puts it: "I could be an ADULT with DEPENDENTS, or an ORPHAN with NOTHING." Harley has chosen the former, and questions his choice every morning he sets off to work two full-time jobs, coming home to three younger sisters. Harley is a tremendously appealing character, funny and wry, who knows he's got way too much on his plate. His life, his home, and his sisters are a mess, and he's not getting much help in the small mining town he lives in. It's no wonder that he falls in love with the first person who seems to see beyond the chaos surrounding him, and this is a terrible choice. Tawni O'Dell has done a remarkable thing. She's written a book filled with despair and shocking revelations, which is peopled by likeable and believable characters. "Back Roads" speaks to people's resilience in even the most extreme circumstances. It deserves to be read. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A moving novel Von HORAK The main Character in Mrs O'Dell's story is Harley Altmeyer, an 18 year-old boy living in the small town of Laurel Falls. He has to look after his younger sisters, Jody, Misty and Amber, because their mother is serving a life sentence in prison since she killed their father. He works at a Shop Rite with two incompetent work mates, Bud and Church, under the command of the useless boss Rick. And he has a second part-time job at Barklay's Appliances. Their house is a permanent chaos and it is very difficult for Harley to make both ends meet. He is assigned a social worker and a psychoanalyst whom he both loathes. But he has no choice since he doesn't want his sisters to be officially declared orphans and be sent to foster families. The strength of this novel is the fact that the events are seen through Harley's young mind. He is often confused because he is not mature enough to have two jobs and educate his younger sisters at the same time. They in turn consider him more as a brother than a father and as a result there are frequent rows between them, especially between Harley and the elder girl Amber who strives for independence. But Harley is very much concerned by the well being of the girls and his worries even once make him have a hallucinatory vision of finding them dead at home, piled up in a pool of blood. At the same time he is looking for a girlfriend and wonders if it is possible to love someone without getting personally involved, without any mutual feeling or judgement. His first relationship is a confused one with a neighbour, Callie Mercer, wife of a bank manager and mother of two children. And Harley often recalls his father and how he used to ill treat his children. His struggle in life is all the more impressive since he gets no support at all from any adult, not even his uncle Mike.

Kurzbeschreibung One day Harley Altmeyer was 18 and thinking about making some kind of life. He had a family he loved and he figured it was time to get a job. Before he has the chance, his life is a minefield: his father is dead, his mother in prison for the murder, three younger sisters to care for, and there's not too much time left over for himself. Suddenly he has two crummy jobs, a fantasy sex life, big worries about the kids and a court-appointed therapist. A intense physical relationship with a woman living down the road seems to offer a way out, the answer to his problems. But little can he realise that those problems are only just beginning.... de Tawni O'Dells Back Roads spielt im "schönen, zerfallenen" westlichen Pennsylvania, zwischen billigen "Eat'n'Parks"- und "Lick'n'Putts"-Fastfoodläden und erzählt die Geschichte des Harley Altmeyer, der ein zorniges, selbstbewusstes Leben auf dem schmalen Grat zwischen Kriminalität und Unschuld führt. Warum wird er von den Behörden festgehalten und worüber ist er so wütend? Vor nicht allzu langer Zeit hatte seine Mutter seinen Vater umgebracht und wanderte dafür lebenslanglich hinter Gitter. Sein Vater war ein prahlerischer, hoffnungsloser Mann gewesen. Und jetzt hat er auch noch die Verantwortung für seine drei jüngeren Schwestern. Diese nerven ihn jedoch so sehr, dass er sich beispielsweise vorstellt, sie heftig ins Gesicht zu schlagen, bis sie "blutige Ksemmakaroni spucken". Aber Harley hat noch ein Gewissen -- gerade noch. Er würde seine Schwestern niemals wirklich schlagen; versucht er doch schließlich, sie zu beschützen. Die Älteste, die freche 16-jährige Amber, wird von den Jungs aus der Stadt auf der Wohnzimmercouch missbraucht. Die erschreckend stoische 12-jährige Misty hat Augen so "glänzen braun wie eine Medizinflasche". Die Jüngste, die hinreißende Jody, schreibt mit ihren sechs Jahren Listen, was erledigt werden muss, mit Eintragungen wie "Für Daddys Sehle beten". Genervt von den Strapazen des Alltags und den ständig steigenden Verlusten, beginnt Harley, gleichsam seine eigenen Worte vor seinem Gesicht schweben zu sehen. Dabei gelingt es O'Dell, Harley sowohl brutal als auch entschuldigbar und reflektierend darzustellen: "Ich lag da bis zum Morgengrauen und dachte über Dad nach; ich versprach die gleiche unnütze Frustration wie damals, als ich das erste Mal sah, wie er auf eine strahlend weiße, frische Schneeverwehung pisste." Aber diese

feinen Nuancen sind bald vorbei, weshalb *Back Roads* droht, eine beladene Angelegenheit zu werden, stark emotional mit einer achterbahnartigen Entwicklung. Harleys Zorn entwickelt sich zu einem geradezu blutgierigen Verlangen nach seiner sexy, nicht mehr ganz jungen Nachbarin, was eine Unzahl verbotener Familiengeheimnisse lftet. So stellt sich heraus, dass Misty die ganze Zeit über irgendetwas verborgen hat. Amber rebelliert, und sogar Jody's Kritzeleien werden zunehmend bsartig. Obwohl der Stil durchweg gut ist, erscheinen Spannung und Handlung beinahe pubertr -- eine Verbindung aus gewaltgeprgter sexueller Leidenschaft und beiender Dsterkeit. Glicklicherweise bleibt jedoch O'Dells selbstsicheres und rhrendes Portrt ihres Protagonisten davon unbeschadet. Man wird den glcklosen, vom Schicksal verfolgten Harley Altmyer im Gedchtnis behalten, lange nachdem seine turbulente Geschichte vorbei ist. Und unabhngig davon, wie der Richter entscheidet, erscheint es plausibel, warum dieser verarmte, zornige junge Mann wahrscheinlich der Unschuldigste von allen war. --Jean Lenihan.co.uk

Not since SE Hinton (*The Outsiders*) has a female novelist penned such a tough and titillating portrait of lower-class, crime-ridden manhood than Tawni O'Dell in *Back Roads*. Set in "beautiful, ruined" western Pennsylvania, amid Eat n' Parks and Lick n' Putts, the novel follows Harley Altmyer as he walks a raging, self-conscious line between crime and innocence. Why is he being held by the authorities, and what's he so mad about? In the recent past, it's his mother, who murdered his father and went to jail for life. In the far past, it's Dad himself: an abusive, hopeless man. In the present, it's the responsibility for h is three younger sisters, which makes him fantasize about smashing their faces in until they "spit up bloody macaroni and cheese". This first novel opens well. O'Dell does an impeccable job of making Harley both brutal and forgivable but *Back Roads* risks becoming an overabundant affair, pitched high, with a roller-coaster trajectory. Harley' s anger metamorphoses into an almost bloodthirsty lust for his sexy, middle-aged neighbour, which stirs up myriad forbidden family secrets. Misty, it turns out, has been hiding something. Amber revolts. And even Jody's scribbles turn malevolent. While the writing is good throughout, the tension and plotting assume an unpleasant adolescent posture-- bodice-ripping passion and mordant gloom combined. Nonetheless, O'Dell's assured and touching portrait of her protagonist emerges unscathed. You will likely remember luckless, fated Harley Altmyer long after his tsunamic tale has receded. --Jean Lenihan, .com