



Chemistry and Other Stories

By Ron Rash

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***Chemistry and Other Stories*, A Picador Paperback Original**

From the pre-eminent chronicler of this forgotten territory, stories that range over one hundred years in the troubled, violent emergence of the New South.

In Ron Rash's stories, spanning the entire twentieth century in Appalachia, rural communities struggle with the arrival of a new era.

Three old men stalk the shadow of a giant fish no one else believes is there. A man takes up scuba diving in the town reservoir to fight off a killing depression. A grieving mother leads a surveyor into the woods to name once and for all the county where her son was murdered by thieves.

In the Appalachia of Ron Rash's stories, the collision of the old and new south, of antique and modern, resonate with the depth and power of ancient myths.

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Chemistry and Other Stories By Ron Rash Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #896421 in Books
- Brand: Rash, Ron
- Published on: 2007-04-17
- Released on: 2007-03-29
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .55" w x 5.50" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 230 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

An award-winning Southern novelist (*The World Made Straight*), short story writer (*Casualties*) and poet (*Raising the Dead*), Rash returns to short fiction with 13 snapshots of contemporary Appalachia. There are double-wide trailers, aging cars and lost souls "resigned to bad times and trouble," but there's also, in "Honesty," a lit professor struggling to get out from under his rich, cynical wife. In the title story, a chemistry teacher prescribed Elavil and shock treatments for a "chemical imbalance" seeks emotional ballast in the backwoods evangelical religion of his youth. In "Blackberries in June" a young couple—he a logger, she a waitress—buy a fixer-upper house, spend their free time repairing it and plan to take night classes at the local community college, but family demands and random events conspire to keep them down. In the haunting "Pemberton's Bride," the local lumber-mill owner brings home a Boston bride; she quickly adapts to the rough and tumble surroundings, remorselessly dispatching any threat to her position or to her husband's business interests, real or imagined. There are pacing problems throughout, particularly when characters get let off the hook with hurried resolutions. But the setups are imaginative, and Rash gets the feelings right. (May)

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From [Booklist](#)

Rash, a poet and novelist (*The World Made Straight* 2006) steeped in Appalachia, offers 13 haunting and picturesque stories that illuminate the terms of survival in that often forgotten landscape. Three old men pursue the shadow of a giant sturgeon--and rejoice not when they catch it but when they find irrefutable proof of its existence. A Depression-era mother whose son has been found murdered "in the back of beyond" scrounges up six dollars to pay a surveyor to find out exactly where he died, just so she can record it in her Bible. A couple dealing with successive miscarriages, a high-school basketball standout who sabotages his chance in the pros with drugs, a bewildered father watching his son lapsing repeatedly into addiction--each character is imbued with empathy and grace. The collection concludes with a teenager who foolishly steals some marijuana plants from a local good old boy right out of *Deliverance*, and suffers the horrific consequences. An apt encapsulation of a hardscrabble world, tinged with loyalty and love, but ruled by hard justice and revenge. *Deborah Donovan*

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Review

Praise for Ron Rash:

"A major Southern writer . . . "The World Made Straight" reminds us of the sort of compelling literature a brave artist can fashion from the shards of such experience."--"Los Angeles Times"

"Captivating . . . His clear, concise prose and regional voice add an authentic veneer to this rich tableau of Southern life."--"Entertainment Weekly "on" Saints at the River"

"Ron Rash writes like a prince."--Pat Conroy

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From reader reviews:

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John Lyons:

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