



# Seagull: A Southern Novel

*Lawton Paul*

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*You gonna fall down or stand and fight?*

Fourteen-year old Jesse, who spends time on a crab boat with his uncle and brother on the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, Florida, is tormented by the thought that maybe his aunt is lying to him about how his mother died.

To find the truth he has to overcome his fears: the local bully, the large dark shapes that he imagines in the middle of the dock at night, and the thought that maybe his brother is right, he's just a warped kid who thinks too much. Will he find the courage to stand and fight?

## Q&A with Lawton Paul

**Q: What sparked this novel?**

A: Two things. One: I wanted my kids to know where I came from. The very southern setting—North Florida on the St. Johns river, is where I grew up. And I wanted to give them a feel for that time and place. Watching the sunrise on a stinky crab boat in the St. Johns—what could be better?

And the second thing: When I'm not writing, I'm teaching kids. I see a lot of young people who have such promise but for some reason or another, give up right before they're about to make headway. I see my own kids struggling at certain points in their lives. And one thought keeps coming back: don't give up. So I wanted Jesse (main character in *Seagull*) to really have some heavy issues to navigate through: the death of his mother, Johnny the bully, and of course, the girl, Hailey. You'll have to read the book (*savvy marketing ploy alert!*) to find out how it all turned out for Jesse.

**Q: Why should readers give this novel a try?**

A: If I've done my job well, you'll enjoy the ride and maybe even get that little happy-glow feeling at the end like you just watched *Rocky* again, or someone said your hair looks nice, or you got an "A" on a pre-calc test. (*Another genius bit of marketing there.*)

**Q: What kind of book is *Seagull*?**

A: It's a coming of age southern novel with a young main character that should appeal to fiction readers of all ages. Younger readers will sympathize with our teen heroes Jesse and Matty and adult readers will be taken back to earlier days. My style has a literary feel, but the story is plot-driven and suspenseful, especially at the end. And even has a hint of romance.

*Thanks for giving Seagull a try. Please let me know what you thought of it.*

—Lawton Paul

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