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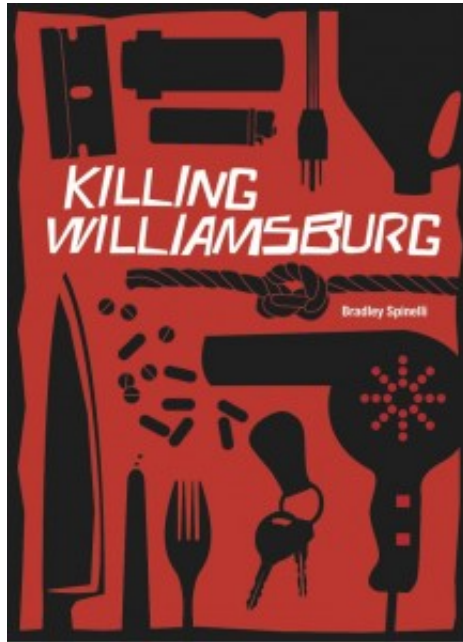
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Book Review: Killing Williamsburg by Bradley Spinelli



Title: Killing Williamsburg

Author: Bradley Spinelli

260 pages, Published by Le Chat Noir

Bradley's Info: [Twitter](#) | [Website](#)

Summary:

After moving to New York in 1999, Benson, a reflexively cynical twenty-something, and his girlfriend look for work while exploring the hipster playground emerging in North

Brooklyn. Rumors of suicides spread, and people start to kill themselves in alarming numbers—hangings, jumpers, death by L train. Friends follow strangers. As the “Bug” spreads to Manhattan, Benson assembles a grassroots crew to help clean up the city, half-deserted and riddled with corpses. *Killing Williamsburg* is a dark meditation on the purpose of life and a testament to the stubborn resilience of the New York state of mind. (Summary provided by [KillingWilliamsburg.com](#).)

My Thoughts:

I was hesitant to read *Killing Williamsburg* by Bradley Spinelli for a couple of reasons. One, I met him at BEA (Book Expo America) and he was so nice that I worried I wouldn't like the book. Really. He is super nice. (Anyone who knows me understands that I hate hurting feelings. Not that I don't give negative reviews but it's different for me when have a ten

minute conversation with an author before reading the book.) Second, I knew that the plot focuses on a suicide* bug that spreads through Brooklyn and Manhattan. I have PTSD along with depression and anxiety, and I worried the use of suicide as an epidemic might trigger me. Well, I ended up reading it and I'm so glad I did. *Killing Williamsburg* is a book that deserves a much wider audience.

Benson starts off as a cynical philosopher looking for any work he can get in Brooklyn. He is the type of character who starts off being really unlikable until faced with adversity. I love seeing a character develop and grow throughout a novel, and Spinelli skillfully develops Benson from a jerk into a hero.

Killing Williamsburg is about a suicide epidemic that sweeps Brooklyn and eventually moves into Manhattan. The suicides aren't caused by depression but rather by a compulsion or a switch that flips in the brain causing people to take their lives. Benson starts noticing the slowly increasing number of suicides early on, and eventually becomes part of a group of citizens clearing bodies because the local and federal government are ignoring the epidemic. The sense of community built through tragedy described in the book is a testament to the strength of New Yorkers.

Killing Williamsburg is set in 1999 and is full of interesting historical facts about Brooklyn and Manhattan. I realized as I read how little I actually know about my favorite city in the U.S. Spinelli makes Manhattan and Brooklyn feel like characters rather than backdrops where the story takes place. Spinelli truly creates a snapshot of life in Williamsburg in the 90s, and gentrification of Williamsburg is a reoccurring theme in the novel.

The late reaction of the government to respond to the crisis brought back memories of what

my family went through during Hurricane Katrina and the glimpses of the Twin Towers during the epidemic the book entails were hauntingly beautiful and sad, catching a moment in time before our country would face a true tragedy.

Spinelli's writing style creates a frenzied tale full of sex, drugs, violence, sadness, and at some points, humor. Horror novels don't normally make me cry, but there's a scene involving a child in this book that had me in tears. *Killing Williamsburg* flows really well and is easily a one sitting read. If you enjoy apocalyptic, horror, or novels that deal with epidemics or take place in Brooklyn, you will love this book.

Killing Williamsburg was the recipient of the [Naked Girls Reading 2013 Literary Honors](#).

*Just in case you think from reading this review that Spinelli is making light of suicide with his novel, he had his book release party on World Suicide Prevention Day in order to raise awareness.

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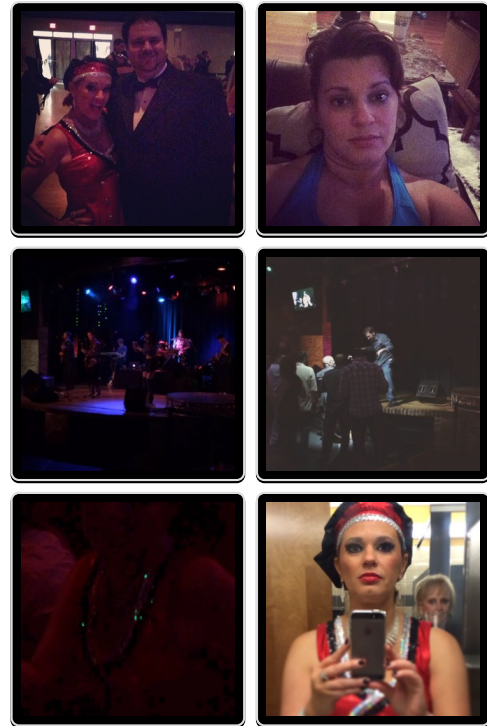


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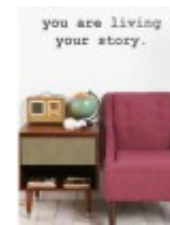


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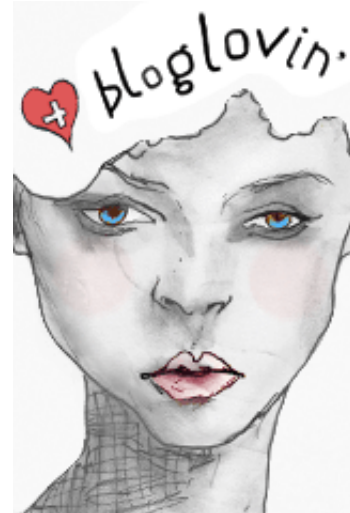
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