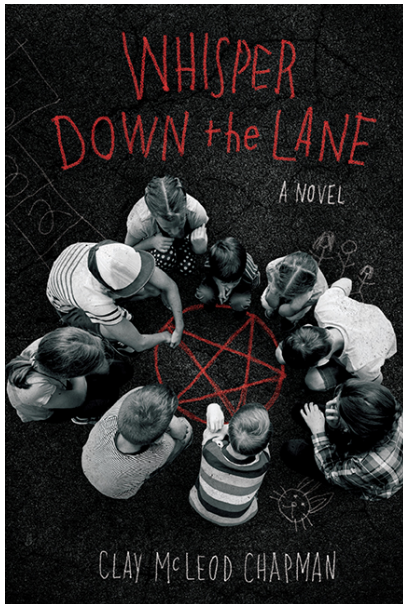




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★ Whisper Down the Lane

Clay McLeod Chapman. Quirk, \$19.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-68369-215-7

Chapman (*The Remaking*) evokes the “satanic panic” that convulsed schools and day care centers in the 1980s, destroying reputations and lives, in this spellbinding psychological thriller. In 1983, five-year-old Sean Crenshaw is goaded by seemingly concerned adults into fabricating accounts of ritual abuse of students by teachers at his school. Thirty years later, with the resulting witch hunts behind him, Sean has renamed himself Richard Bellamy and works as an art teacher at the upscale Danvers School in Virginia. But a series of disturbing incidents pulls him back into the nightmare of his past: a school pet is found ritually slaughtered, and kids in his class begin blaming bruises on their bodies on a fellow student named “Sean”—even though Richard has no student of that name. Chapman skillfully toggles between 1983 and 2013, tantalizing readers with the possibility that Richard’s suppressed past self might somehow be expressing itself in the present, and he laces the text with interviews between young Sean and manipulative authorities who are horrifying in their own right. The result is a suspenseful tale of paranoia that will keep readers riveted until the last surprise is sprung. *Agent: Emily Dayton, Gotham Group. (Apr.)*

DETAILS