



Urbantasm: The Spring Storm

Urbantasm

Book Four

Connor Coyne

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Book Description:

Urbantasm: The Spring Storm is the fourth and final book in the magical teen noir serial novel inspired by the author's experiences growing up in and around Flint, Michigan.

The stage has been set. The chessboard awaits. Against a background of love and friendship, of hard-won grades and groundbreaking plays, John and his friends are ready to claim their lives, their futures, and their city. They have identified their adversary: a mysterious man who calls himself "God" and manipulates the Chalks street gang through the influence of his children. John has also unlocked the secret of O-Sugar, an otherworldly drug with the ability to distort space. But God wields a powerful influence throughout the city of Akawe, and nobody seems to understand his true motives or intentions.

As the ice and frost of a long and unrelenting winter finally crack under cold, torrential rains, frozen things begin to stir again. The brutal murder of one of John's friends and the abrupt disappearance of another signals that the moment of action has arrived. Who will survive this dying city, and how will the experience change the survivors? Akawe has been unstable for decades. A bit of lift and heat and moisture is all it needs to build a spring storm.

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Excerpt:

I borrowed a flashlight from Charles before I left rehearsal that night. I half-expected to hear some winos as I passed under the viaduct, but all was empty. I directed the flashlight beam away from the looming silos and made my way across the wet stepping stones with aching care. When I got to the other side, I saw Bill standing beside my tent, staring at me, his forehead hatchet rent.

That was when everything I had kept at a distance collapsed beneath its collected weight, and I knelt and vomited and cried. We will never be free, we will never be free, we will never be free of this, it will never go away. Then the food was gone, and I was dry heaving. I swallowed and slowly gathered my breath and looked up again.

Bill hadn't moved. He still stared at me, the wound in his head like a third eye that didn't watch me but looked instead at the silos hidden behind the concealing trees.

"Since you're just staring at me, you won't mind if I get something to drink," I said.

I rummaged in the tent and got the water. I swirled it in my mouth and spat out the bile. Then I drank. Then I ate a Pop-Tart. Then I ate another. Then I reached into my backpack and took out some fishing line and silverware from the home ec room. Ignoring Bill, I tied the fishing line around the trunk of the willow tree and drew it in a broad loop around the clearing, wrapping it around trees as I went. When I had returned to the willow tree, I tied the line off and began hanging the silverware, in twos and threes, every meter or so. It probably took me an hour. I plucked at the fishing line. The silverware clattered and banged.

"Now I can hear like a pigeon," I said.

Bill started to walk away. He went a dozen paces up the trail, then looked back at me.

"What is it?" I said. "Why are you here? Why don't you just go away? You're an urbantasm. You can't see me. You can't hear me. What the fuck do you want?"

He watched and waited.

"You aren't even there," I said, but I picked up the flashlight and followed him along the path.

Bill led me slowly. In the utter dark – the sky was cloudy above the hundreds of branches – I had to step carefully over the cracked roots and desiccated vines. I followed Bill back to the main path, and he led me southward. We scrambled up and down a couple of hills, and I could hear the churning of the water far beneath me. I caught up with Bill at the edge of the stream. He was standing near a lightly submerged concrete pillar, which seemed to provide passage to the other side.

"What is it?" I asked.

Bill stepped onto the pillar, his footsteps not disturbing the water, and crossed to the opposite side.

I followed, my feet clumsily kicking up waves. At one point, I slipped, and my whole left leg went into the water. I almost fell off the pillar completely, but I held the flashlight overhead and hauled myself back up. I finally made it to the opposite side, dripping and freezing, and saw Bill moving away from the stream onto the bank.

Is this where she is? I wondered. Did she come back in the woods here and die, and I'm about to find her body, and then he'll vanish, and I'll be left alone with what's left of Selby? Is that what happens now?

There were no paths here, and the growth was younger and denser than where I had made camp. Branches and nettles scratched my face, and the flashlight beam flew wildly. I finally

emerged into a massive grassy clearing, where Bill stood waiting. He pointed. I followed his gesture.

We stood at the back of a broad lawn, looking up at a great, hulking, shuttered building made of brick and stone. It was only three stories high but close to a hundred feet tall, and the vast wings of the structure stretched off to the right and left. For a moment, I wondered how such a colossal building had gone unnoticed in the middle of the forest. Then I recognized it as the mental asylum. We'd come out of the Happy Hunting Grounds on its westward side and stood behind the massive complex. I could hear the quiet hum of traffic along South Street.

"Is Selby in there?" I asked.

Bill's mouth moved.

"No," he said, and there was a slight delay between his speaking and the sound that followed.

"So you can talk too. And I can hear you. And you can hear me."

Bill stared at me.

"I'm not going in there," I said. "No way."

I returned the way I had come. Bill didn't follow me. When I got back inside my tent, a blue glow rose around me.

"Is that you, Aunt Ellie?"

"Yes, my love," came my aunt's voice.

"Why is Bill following me? What does he want?"

"Yes, my love."

"Why am I able to hear you now? I thought you were just images pulled back to me because of the O-Sugar. How are you able to talk? Is it a flashback? Are you just illusions? Or are you real ghosts?"

"Yes, my love."

"Whatever you are, please protect me from nightmares again. Because the days are nightmares right now. I can't do this if both days and nights are nightmares."

"Yes, my love."

I undressed and crawled into the sleeping bag. The blue glow wavered, and I knew Ellie was taking a seat outside. I closed my eyes and wondered if Bill was going to follow me for the rest of my life. I wondered if Selby died, if her urbantasm would appear to me as well. Would I give up my search at that moment? I thought about May. I wanted her. The warmth of her arms. She could protect me, but now it was up to me to protect the others. I started to say a rosary to myself. I thought it might help me calm down. It doesn't matter if I don't have the beads, as long as I say the prayer. I knew the number and order of the Our Fathers and Hail Marys, but I'd forgotten what came before and after. Was it the Nicene Creed at the beginning or another saying? And what were the right ruminations? The scourging and the crown, yes, but what else? When Pilate washed his hands? No, that's not right. None of us can just wash our hands. I said prayers until the sleep finally closed in around me.

About the Author:

Connor Coyne is a writer living and working in Flint, Michigan.

He's published several novels and a short story collection, and his short work has been featured in Vox.com, Belt Magazine, and elsewhere. He lives with his wife, two daughters, and an adopted rabbit in Flint's College Cultural Neighborhood (aka the East Village), less than a mile from the house where he grew up.



Learn more about Connor's writing at:

Author Website: <http://ConnorCoyne.com>

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Blog: <http://connorcoyne.com/blog>

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“You were as bright as the sun?”

“Brighter.”

Urbantasm is an award-winning teen-noir novel inspired by life in Flint, Michigan.

<https://amzn.to/3E4a3g5>

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