

BUZZ

status report

TED THOMPSON • HAYLEY FAITH NEGRIN • ATHLETA • VINEYARD VINES • SPERRY TOP-SIDER

In Transit

Reflection and regret in
The Land of Steady Habits

Author Ted Thompson



Looking back, all of these characters are going through these moments in which everything is changing,” Ted Thompson says of his novel, *The Land of Steady Habits*. Though he now calls Brooklyn home, the Staples grad mined his experiences growing up in Westport for his debut work, selected as the Amazon Best Book of April 2014.

Threaded with both humor and heartbreak, the novel is a meditation on ambition and expectation, set in Westport, during a tumultuous holiday period. Add a drug called Peruvian salt and Laika, the Soviet-launched space dog, and you have a debut that lingers with you long after the final pages.

The main character, Anders, is in sort of a second adolescence after he abruptly retires from his high-paying (and soul-crushing) job in the city and leaves his wife. Together with ex-wife Helene, and their son, Preston, the story is told through a weaving triptych of viewpoints.

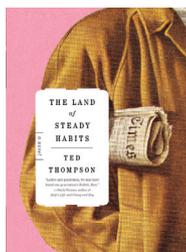
As the trio restlessly navigate their lives,

modes of transit are frequent set pieces. Characters crawl through traffic on the Post Road, floor-it down I-95, and watch, grimly thankful to be distant from the train that glides to Westport from Manhattan, “spilling dark-coated people onto the platform like a gutted fish.”

Though many reviewers have dubbed the book as a take-down of a dwindling, privileged class, Ted admits the story’s genesis was more personal. “The book was more about me wanting to explore a fear of mine, which is making a series of decisions that lead to a later-middle age filled with a certain kind of regret,” he says. “A lot of it was a projection of that internal fear.”

The characters might be ticking time-bombs of tension, but Ted’s own experience in town was much less fraught. “Westport is a gorgeous place to have grown up,” he says. “I don’t know that I would’ve traded it for a different life.”

—Nathan Tavares



The novel’s cover

PEG+CAT = BIG WIN FOR WESTON



Weston’s **Hayley Faith Negrin** landed the starring role as Peg in PBS’s *Peg + Cat* at the tender age of eight. That was only six months after launching her acting career. Now Hayley, at age eleven, has won an Emmy for Outstanding Performer in an Animated Series, nudging out big names like Alan Cumming and Ashley Tisdale.

Hayley says, “It felt really amazing to win because I have worked so hard recording the show. The Emmy made me feel really accomplished.”

The actress works about sixteen hours per month and says the hardest part is missing school, which she loves. She also plays basketball and lacrosse. Hayley is low key about her job and kept news of her press tour under wraps at sleep-away camp this summer. When Hayley won her Emmy, mom Jara says, “I think my husband and I were more excited than she was! We were jumping up and down. Hayley walked right up to accept the award, without looking back.” —Jill Johnson