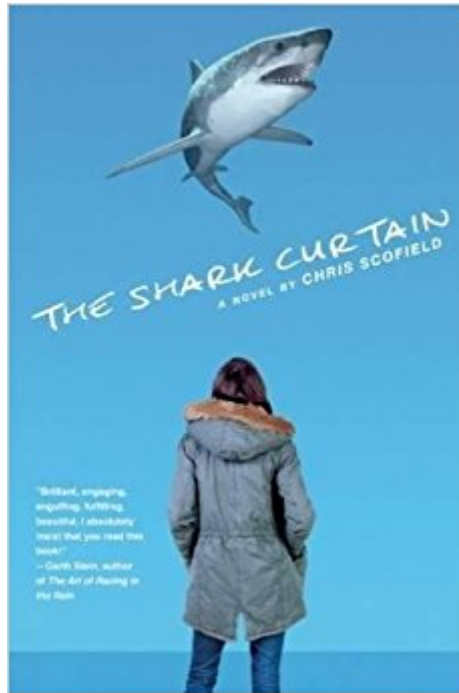




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The Shark Curtain



Synopsis

Winner of the 2016 Paterson Prize for Books for Young People "It's easy to empathize with [Lily]....Throughout, first-time author Scofield creates striking images that will stay with readers."--Publishers Weekly "This is a painful and poignant story that is not for every reader; but for those ready to deal with complex realistic fiction, it has much to offer."--Booklist "Dynamic...[Protagonist Lily Asher] comes to glorious, heartbreaking, embraceable, vibrant life courtesy of the experiences, heart and immense imagination and talent of Eugene author Chris Scofield."--The Register-Guard "Chris Scofield has written a young adult novel that doesn't compromise integrity for trendiness....It's complex and quirky...there can be no doubt as to its uniqueness."--LitReactor "The Shark Curtain is worth a read by teens and adults alike."--Eugene Weekly "Absolutely bewitching....Scofield has crafted a dense, poignant book, filled with extraordinarily beautiful language....In exploring themes such as art, sex, and self-acceptance, Scofield examines the trade-offs we all make to be included in the tribe."--KLCC "Those who prefer edgy period fiction with truly original characters will be fascinated by this glimpse into the mind of an unmedicated non-neurotypical teen struggling to come of age in the '60s."--The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books "The Shark Curtain...is believable and real."--What Is Much "Brilliant, engaging, engulfing, fulfilling, beautiful. The Shark Curtain will turn you inside out and make you see the world differently. As well you should. As well we all should. Because life isn't about having the answers, it's about grappling with the questions. Chris Scofield's fantastically fantastic novel pins the tail on the donkey with a pneumatic nail gun--I absolutely insist that you read this book!"--Garth Stein, New York Times best-selling author of *The Art of Racing in the Rain* Set against the changing terrain of middle-class values and the siren calls of art and puberty, *The Shark Curtain* invites us into Lily Asher's wonderful, terrible world. The older of two girls growing up in suburban Portland, Oregon, in the mid-1960s, her inner life stands in quirky contrast to the loving but dysfunctional world around her. Often misunderstood by her flawed but well-intentioned parents, teenage Lily orbits their tumultuous love affair, embracing what embraces her back: the ghost of her drowned dog, a lost aunt, numbers, shoe boxes, werewolves, rituals, and stories she pens herself (including one about a miscarried sibling she dubs "Frog Boy"). With "regular" visits from a wisecracking Jesus, an affectionate but combative friendship is born--a friendship that strains Lily's grasp of reality as much as her patience. From the violence of a Peeping Tom and catching Mom in flagrante delicto with the neighbor, to jungles in her closet, butlers under her bed, and barking in public, Lily struggles to balance her family's expectations with the visions that continue to isolate her.

Book Information

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#736 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 6 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up "In this novel set in 1960s Portland, OR, 14-year-old Lily Asher hears voices. Not just any voices" Jesus (SOG, as she calls Him), her dead dog, and others regularly make appearances in her mental world. She also feels as though she is becoming a dog, believes that she's growing a tail, and often randomly barks. Her highly active imagination is frequently misunderstood. The teen is dubbed a "weirdo" by her younger sister and has few friends. Her unconditionally loving but completely dysfunctional parents try their hardest to help Lily deal with her schizophrenia. Lily and her mother share an interest in art, but her mother's deepening alcoholism and substance abuse cause the family even more grief. Her father "plays the dogs" and brings home more trouble. The family, despite their plethora of issues, genuinely loves Lily and each other. This is a difficult story to read in part because the author brings readers into Lily's mind so successfully. Teens will bounce from one thread to the next, which often does not allow for much continuity or flow. The plot careens from one (usually highly dramatic) event to the next. Also, their family's frank talk about sexuality and irreverent attitude toward God can be very startling for some readers. VERDICT While it is encouraging to see a YA book with a mentally ill protagonist who is loved unconditionally for who she is, the narrative is jarring and not engaging enough to keep teens' attention." Lisa Crandall, formerly at the Capital Area District Library, Holt, MI

"The Shark Curtain is a full-on adventure tale of the best kind. The heroine, Lily Asher, is a

'weirdo'--a sweet, troubled, creative teenager who lives life through the lens of her hyperimagination. Regularly visited by the ghost of her dead dog as well as a tedious and melancholy Jesus, Lily struggles with her own bizarre behavior, puberty, and love for her dysfunctional family. The Ashers are going through what we all went through in the 1960s: the Vietnam War, race riots, the white patriarchy, bullies, death, and too much Valium. It's Lily's unusual voice that brings the story all together. Chris Scofield's *The Shark Curtain* is a shout-out to all us grrrrrls. Hooray!"--Tom Spanbauer, founder of Dangerous Writing

"You've never met anyone like *The Shark Curtain*'s Lily Asher. With Jesus as her smart-aleck companion, a dead dog as her guide, a sister who thinks she's a 'weirdo,' and parents absorbed in their own drama, Lily leads you wildly through her imagination, her dreams, and the crazy roller coaster of her teenage years. With deep wit and endless invention, Chris Scofield has created a girl--and a story--unlike any other. Read this book and experience its wonder."--Miriam Gershow, author of *The Local News*

"In *The Shark Curtain*, Chris Scofield offers us a rare pleasure: a startling and original heroine, Lily Asher, whose quest to understand and experience the world around her is second only to her journey inward, where she grapples with a menagerie of family members, animals, historical and religious figures, and pop cultural icons in a series of both real and imaginary encounters. These twisted and sometimes absurd relationships allow Lily to grasp fleeting and brilliant truths about the human condition, the problem of death, what it means to be 'crazy,' what it means to be 'normal,' and our very real need for love and acceptance, no matter who we are."--J.L. Powers, author of *This Thing Called the Future*

I love Lily Asher, whose slippery sense of her world is mesmerizing. The book drew me in and made me feel the emotional impact of her experience. Not only does her story give the perspective of a unique young woman whose imagination is as real as the "real" world she shares with others, the story's setting gives an authentic glimpse into the life of teenagers and families in the 1960s. The use of language is also powerful. This book gives a worthwhile reading experience that works on so many levels.

The Shark Curtain is so original, that describing it mentioning *Geek Love* and the New Testament in the same sentence does not seem too far fetched. Some words that come to mind are compelling, edgy, quirky, dark, hilarious. OK, here's something else. I was reading *The Shark Curtain* during Earth Hour by candlelight to finish the section on Lily's delivery to the class of her essay on Frog Boy. That has to mean something.

I can honestly say I've never read anything quite like *The Shark Curtain* -- and I've read a lot! Lily's perspective was utterly unique, which is not an easy thing for an author to achieve. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys immersing themselves in truly beautiful, startling language. I found myself reading passages aloud just to hear the words. Other times, I would have to look up and just take some deep breaths while the prose sunk into me. Definitely a wonderful reading experience!

This book was so so incredible. Lily was so real and flawed and relatable. I want to list the things I love but I am afraid of spoiling any of it for potential readers. The way her world is drawn, with such detail and emotion, and the way it unfolds, it was all so captivating and magical and deeply sad. Lily is a special character, and I'm so glad to know her.

Buckle your seat belts and hold onto your hats! You may never know where Lily is headed, but her journey will tantalize you, make you laugh, and at times, cry as her search takes you into her world as she sees it. Everyone has a different story as told by Lily. How does she find what is real and true? This book is a winner, and Chris's talent is not to be missed.

Wonderful read! Chirs Scofield's breakout novel displays a level of insight and compassion for her extraordinary character uncommon in popular literature. The range of emotion displayed and demanded makes the reading of this story more like a family experience than just reading a book.

The Shark Curtain is a rich story with great characters and in depth thought. A great read for teenagers And adults.

Something so real about the effects of alcoholism on kids, rather haunting. So well written and I would recommend it to anyone.

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