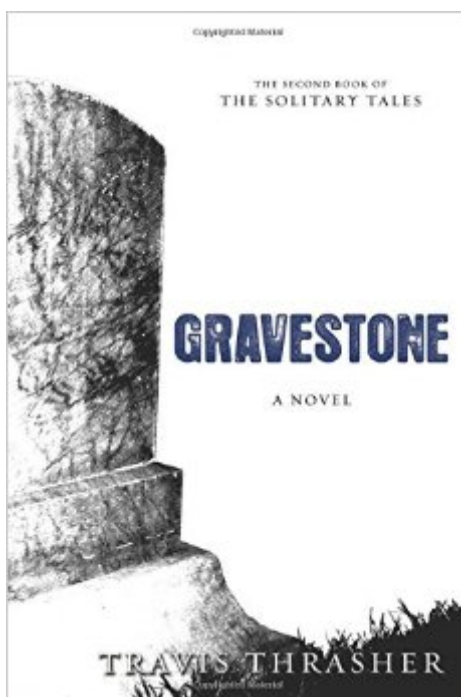


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Gravestone: A Novel (Solitary Tales Series)



Synopsis

His Fear Will Soon Turn to Anger |. At first, Chris Buckley was simply warned. And watched. But as Chris unravels the haunting riddles of the town of Solitary, he finds that much more than the life of a town is at stake. Whether facing a pastor with a house full of skeletons or a cousin he never knew existed, Chris is forced to choose between light and darkness, life and nightmarish death. Every choice he makes reminds him that the unthinkable has already happened "and if he trusts the wrong person, it may happen again." This second book in the Solitary Tales continues Chris's journey toward finding out who he is and what his own role is in the darkness suffocating his tiny new hometown. Filled with shocking twists, Gravestone is a tale of a teenager thrown into a battle over a town, a secret "and ultimately his own soul.

Book Information

Series: Solitary Tales Series (Book 2)

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (52 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #836,566 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Emotions & Feelings #18 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Friendship #142 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Action & Adventure

Customer Reviews

Shattered. There's no other way to describe Chris Buckley's life. Absolutely shattered by the events that ended Solitary, Chris now has to return to school like everything is a-ok when in reality nothing has ever been more wrong. Last year, when Travis Thrasher released Solitary, the first book in The Solitary Tales, I was absolutely blown away by everything about the book. Theme. Plot. Beginning. Middle. End. Writing style. In fact, I picked it as my favorite book of 2010. Needless to say, I was highly anticipating Gravestone. I had no idea where Thrasher was taking the story, I just hoped it would be an exciting and fascinating journey. Second installments of series can be difficult. First

installments introduce the world--characters, initial plot, overarching theme, and many other things that make for a good stories. They're like the initial downhill plunge of a roller coaster. Maybe kind of slow at first as the world is built, but then you whoosh down that initial hill. The momentum for the series is set. Second installments can either coast along and take things easy or take the reader on a series of dips, dives, and loops that make for an exhilarating ride. Gravestone is definitely the latter. The book begins with Chris trying to somehow go back to normal life and ignore the catastrophic events at the end of Solitary that are now being covered up. He's got to do something, but what can he do? In the journey to find justice and seek out the evil in Solitary, Chris finds a few new friends, a few new enemies, and many more questions. The more Chris looks into the matter, the more he finds that the source of evil in Solitary rests on New Beginnings Church and Pastor Jeremiah Marsh. Gravestone, is in a way the tale of Chris Buckley v. Jeremiah Marsh. The odd hints on the pastor received in Solitary blossom as the pastor unveils his true colors. But everyone but Chris--and maybe a few others--seem oblivious to it. Thrasher respectfully moves on from the shocking end of Solitary, giving it the emotional weight it deserved without bogging down the pacing of the story. Perhaps my favorite parts were the scenes of Chris speaking with Iris at Crag's Inn, where he ends up getting a job. So much alluded to, so much left unsaid, such a great storyline. Like Solitary, Gravestone ends on cliffhanger that's jaw dropping. It answers as many questions as it raises, for as one layer is revealed a new layer presents itself. Where will Chris go from here? I have no idea...but I can't wait to find out. Hopefully five years from now, The Solitary Tales will be known as the series that launched Thrasher's writing into the bestseller's lists. It's certainly deserving of being there.

Last year I received a copy of Solitary from a publicist and tossed it in my bag on the way to a family reunion, whereupon I ended up blowing all sorts of people off since I got so engrossed in it. Thanks, Travis Thrasher. This time I have a pile of papers to grade, yet the second installment in the series--Gravestone--showed up on my doorstep, and I've done nothing for the past several hours except plow through it. Now my students thank you, Travis Thrasher. Gravestone picks up immediately where Solitary left off, right after New Year's Eve and all the events that happened. Chris Buckley is alone and terrified and wondering in whom to believe. Oh, and there's a snowstorm, and there's no phone or Internet service. This scene sets things in motion that are an even wilder ride than Solitary was. It's hard to tell much about the book without giving any spoilers, but the main thread is Chris trying to find someone, anyone, he can confide in and trust about the increasingly frightening happenings and menacing people in town. In addition to the previous

characters, we're introduced to several new people--Kelsey in Chris's art class; Jared, Chris's unknown cousin; and Iris, a mysterious elderly lady who lives on a hill, each of whom provides another piece of the sinister mosaic that is Solitary. The increasingly-ominous Pastor Jeremiah Marsh begins to take center stage. How much does Chris's mom know about what's going on? Will Chris ever see his dad again? What about the mysterious church underneath the falls? Gravestone has some out-and-out horror moments and so many twists that you're wondering whom you can trust right along with Chris. As well, it examines Chris's faith, or lack of it, in greater detail and shows us yet again that nothing and no one is exactly what it seems. The book leaves us with another shocking, unexpected ending, and we have to wait until June 2012 for the next installment and June 2013 for the final installment. Thanks, Travis Thrasher!

In some ways "Gravestone" is like the TV show *Lost: The Complete Sixth and Final Season* where every character is an enigma and every answer opens up two more questions. At times the TV show and this book can be quite maddening and you get to the point where you want to yell-out in frustration. The difference is that "Gravestone" is able to keep the loose ends in order allowing it to progress with the tale. *Solitary: A Novel (Solitary Tales Series)* is the first novel in the Solitary series and it has a definite beginning middle and end. However, "Gravestone" makes no apologies as it clearly serves as a bridge between "Solitary" and the next installment *Temptation: A Novel (Solitary Tales Series)*. Despite being a virtual literary bridge "Gravestone" is a darker (and ultimately better) than its predecessor. It is tough to explain how a YA Christian mystery novel could have the same level of gloom and dread as *Salem's Lot* and *The Mist* (Previously Published as a Novella in 'Skeleton Crew') but it matches both of them. It really is a surprising novel on many accounts - not only is scary, but it also captures teenage angst and the nature of being an outcast and a rebel. One thing that sets the Solitary apart from other books in the suspense/mystery genre is that for all of its evil and scary imagery it is a very clean novel. While I wouldn't recommend it to kids under 13 (especially if they are nightmare prone) it avoids using profanity or other cheap tricks to try and create an authentic feel. Final Verdict, while "Gravestone" may not be appropriate for every teenager it will likely be a popular series if people see it for what it is (a very dark and terrifying story) and not as a YA Christian novel. Trust me - "Gravestone" is a novel that would make Stephen King very proud. 5 Stars

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