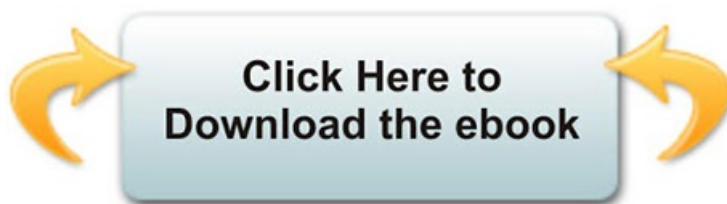


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Nightfall by Jake Halpern.

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Edgeland: Peter Kujawinski and Jake Halpern preview next book.

Authors Peter Kujawinski and Jake Halpern stretched our imaginations with last year's *Nightfall* — a novel about a world in which 14 years of night follow 14 years of daylight. . . and the kids who accidentally get left behind as the sun is setting. Their next novel, *Edgeland*, is set in the same universe as *Nightfall*, but it's a completely different story. In this one, Wren and her friend Alec live on the island of Edgeland, situated near a 30-mile-wide whirlpool called the Drain. Nothing sucked into the Drain is ever seen again — including the treasure- and corpse-filled boats people send into whirlpool when burying their dead. Wren, an orphan, dreams of escaping Edgeland, so she and Alec plan to rob one of the boats on its way down — but the plan goes awry, and the two get sucked into the Drain, only to discover what's beneath is like nothing they ever could have conceived.

Below, EW exclusively reveals *Edgeland*'s cover, and Kujawinski and Halpern tell us where they find their out-of-this-world ideas.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY: Where did the concept for *Edgeland* come from?

JAKE HALPERN : It's a story about two kids who fall off the edge of the earth. And there's a real life inspiration here. You see, I grew up near Niagara Falls. Ever since I was a kid, I was obsessed with stories of people who "jumped" the falls. In fact, there was a legend about a seven-year-old boy who went over the edge and lived. Turns out, the legend was true. Afterwards, fans and — even some religious zealots — made pilgrimages to the trailer park where this kid lived. Some believed he'd been touched by God. I wrote a story about him for *Outside Magazine* . Anyway, the story stayed with me. I had this image in my mind of a boy, falling in a cascade of water, down, and down, and down into some other world. Then I called up Peter, my co-author — and shared the idea.

PETER KUJAWINSKI: I loved the idea! Of course, the next question was, if this boy falls down a waterfall at the edge of the world and survives , what does he find at the bottom? We kicked around some ideas, but settled on the notion that the waterfall was a portal to the afterlife. And from there, it was an easy step to imagine an island of funeral homes next to the waterfall nearby, where all the world's dead were prepared, blessed and then slipped into the current. From the beginning, we loved these concepts — they were creepy, mind-bending, and very cool.

How did travels in Jerusalem influence you?

JH : Peter and I met in Israel. He was working as a U.S. diplomat and I was teaching at the American International School. We spent a lot of time in the old city of Jerusalem, which is — without a doubt — the most intense place I have ever visited. The narrow, twisting streets are teeming with street vendors, machine-gun-toting soldiers, bewildered tourists, and religious pilgrims headed to their respective holy sites — the Western Wall, the Dome of the Rock, or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — each within a stone's throw of the other. So, when we envisioned the island of Edgeland, where our novel takes place, we pictured the old city of Jerusalem, filled with dead bodies, and perched on a waterfall at the edge of the world. Describing it this way sounds kind of insane, and that's what we were going for.

PK: Jerusalem is a place where devout Jews, Christians, and Muslims rub shoulders all the time. Being there, you see the power of religion — and the complexity of living next to people with different, sometimes antagonistic, beliefs. It's an atmosphere that we channeled when writing *Edgeland* .

Why did you want to continue writing in *Nightfall* 's universe but not write a sequel to *Nightfall* ? Do you have other stories planned in this same world?

JH : We always envisioned *Nightfall* as a stand-alone book, but the thing is, we loved the world in which it was set. We loved its epic 500-mile tides and its 14-year-long nights. So we decided to set *Edgeland* in another bizarre corner of this same world. In fact, there are some crossover characters. In *Nightfall* , there's a group of traders, known as the "furriers." They are hired to take everyone on the island of Bliss to the south. We open *Edgeland* with these same furriers. They've made their trip to the south, dropped off their passengers, and now they're taking their dead — who are frozen in blocks of ice — and bringing them to the island of Edgeland.

PK: I could well imagine other stories based in this same world, perhaps even a potential meet-up between the main characters in *Nightfall* and those in *Edgeland* . However, right now we're focused on the release of *Edgeland* , so the conversation on future stories hasn't happened yet.

What's your process like when writing together? How does the collaboration work?

JH We talk all the time. My wife sometimes jokes that he is my “other spouse.” And often we’re on opposite ends of the globe. I will be reporting a story in Poland and he’ll be on a diplomatic mission to the Arctic Circle. Or, I’ll be living in southern India with my wife and kids and he’ll be working at the United Nations in New York. But we always find a way to talk and share ideas. The talking is as important as the writing because we like to map out our stories, in detail, before we start pecking away at our keyboards. Our goal in life is to be like two twelve-year old boys who refuse to grow up. And yes, we like *Stranger Things* .

You both have had jobs that dealt explicitly with the real world—investigative journalism and diplomacy. What appeals to you about creating new, fantastical ones?

PK: Living in so many countries has made me realize that the divide between real life and fantasy is not as large as you might think. Edgeland is based on our time in Jerusalem, as well as other things like Jake’s travels to India. Another example of the connection between fantasy and real life is from living in Haiti, where I remember talking to people who believed profoundly in *loup-garou* — the French word for werewolves — stalking their homes. One man told me a werewolf had circled his house the night before, and I can still see the terror in his eyes. Finally, both Jake and I were enthralled with an idea that was considered absolutely true centuries ago: that the earth was flat, and that ships could sail to the end and fall off. For people living in the Middle Ages, this was the real world.

JH: For pure inspiration, you can’t beat the real world. Fact is stranger than fiction, for sure. That’s why I love reporting stories for outlets like *New Yorker* and *This American Life* . So in my novels, I like starting with a true premise and then, flipping a switch, and delving into the unreal. It feels like defying gravity or breathing underwater.

Novels.

Why novels? Because sometimes you get sick of fact checking and just want to write about haunted forests and iceberg fortresses.

Edgeland.

Penguin, 2017 Genre: Young Adult / Fantasy.

Thousands of miles south of the island of Bliss, day and night last for 72 hours. Here is one of the natural wonders of this world: a whirlpool thirty miles wide and a hundred miles around. This is the Drain. Anything sucked into its frothing, turbulent waters is never seen again.

Wren has spent most of her life on Edgeland, a nearby island where people bring their dead to be blessed and prepared for the afterlife. There the dead are loaded into boats with treasure and sent over the cliff, and into the Drain. Orphaned and alone, Wren dreams of escaping Edgeland, and her chance finally comes when furriers from the Polar north arrive with their dead, and treasure for their dead.

With the help of her friend Alec, Wren plans to loot one of the boats before it enters the Drain. But the boat—with Alec and Wren onboard—is sucked into the whirlpool. What they discover beyond the abyss is beyond what anyone could have imagined.

PRAISE.

★ “Halpern and Kujawinski have constructed a refreshing, original fantasy that thoughtfully probes the subjects of class, religion, and morality. . . . Compellingly written, this otherworldly adventure is a unique offering that deserves attention.”—Booklist, [starred review]

“An imaginative adventure/fantasy exploring the afterlife. Edgeland is a place more for the living than for the dead. . . . Recommended for fans of James Dashner’s “Maze Runner” series, this is a solid addition to collections serving upper middle grade and middle school readers.”—School Library Journal.

“In this intriguing fantasy, two friends discover the secret of life after death as they travel to the realm where people go to await their final fate . . . Halpern and Kujawinski provide a fascinating world, and their story is fueled by a strong premise and compelling protagonists”—Publishers Weekly.

Book review: *Nightfall*, by Jake Halpern and Peter Kujawinski.

Jake Halpern and Peter Kujawinski’s *Nightfall* is a super-creepy book with a really fascinating premise, and if you like high-concept, atmospheric young adult horror, you really need to get on this if you haven’t already. It’s another great team effort from these authors, and it’s further cemented my soft spot for authors who can write collaborative projects so seamlessly, because it’s not something that comes easy, even with careful editing to smooth the stitches of Frankenstein’s monster. Believe me, there’s a lot that’s monstrous about *Nightfall*.

On Marin’s island, the cycles of night and day are, shall we say, much longer than those on Earth. For 14 years, daylight bathes the island, making it a productive place filled with crops and farm animals. For the next 14 years, though, the island is plunged into darkness, and the residents relocate to a region nearer the equator to take advantage of a better climate, cycling back and forth between their far-flung home and the desert. In this sense, it reminds me of some of the greatest science fiction set on planets that move far beyond the orbits of their home stars, with rotations and axial tilt very different from that of Earth.

By tradition, as the light of dusk gathers, the people of the island follow a rigid set of rules as they pack up their homes, clean them, and set out a series of objects and ornaments, almost as though they are preparing for guests who might arrive after they leave. Once everything is put away, they set sail with fur traders who make a stop on the island as part of their route, returning when the sun rises again. Some residents, like Marin’s father, come home with wives from the desert, and some women — like Marin — will be sequestered during part of their time there to learn the traditions of their ancestors.

But that's not quite how it works out for her. Marin and her twin brother Kana are preparing to go when they realise that their friend Line has gone missing — and they have a pretty good idea of where he is. Racing against time, they plunge into the woods to find him, hoping that the ships won't leave the docks before they do, but when they emerge, it's to see the fleet of ships set sail, disappearing over the horizon. The teens are left alone in a dark, hostile environment to survive for the next 14 years unless they can find a way off the island and back to their families.

And they're not alone.

The older, darker, original residents of the island are furious with the humans who invade it during the daylight hours, and they make it their home at night. As Marin, Kana, and Line try to figure out how to get off the island, they're also dodging mysterious creatures who seem faster, more agile, and more prepared for the dark than they will ever be. Meanwhile, Kana is fighting his own demons under cover of darkness, struggling with an emerging aspect of his identity that he's only beginning to understand.

I really love the concept behind *Nightfall*, reminding me in many ways of 'All Summer in a Day' by situating the story on a planet where seasons and weather move differently, but are still rooted in human experience. This isn't a colony on Venus, but it is a community that would be familiar and accessible to many readers, and something we're familiar with on Earth though to a lesser degree — the land of the midnight sun with its endless, unrepentant days turns to relentless darkness in winter, creating brutal conditions that have a very stark and fundamental effect on the lives of those who make these regions their home. The migration of Marin's people and their measures to survive in a hostile environment remind me of cultures on Earth that have made similar adaptations.

Though the concept is well-rooted in science, this is not science fiction — speculative fiction, perhaps, but it's more firmly rooted in the horror and thriller genres. It was definitely a creepy read at night, creating a sense that the sun would never actually appear over the horizon, and it made for an eerie one during the day, too. We humans fear the dark and what we think might be hiding it. For centuries, we've been telling stories about monsters to terrify ourselves, because this is what humans like to do. Texts like this have a long-established role in human history and culture, and this one is incredibly well crafted and engaging.

Each of the characters is dealing with complexities that each doesn't reveal to the others, creating a web of secrets and lies that tangles around them tighter and tighter until the strings start choking them. What comes into question with *Nightfall* is when those webs will break up and how the characters will resolve them — if they can resolve them before the clock runs out on them and they're left with their backs against the cliffs and nowhere to go, all chances of escaping lost with the long-gone tides.

Nightfall.

Sign up for LibraryThing to find out whether you'll like this book.

No current Talk conversations about this book.

I have incredibly mixed feelings about this book. It definitely didn't go in the direction I was expecting, so that could be either good or bad. I kept forcing myself to pick it back up and finish it, but I won't say that it's necessarily a bad book. Great concept, but the delivery just wasn't quite there.

I do know these things for sure: -I really like Kana, but for 98% of the book, could not stand Marin and Line. -There is a lot more that could be explored in this world. The world-building of the island was pretty cool, but we're never given a history on why the island and its inhabitants are the way they are. We also don't know how most of the rest of the world functions. -The chapters were wonky, often cutting off at awkward times. There's a difference between a cliffhanger and just abruptly cutting off a scene. -I got bored a lot. I felt like I was stuck in a very long forest dungeon in a video game, and I typically really enjoy forest areas in games. I just got really tired of the same descriptions of clearings and "copses of trees." -Some descriptions were just hard to visualize because of how they were written, like details were left out or something. Especially true during some of the more action-heavy scenes. -This book could definitely use a follow-up, but I don't think I would read it. I just didn't feel invested.

I will give Marin credit for her reaction to the following line: "Sometimes in life, we do things simply because we've always done them." She basically went off about no one thinking for themselves. But it was too little too late, because it makes no sense that she's suddenly questioning it on the "day" that everyone is leaving. The whole scene just felt forced.

Overall, not a terrible book, but hating 2/3 of the main characters isn't a good sign. I couldn't bring myself to really care about their plight. ()

I was going to reshelve this book and move on with my day, but the arresting cover made me turn it over and read the back. Done. Sold.

'*Nightfall*' is about 14-year-old Marin and her home, an isolated island that enjoys fourteen years of daylight. With nightfall imminent, Marin helps her family and her friend Line, who is head of his household after the death of his parents, prepare to depart the island to wait out the long night. There are some unusual rituals. The placement of furniture in specific places, the placement of knives and bizarre trophies, and a cleansing of each house. To stay behind through the long night is unthinkable. At least the adults refuse to speak of it.

There's a difficulty, however. The boats that arrive to bring the Islanders to safety come early and there are fewer of them. In the rush and confusion, the adults dismiss Marin's concern that her friend Line is missing. It dawns on her where he might be, and convinces her twin brother Kana to help her find him. They don't make it back to the boats in time.

The three of them are about to find out why the islanders leave their homes for fourteen years rather than face the night.

This was an excellent juvenile thriller/fantasy, it created a new world and brings the reader into this dangerous situation with a minimum of exposition for a mg/ya book. I could have used a little more insight into Kana's experiences (can't say more) and a little bit more to the last act of the book, but it was very satisfying nonetheless. There is a sibling book out now and a sequel possibly on the way.

Next (Companion, not a sequel): 'Edgeland' ()

1 review add a review thingScore 50.

*** 3 out of 5 stars Review by: Mark Palm The Longest Night.

I usually don't start my reviews with a treatise on science, but as biological beings we are so tied to our circadian rhythms that disturbing them by hours can have profound effects on us. Just ask anyone who move from say, New York to the Arctic Circle. I have always found chronobiology fascinating, and that was one of the first things that drew me to *Nightfall* by Jake Halpern and Peter Kujawinski. The good news is that there is more to this book than a clever premise.

On the island of Bliss fourteen years of day is followed by fourteen of night. Because of the coldness of the Night, and the fact that the tide rolls out for hundreds of miles, the islanders migrate to the Desert Lands of the South. Not only do the islanders have to pack for the long trip but they have rituals that must be, and have always been performed for time immemorial, such as sweeping out their houses, setting the tables, and hanging unused decorations on the walls. The rituals are bizarre but the elder islanders insist that they must be done.

Marin, her nearly-blind twin brother Kana, and their friend, Line, whose parents have recently died, have spent their entire lives on the island, and know nothing else. Once inseparable tensions have been rising between them as Marin and Line find themselves increasingly attracted to each other. The day of departure Line is missing, having gone off to find a necklace belonging to Marin. Everyone is frantically boarding the ships, so Marin and Kana end up searching for Line. They find him injured, and by the time they return everyone is gone, and the three teens find themselves alone on the abandoned island with temperatures falling, and the weather growing worse by the minute. Even worse the only other person, a vagrant in town, has been murdered, and a single message has been left for them, stuck to the Mayor's door. It says "HIDE." Also a voice that Kana thought that he had heard only in a dream seems to be frighteningly real.

I can't really reveal much more without dropping some huge spoilers, but the authors do an excellent job of wringing every ounce of tension they can from this set-up. The culture and customs of the island's inhabitants are subtly eerie in the beginning of this novel, and by the time they are isolated *Nightfall* is downright creepy. Once they begin to realize the depth of the mess they are in the plot has unveiled a ton of twists and turns, while still moving at a quick pace. While the build-up is stellar, the pay-off never really lives up to its expectations. I know that the protagonists are teens, but even so they make a ton of questionable decisions that left me scratching my head. At the same time they all take a beating that would make Indiana Jones cry and just keep on ticking.

The characters are solid but never really spring to life, except for Soraya, who shows up late and still manages to steal the show. The fate of the characters, and what may be waiting for them down the road is left hanging a bit, but I found the actual end of the novel satisfying. *Nightfall* is creepy and tense, but if the atmosphere in the beginning of the book could have carried over to the end it would have been a knockout.