



End of Story

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Aspiring author Ivy Seidel accepts a part-time position teaching writing to a group of convicted criminals hoping the experience will add depth and darkness to her own work.

But in the haunting writings of charismatic inmate Vance Harrow she discovers a talent possibly greater than her own. And in the startling, disturbing stories Harrow has to tell, Ivy finds a dangerous new purpose—and a terrifying temptation that lures her into an inescapable world of shadows.

End of Story Details

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From Reader Review End of Story for online ebook

David Carr says

Ivy, MFA, young naive New York bartender and aspiring writer, takes a job teaching writing to murderous, psychopathic male prisoners. This is A BIG MISTAKE. And, alas, it is such an obvious mistake to the the reader that he begins to wonder about the praise given to this writer and this book. It is almost enough to cause one to lose faith in Stephen King, who calls the author his "favorite American suspense novelist." Could this be true?

Or the Chicago Tribune, who called this not just "astonishing" or "exciting," but "astonishingly exciting." And of course I like "literate, suspenseful fun" -- an oxymoron? -- as much as the Washington Post Book World, you know, but I also hope for some suspenseful respect for my literate fun-loving brain.

So, not to write this off as a total loss, let me suggest some two-star lessons.

Lesson one. If you must take a job teaching writing to prisoners, do not believe everything the prisoners will tell you. There are many indications that they are not part of a culture of honesty.

Lesson two. Before you try to teach anyone anything about writing in the prison, it might be wise to look up the words "amoral," "manipulative," and the phrase "murderous psychopath." Reflect briefly on them. Then re-read Lesson one. Also, re-read something by Stephen King. Continue to reflect.

Lesson three. For a writing teacher, sudden but overpoweringly consensual sex with a prisoner is really YET ANOTHER MISTAKE, but perhaps it is ...

Lesson four. ... just a bit less worse than the WORST MISTAKE, involving a ladder and a pair of bolt-cutters. Never do this, although I have found a good pair of bolt-cutters to be a surprisingly useful tool, even outside prison.

So if you take these lessons to heart, reading this book will not have been a waste of time, but if you re-read Lessons one through four, above, you might be able to use the time in other ways.

Will Byrnes says

Ivy is an aspiring writer, working as a waitress and dreaming dreams of literary glory. When a writer friend hits a jackpot he offers her a chance to take over a teaching job he had been doing, teaching a writing class at a state penitentiary in upstate New York. Although it is a frightening experience, it is also stimulating. There is one inmate who captures her interest with the richness of his writing, and Ivy feels that he can have a future as a real writer. From details in the stories he submits, she begins to question his guilt. She does some investigation and comes to believe that there is no way he was present at the robbery and felony murder for which he is serving a 25-year sentence.

Peter Abrahams - from his site

One thing I learned in a writing class many years back is that in a story involving investigation, the protagonist must have some actual authority to go around asking people questions. Ivy's was paper thin. The main focus of the novel is writing, what makes it good, what inspires it, how one gets published. It is a book that anyone with literary aspirations will enjoy. I was rather dashing through it, so I cannot say to a certainty that the details of her research hold up, but I did enjoy the route. I would recommend this book, particularly to anyone who spends a lot of time word processing their own material.

PS - Abrahams also writes under the name Spencer Quinn

Jim Thomsen says

Wow! Peter Abrahams delivers yet another lean, mean, hairpin-corner thrill ride ... and does it again with ordinary people in ordinary settings.

The latter is the key to making suspense novels like "End Of Story" take off for the reader, who can relate to characters like barkeep/aspiring author Ivy Seidel and small-town ne'er-do-well Vance Harrow much more than they can to New York socialites or foreign intelligence operatives, for example. Main character Ivy is an everywoman, not especially idealized, a person who isn't dumb but does some dumb things for smart reasons.

That's one key, actually. The other is the crisp confidence with which Abrahams writes. There's no self-conscious prose here, no slowing down the story for even a second to explain things. As in his other novels, Abrahams simply grabs you by the arm, takes you on a fifth-gear wild ride through the city and country, and explains things as he goes — and if you're fast enough to keep up, you will. If you're not, you won't. As Ivy comes to learn in her own growth as a writer, the reader never feels like he or she is going uphill in this book. One read of "End Of Story," or almost any other Abrahams book, will make clear exactly what that means.

It also helps that the plotting in Abrahams' book is airtight. Everything makes perfect sense as it unfolds, even as key elements to every revelation are kept tucked back in the shadows as later surprises. The reader comes to see, as Ivy does, how Vance Harrow could be innocent of the upstate New York casino holdup that kills a security guard and two cohorts. And the smart reader is also allowed to see how there could be a little more to the story than a simple frame-up. Or even a lot more. And how Ivy may not know what she thinks she knows, even if she knows most of it. The moral of this story: Nobody knows as much as they think they do. And thinking otherwise could damn well get you killed.

I'm dinging this book a half-star, because I've read just three Abrahams books, and in two of them he employs the same surprise device of making the innocent person a lot less innocent than he or she appears to be at the very end. Because I'd read another Abrahams book with a similar character, I found myself expecting the same surprise, hoping it wouldn't happen ... and being disappointed when it did.

But that was a small imperfection in an otherwise perfect all-meat, no-fat story. A lot of genre authors, too obsessed with establishing their voices or following the dictates of their craft, forget to lend equal measures of speed and soul to their suspense tales. Not Abrahams, who rips with calm confidence through a ripping yarn that cheerfully tosses overboard anything that isn't pure exhilarating story.

I can't wait to work my way through the rest of Abrahams' considerable oeuvre.

Christine Roberts says

A good suspense novel, full of ambition, bold moves, and a hunger for more.

"End of Story" was my first Peter Abrahams novel, and I couldn't help but notice that this particular author has a Stephen King stamp of approval. I was interested right from the start, partially because of the story itself, but partly because the novel is so well-written the reader cannot help but jump right in. "Always leave them wanting more" would be the tagline on the poster if this gem was ever made into a film, because while the reader is given plenty of information in order to become fully involved in the story, there is just so much we do not know. I wish that I could say this book is the start of the series, because the end of the book has as much suspense as the middle, and I'm dying to know what happens at the end. I believe, though, that the best authors do that, make you think long after the book is over, wondering what happened after all.

Gail says

Though this was somewhat of a slow read ... the ending sure made up for it. I love it when an author actually surprises me and doesn't take the easy way out, tying up all loose ends and "saving" the main character.

Characters were believable ... especially Ivy who just can't seem to make the right decision.

Marc says

Peter Abrahams' plots are the opposite of "high-concept." End of Story takes a real-world situation-- a young, struggling writer inherits a friend's teaching gig at a prison writer's workshop--and tracks it as, one misunderstanding, bad judgment call, and unconscious wish fulfillment at a time, it spins out of control.

Abrahams' characters--his minor characters as well as the protagonists--are vivid, memorable, and utterly believable. You know these people, and may be uncomfortably like them. He is especially adept at evoking a milieu--the violence and paranoia of prison life, the shabby working-class towns in New York State's North Country--with a few deft strokes. Abrahams' prose is careful and spare--not self-consciously "minimalist," but pared down to what is precisely necessary.

Highest recommendation.

Monique says

Eh, disappointing read for my twentieth this year, sigh where is my touch for finding the gems I need and love to read! So far a truly bleak start to my year-heads up friends I WILL read something great soon-but this wasn't it..I have read this author before with his novel The Tutor and I wasn't really the biggest fan of that book either after rereading that review LOL but I tried this one sight and review unseen and tried really tried

to get into this but it got super unbelievable and I did not have a good time at all..So here is the story of Ivy Seidel a wannabe writer who has never been published, has nothing of note written and no qualifications to teach writing except for a Master's degree but nonetheless she gets a fluke job "teaching" inmates at a local prison when her friend leaves without an interview or anything and so she teaches a small class of felons despite her inexperience and inability to creatively write herself she reads the work of a Vince Harrow a criminal serving time for a casino robbery and she becomes intrigued..Now the real story would have been if she stole his work and passed it off as her own or if she did something else interesting instead she cant believe he wasn't college educated and attracted, curious and envious she decides to investigate him, the robbery he was locked up for and anybody who ever knew the guy from his high school football buddies to his girlfriend's sister..It was too much and what was crazier is everyone from the people she ran up and called on to the police went along with her, cooperated with information and indulged this silly girl with no writing experience with her made up reasons of writing a fiction novel..Not to diss her but really who was she that she got so close to everything and "solves" the robbery murder by herself..I don't know I lost the book and my interest waned after like page 100 but it started okay if you suspend your reality and go with her improbable job and insane fixation with this criminal who writes better than her..I don't know I did not enjoy and as this is my second foray in Abramson's works I may try again later later in life but eh not a favorite and not impressed with this at all.

Maureen Sharon says

Per other reviews, many readers have identifies this novel as having a weak main character that seems to lose credibility as the plot continues. I found it intriguing for a completely different reason. As a former teacher with students exhibiting severe behavioral challenges I continually identified with the inmates in the novel and saw terrifying connections between them and my struggling students. It refocused me on how I worked with them and for that reason I chose 4 stars. Fiction has a way of changing lives in unintentional manners.

Melanie says

This book is about a struggling author who is offered a part time job teaching writing in a men's prison. She becomes interested in the case of one of the prisoners in her class and thinks he is innocent of the crime he was prosecuted for. She investigates and gets in WAY over her head.

I thought the book was o.k. A good thing was that I wanted to find out how everything would end. Another good thing; at just past the halfway mark I thought I had the ending all figured out. (I thought it would be the predictable, obvious ending). Nope, I was wrong. Didn't see the end coming. A bad thing; the main female character was an idiot. So because of her a 2.5 rating from me rather than a 3.

Lori says

I got such a kick out of this book.

Ivy Seidel is a writer. And honestly, we quickly realize she's not very good. In fact, she's not all that smart. But Abrahams lets us come to both conclusions on our own.

Still, though, she's likable. And even though you can see her disastrous decisions coming from the instant she

starts teaching at a prison -- but not so far in advance as to be annoying -- you want her to take the wrong path. Because it's a hell of a lot more interesting than the right one.

Dev Adams says

This book came as a recommendation from my library's book club. I've always enjoyed reading suspense novels and I appreciated that this one featured a female lead character.

Then, I read it.

The entire book has a strange, duck-footed pacing (just like one of the characters) that I found completely off-putting. The author also chooses to insert strangely worded sentences into the book in such a way that feels forced and pretentious.

To call this novel suspenseful would be doing suspense as a genre a discredit. From the heroine's first visit to Dannemora, the intelligent reader can gain a grasp on where the author is going. There are too many coincidences, too many obviously fallacies. The only surprise was the very, very end, but it was far too little, too late.

This is the second "innocent prisoner" book I have read this year, and the other, *The Woodcutter*, is so far superior as to be in a completely different universe.

Laura says

Now THIS is a damned good Abrahams book!

I fell in love with Peter Abrahams about 15 years ago. Each book was better than the last.

Somewhere along the way, I lost track of him. When I started to catch up, the newer books just weren't doing it for me. And at some point he started writing for kids.

I still dig up his older books when I can, & I came across this one in a used book store a few months ago. And I'm so glad I did. It's classic Abrahams: modern noir, with twists just out of your periphery, leading up to a crash. I'd recommend this one to anyone who likes suspense.

Shiela says

Bar tender by night, struggling writer Ivy Seidel wants nothing more than for her stories to be published. To help her gain depth and darkness in her work, she agrees to teach a writing class to a group of inmates in a high security prison. In the midst of pandemonium and murder, Ivy encounters inmate Vance Harrow, a man who possesses great literary promise. As her relationship with the inmate becomes more involved, Ivy becomes convinced that Vance pleaded guilty to a crime he never committed. She soon becomes obsessed to learn his true motivations.

After a strong, captivating start, the story took a turn for the worse and I was actually glad when the novel ended. Right about midway through the book, I could almost see the heroine's brain fall out of her head as

she became a pathetic, one-dimensional character who made one unrealistic bad decision after another... for a man...convicted of a heinous crime. Urrggh! Oh, and by the way *End of Story* is a Publisher's Weekly starred review and won the title for Best Book of the Year in 2006. Not sure why, but there it is.

Tillie says

[Abrahams turned her into your classically stupid, blinded by love idiot. Not to mention that the plot turns completely r

Christie says

I cut my teeth on mystery novels when I was about eight. Every gift-giving occasion, my uncle would give me two brand new Bobbsey Twin books- hard covers. I loved following Bert and Nan, Flossie and Freddie as they solved mysteries in and around their home town, Lakeport. My daughter has those books I managed to save through numerous moves.

Anyway - I still love a good mystery and I finished a new one this morning. Peter Abraham's new book *End of Story*. I added this book to my 'must read' list when it appeared on Entertainment Weekly's list of Best Books for 2006. *End of Story* is a great book...but not just because EW said so. (Or any of the other media outlets which have called it everything from "cunning...suspenseful...very scary" (New York Times Book Review) to "almost physically impossible to put down." (Booklist) I'd have to agree with that last one; I read last night until my eyes were burning. This is a great book because it pays attention to details, transcends crime-story cliches and delivers characters that are cunning, charismatic, naive.

End of Story tells the compelling tale of Ivy Siedel, an aspiring writer, who takes a job teaching writing to a small group of inmates at Dannemora Prison, in Upstate New York. When one of her students, Vance Harrow, turns out to be a talented writer, Ivy decides to take a closer look at his history and discovers something about him that both shocks and excites her...and changes her life forever. Abrahams doesn't waste any time - dumping the reader right into the middle of Ivy's story-which barrels along as fast as you can turn the pages (and I was turning pretty fast. I read the book over the course of two days.) Obviously, since this is a mystery novel I can't give you too much info. But I can say that the novel's natural climax offers a surprising twist as Ivy works and reworks the details of Vance's story. Along the way Abrahams makes some interesting observations about writing and the process of doing it.
