



# The Blonde

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## **The Blonde** Duane Swierczynski

The night before a big meeting, Jack Eisley is sitting in an airport bar in Philadelphia, chatting up a pretty young blonde. Sure, Jack has a wife and daughter at home, but this is just a little harmless flirting. Harmless, that is, until the blonde leans forward and says, "I poisoned your drink."

She tells Jack that unless she can keep someone within ten feet of her at all times, she'll die. And if he wants the antidote, he'll have to take her back to his hotel room and promise to stay by her side.

Jack thinks: psycho. But as the violent night wears on, and he encounters a relentless government assassin, a threatening voice on a cell phone, a deadly waitress, dirty cops, and shady cab drivers...

He begins to believe her.

## **The Blonde Details**

Date : Published November 14th 2006 by Minotaur Books (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9780312343798

Author : Duane Swierczynski

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : Thriller, Fiction, Mystery, Crime, Noir, Mystery Thriller

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# From Reader Review The Blonde for online ebook

## David says

I should read this again. It really blew my socks off when I read it. I'd never heard of the author back in 2006. Think this was his second novel. It's so fast paced it's nuts. You'll want to read it in one go. Totally love this speed-freak of a non-stop thriller. One of the best page turners that I can recall.

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## Harry says

So, last night I went to bed feeling excellent in all respects. I turned on my lamp above the bed and grabbed Duane's *The Blonde* which I had to rescue from the local library because friggin' Amazon's Kindle store had it on their "*sorry folks, but due to formatting errors, we are reviewing this book with publisher*" list for over a year now with no progress apparent from either the publisher or Amazon. I called Amazon and told them: "...either remove the damned book from the Kindle store, or fix the thing already!" While I was at it, I gave 'em the same diatribe for JLB's Robicheaux #5 which is the only JLB book not available on Kindle (library is grabbing that book from another branch as I speak). I mean, really?

Needless to say, I fell asleep an hour or so later as books make me do (better than any sleeping pill I can think of). Then, out of the blue, I wake up at 3:55AM with a runny nose, barely able to breathe and sneezing up a storm to the point I turned the light back on and went "What the hell did I do?" I mean, where do colds come from? I was feeling just fine, dammit! Unable to sleep, I grabbed Duane's book and just kept on reading and sneezing (I'll have to nuke the book a bit before I send it back to library). Couple of hours later I finished it.

What did I think? Before I go further, potential readers out there should understand something about Duane's work. The man is a pulp writer; he writes comic books as well as novels. I grew up on comics and the one thing you can't do when reading stuff like this is expect verisimilitude, you can't read 'em and not love suspending disbelief. Once you get over that hurdle, you're in for a hell of a ride especially where it comes to his Charlie Hardy series (2 more days to go before the third in that series gets downloaded to my Kindle). So, that's my heads-up on that.

Unlike a lot of other reviewers who like his stand-alones and having suffered through *The Wheelman* which I thought sloppy (see my review here)...this one's a little better for a Swierczynski stand-alone. It starts out like this (Chapter 1, lines 1 - 5):

*"I poisoned your drink."*

*"Excuse me?"*

*"You heard me."*

*"Um, I don't think I did."*

*The blonde lifted her cosmopolitan. "Cheers."*

Does that grab your attention? Hell yes, it does! This is why I love authors like John Locke and Duane Swierczynski. They are quick reads. Their premise on which the novels are based are unusual if not outrageous (ok, ok, this one's not original as we've seen this before in films like *D.O.A.* decades ago but get ready for an altered scenario on this old premise). Right out of the gate, we're thrown into a wildly out of

control situation and we're locked into the precise context from the very first lines of the novel. What's not to love about that? Again, unlike "The Wheelman" Duane wraps this one up nicely and ties all the loose ends in a fitting epilogue.

I don't discuss plots for series books...and don't particularly delve into them much in stand-alone reviews. Why spoil all the fun, right? Trust me to say that Duane's plots are unique (one of Duane's trademarks); it moves very fast, and you can't expect much in terms of settings, etc. I mean, it's opening....dialogue, action, dialogue, action...end.

This novel takes place over hours, not days - and subsequently, I read it in a few hours, not days. I was done with it and fell asleep sometime just as dawn crept across the skies outside. I'm giving it a three because I still like the Hardie series better. For pulp, they are more consistent and as a series add considerably to character development...even for pulp.

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## **Steve Dennie says**

Duane Swierczynski has quite an imagination. His books are unusual, and unpredictable. Such was the case with "The Blonde" (2007).

I previously read two of his other books, "The Wheelman" from 2006 and "Severance Package" from 2008." "The Blonde" would be in the same league as "Severance Package," both of them dealing an ordinary guy caught up in the machinations of a super-secret government agency which specializes in assassinations. But whereas "Severance Package" takes place in one building during a span of a couple hours, "The Blonde" ranges from Great Britain to Mexico.

The first line is, "I poisoned your drink." It's spoken in a Philadelphia airport bar by The Blonde to Jack Eisley, a journalist passing through. Here's the deal: she has been injected with nanites (tiny robots) which course through her blood. She must stay within 10 feet of someone at all times. If she doesn't, the nanites will know, and her head will explode. Slipping poison into Jack's drink, with the promise that he'll die in 9 hours unless she gives him the antidote, is her way of keeping someone close.

The nanites trace back to a diabolical scientist named The Operator, who is following her. There's another US agency involved, and they've sent a benevolence killer named Kowalski after her. Then Jack gets infected with the nanites, too—they can be transmitted through saliva, and in a weak moment he kissed the Blonde. So now he has to stay within 10 feet of someone at all times, too.

The book takes us on a wild ride through nighttime Philadelphia. As with Swierczynski's other books, the plot is unpredictable. You just don't know where things are headed, though it's obvious a showdown is in the works.

I was surprised when THE END came after 225 pages, and another 50 pages remained. Those 50 pages were filled with a novella called "The Redhead," which was a sequel to "The Blonde." Interesting. "The Redhead" was very good.

I've become a big fan of Duane Swierczynski. He has a few other books out there, and a new one coming out in March 2011. I need to track these books down.

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### **Josh says**

I love the 'The Blonde' – there is a reason this is a pop culture classic. It has everything a pulp addict could possibly want; basement crazies, dangerous broads, chivalrous men, and hard hitting action. The bonus novella 'The Redhead' follows on from the events that transpired in the novel with a more thriller feel than the full length predecessor and closed off the story arc nicely. One has got to wonder if this story has enough legs to warrant a sequel? Fans of Swierczynski, I'm sure are hoping there is a half finished manuscript sitting on desk his somewhere begging to be finished and unleashed on the world. Glad I reread this, 5 stars all the way.

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### **Larry H says**

Awesome book! This was like reading a book on speed. I'd never read anything by DS before but now I definitely will need to again. Terrific concept, great characters and while the storyline required significant abandonment of reality, it grabbed me from the first page and held me through the last, even through the extra "sequel short story" at the end of the copy I bought. This could be a Tarantino movie. Suspend your belief at the door and pick this up!

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### **Boden Steiner says**

I'm starting to think that nobody knows how to get pages turning in a crime novel quite like Duane Swierczynski.

Need a hook? Need a ticking clock? Need a conflict?  
Page one, line one, "I poisoned your drink."

This is surely enough to get a story moving, but while most writers would allow that premise to coast, Swierczynski just uses it as a jump start before flooring it. Sequence by sequence, scene by scene, the conflicts get boosted, jacked, and blasted. The characters are continually cornered and left for dead, and just when you think they have managed their way through a situation, Swierczynski just tosses gasoline on them (I almost picture him laughing at the poor bastards while he types sentences). The reader is left with no choice -- the clock is ticking, matches are lit, and there is another page after this one!

The Blonde is quite brilliant in this regard, a clinic in rising tension. The clock gets tripped and the story unfolds at a breakneck pace. The sections are even titled with that clock as a device -- sometimes to the second. That is just fun reading.

It's difficult to keep a pace like that and still find a way to flesh out the characters, especially when they are hard, scarred, and not afforded a large range of emotion. The depth, by nature, can't get too far off course and keep the pace, and I can forgive that, or even applaud it a bit because the novel doesn't try to be something that it isn't.

The novel follows the three leads throughout, but make no mistake, this is Kowalski's (a hit man, cleaner, assassin with a heart of teflon) show all the way. That character positively owns the novel, but I think all the characters do get some time to shine.

The Blonde is a prose action film, Crank 2 with an everyman in place of Chelios, and the camp held in check. It's fun and tough with a killer smile. Swierczynski has established a style and a voice that can only mean bigger and badder things to come. I hope he's typing fast. Tick tick tick.

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## **Brandon says**

While sitting in an airport lounge, Jack Eisley is told by an attractive blonde that she had poisoned his drink. Assuming she is merely flirting and not believing any part of her threats, Jack leaves but eventually suffers unimaginable pain and sickness. Upon meeting back up with her, Jack slowly realizes just how true her threats are..

Swierczynski had stated he wanted to write a sequel to The Wheelman, I suppose this was his idea. While technically linked to the previous book in the sense that a minor character in Michael Kowalski returns, there's no real semblance in terms of continuation; the plot is totally unrelated. That being said, I did love the nod to the events in The Wheelman.

I loved the layout. The fact that Swierczynski tracks several interchangeable narratives really keeps things moving at a brisk pace and helps the story stay consistently fresh. As in The Wheelman, Swierczynski's penchant for lightning fast action returns with quick and brutal violence. His writing is just so.. *cool* (that word isn't overused is it?)

There were a few things I was kind of bothered by.(view spoiler). However, it was nothing that really ruined my experience overall.

\*\* On a side note (not that it matters), of all the books I've read in the past year or so, I can see this one easily adapting to the silver screen. Swierczynski's writing just oozes style and seems to be built for a slick, fast-paced film. Surprisingly, I've read that his book Severance Package has been optioned by Hollywood so I've got that one on deck.

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## **Gram says**

The most outrageous thriller I've ever read. The action is set at a blistering pace as confusion reigns in a story that defies all reason. Jack Eisley is sat in an airport bar when Kelly White (an attractive blonde seated next to him who's actually a scientist called Vanessa) tells him she's poisoned his drink.

Kelly explains to Jack that unless there is someone within 10 feet of her at all times, she'll die. So, if Eisley wants the antidote, he'll have to stick by her. There follows a night of cartoon-like violence, mostly committed by Kowalski - a government assassin who works for the most secret of secret departments within

the United States Department of Homeland Security.

But Kowalski's controller has gone rogue and is working for a deranged scientist known as "The Operator" (Kelly/Vanessa's former boss) who's responsible for an awesome techno weapon, nicknamed "the Mary Kates", microscopic nanotechnology that replicates itself and lives in human blood. It involves a method of blowing people's heads apart if they're left on their own for more than 10 seconds. Along the way, there's an incident at a Sybian club, several trips in taxi cabs, lots of people getting beaten up, fights in hotel rooms, private homes and a hospital and at least another 3 assassins with delightful names. There are explosions, lots of gunfire - and several stabbings with various pointed implements.

Confused? That's all part of the fun. Duane Swierczynski's noirish nightmares have to be read at speed as the action is always flat out relentless and you simply have to keep up! It helps if you're a headless chicken - maybe.

At the end of "The Blonde", there's a novella which - as Swierczynski warns - you mustn't read until after you've finished "The Blonde". "Redhead" explains a lot of what happened in "The Blonde" - sort of! Hell - just go and read this book. It's FUN!\*

\*Unless you're one of those dingbat Goodreads members who thinks there's too much violence in crime novels. God, give me strength!!!

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## **Toby says**

**There's no two ways about it Blondes have more fun.** *Yeah I couldn't resist that.*

At least if you think exploding heads, pulp fiction references and a race against time not to mention multiple interested parties who don't have being concerned about your well being at the top of their to-do list is more fun they do.

Meet Jack, a loser in an airport bar drinking to get the courage to go sleep in a motel room alone and wake up to meet his wife's divorce lawyer. Meet Kelly, a devastating blonde so desperate to keep somebody close that she poisons Jack in an effort to get him to go home with her. Meet Kowalski, DHS operative who'll maim, kill and incapacitate without raising a sweat. A deadly game of cat and mouse set in the dead of one Philadelphian night ensues and you won't want to put it down until it ends.

This was a fun book and I enjoyed every word of it, like a blend of traditional noir/pulp (and Swierczynski - copy paste, no way I could remember that spelling - is very much a massive fan of the genre, it comes across in everything action of his characters like it is hardwired in to their DNA) and the good bits of a Jason Statham movie. It starts at a breakneck pace and doesn't relent until the final BLAM BLAM BLAM. This constant action had one minor drawback for me in that it provided no sense of final climax because every other page has a climax in one way or another.

This was my first experience of Swierczynski and I was surprised at the quality of the writing, the seamless integration of humour in to the tension packed plot and the reflexive attitude towards his genre as he toys with the reader. For example from the beginning I'm thinking how clever these references are to X are only to have Swierczynski slap me in the face later on with a red herring, Kowalski saying "you idiot, who hasn't seen X?" Well played!

**If you haven't read this, if you're undecided or hesitant in anyway, just buy it already you are not going to regret it.**

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## **Kelly Hager says**

Jack is on his way to Philadelphia to meet his wife's divorce attorney, so he was pretty sure that his life couldn't get much worse. Turns out, it can. He meets a blonde at the airport bar and they're chatting. He thinks it's going pretty well until she tells him that she poisoned him. He's like, "Yeah, sure, hahaha," but turns out she really did. So now he has to find her again. And when he does, the story she tells him? Well, it gets even weirder from there.

This is my fourth of his books (and this one is connected to the first one I read, *The Wheelman*\*), and these books are just beyond entertaining. They're action-packed and weird, but in the best possible way.

They're sort of like noirs on speed, and while I can't say this is my favorite of the four I've read (that would probably be *Fun & Games*, followed closely by *Hell & Gone*), I CAN say that so far, I've not been disappointed by one. These books are just so ridiculously fun and I can't say enough good things about them.

Recommended.

\* = otherwise known as the anti-Ocean's 11, because it makes you never want to plan a heist, ever. As opposed to Ocean's 11, which makes it look both easy and fun.

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## **Manfred Moonlight Ackermann says**

Cela se lit d'une traite. Parce qu'on a envie de connaître la suite, terriblement.  
Et c'est à la fois drôle, n'importe quoi, cocasse et certainement flippant pour les protagonistes.  
Du coup on se laisse prendre dans l'histoire rocambolesque, l'écriture est fluide et la fin est à mon sens un peu trop rapide et pas si géniale que cela mais c'est toute l'ambiance du livre qui vaut le coup.

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## **Richard says**

**\*2.5 Stars\***

*"I poisoned your drink."*

*"Excuse me?"*

*"You heard me."*

*"Um, I don't think I did."*

*The blonde lifted her cosmopolitan. "Cheers."*

And thus starts Duane Swierczynski's bizarre thriller where Jack Eisley is poisoned by a sexy crazy woman in a bar who claims that she has something in her blood that will make her head explode if she doesn't have

anyone within ten feet of her at all times, and essentially takes him hostage in exchange for the antidote.

It's a set-up that forces you to pick the book up and read it, a modern Hitchcockian-thriller that's a mash-up of noir and science fiction. It's also told in what seems like real-time with clipped chapters and a Woolrich-like clock ticker. It seems like the book was tailor-made for me to love it! So why was I strangely uninvolved? I'm not sure. I mean, I love Swierczynski's writing style and humour, and there are some sequences and moments that are actually pretty clever and entertaining. But at the end of the day, it wasn't the wild, un-put-downable, rollercoaster ride that it promises to be. I was never bored, just never as interested as I should've been. It might be the fact that it felt like I was never allowed to truly engage and empathize with any of the characters. They never felt like real people to me. And some of the sequences felt forced and out of place, as if they were there just to put the characters in another crazy situation, without really adding anything to the story. The Sybian Club and the train accident for example are two sequences that could've been left out and probably not really affect the story much.

But I loved Swierczynski's *The Wheelman* and I really admire the author from what I know so far. He seems fearless in his ideas and execution, creating his own genres, and all of his books just scream to be read. He's a more exciting writer than most people out there right now. I feel like I should give all of his work a chance. It's just that this one was a little disappointing.

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## **Amanda says**

The Blonde is a quick read, a fast-paced, farcical, nutty and ultimately irreverent tale written in the crime noir style of pulp fiction. You won't come away from the story hoping for a sequel to experience these characters again, but you'll enjoy the madcap thrill ride while it lasts. The comedic story at times requires a good dose of "suspension of disbelief" although it does have one of the best opening lines I've ever read that is sure to hook readers: "I poisoned your drink."

The plot takes place over the course of one night in Philadelphia, shifting between point-of-view from three characters: scientist Kelly White, journalist Jack Eisley, and covert assassin Mike Kowalski. Kowalski is the most well-rounded of the characters since more of his background is detailed allowing readers to sympathize with him despite his conscienceless profession--which he illustrates throughout the novel as he murders unsuspecting casualties of war who get in his way.

The Blonde, Kelly White is a scientist on the run from The Operator, a villain who co-created The Mary-Kates, microscopic nanotechnology that replicates itself and lives in human blood. The problem is--the infected victims must remain within 10 feet of another person or the nanos will implode their brain and kill them.

Poor Jack is the dumb shmoe who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and gets unwillingly pulled into the worst night of his life when Kelly announces that she's poisoned him. What follows is a farfetched romp through Philly with Jack trying to remain in close proximity to a city full of strangers while Kelly runs from Kowalski who's been hired to bring her in alive. Their paths cross periodically as Kowalski becomes aware of Jack's infection by Kelly and now must target him as well.

This would make a great beach read, but I doubt it would make the ranks of hardcover fiction. I gave it 3 stars because while the book is enjoyable purely for its fast-pacing, the story is not character-driven enough to make it truly memorable. Charlie Huston is a good alternative for readers preferring more character-driven

crime-noir plots.

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### **Eric\_W says**

Fasten your seatbelts and prepare for a wild ride of Homeland Security assassins, clean-up men, a beautiful blonde who has to be within ten feet of someone or horrible death ensues, an evil man called “The Operator” (what else), nanotechnology creatures called “Mary Kates,” a Sybian Club, and a normal guy who gets caught in something way over his head.

Fun. Perfect for a cross-country plane ride or waiting for the doctor to be finished with the cute drug salesperson (ever notice how they always get in ahead of you without an appointment?)

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### **Peter Kim says**

The novel begins with an instant hook which quotes “I poisoned your drink.” It’s an opener that has any reader caught in the story already. It foreshadows exactly what this novel is like which is violent, action-packed and comical. It’s about a journalist, Jack, stopping by a bar for a drink, just to meet with a flirtatious blonde mentioned in the title. She is controlled to kill and be killed if not within 6 feet of another human being. Unfortunately, that is what happened when she poisoned Jack, who is to die in the next 12 hours. She promises him an antidote if he promises to stay by her 24/7.

The plot unravels like a 1990s-2000s fantasy cartoon show. Jack encounters assassins, a mad scientist, a shady waitress and questionable cab drivers. It’s an entertaining piece as it sounds and I do recommend it. Though I will have to admit, that the plot did come off slightly cheesy. Regardless of the fact, the novel was written quite well and intrigued me as a reader.

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