



## Heartwood

*James Lee Burke*

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A brilliantly layered novel of crime, character, and place from the two-time Edgar Award winner, Gold Dagger Award winner, and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sunset Limited*. Few writers in America today combine James Lee Burke's lush prose, crackling story lines, and tremendous sense of history and landscape. In *Cimmaron Rose*, longtime fans of the Dave Robicheaux series found that the struggles of Texas defense attorney Billy Bob Holland show Burke at his best in exploring classic American themes--the sometimes subtle, often violent strains between the haves and the have-nots; the collision of past and present; the inequities in the criminal justice system.

Heartwood is a kind of tree that grows in layers. And as Billy Bob's grandfather once told him, you do well in life by keeping the roots in a clear stream and not letting anyone taint the water for you. But in Holland's dusty little hometown of Deaf Smith, in the hill country north of Austin, local kingpin Earl Deitrich has made a fortune running roughshod and tainting anyone who stands in his way. Billy Bob has problems with Deitrich and his shamelessly callous demeanor, but can't shake the legacy of his passion for Deitrich's "heartbreak-beautiful" wife, Peggy Jean. When Holland takes on the defense of Wilbur Pickett--a man accused of stealing an heirloom and three hundred thousand dollars in bonds from Deitrich's office--he finds himself up against not only Earl's power and influence, but also a past Billy Bob can't will away.

A wonderfully realized novel, rich in Texas atmosphere and lore, and a dazzling portrait of the deadly consequences of self-delusion, *Heartwood* could only have been written by James Lee Burke, a writer in expert command of his craft.

## Heartwood Details

Date : Published September 21st 2011 by Island Books (first published 1999)

ISBN :

Author : James Lee Burke

Format : Kindle Edition 402 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller

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## From Reader Review Heartwood for online ebook

### Connie says

HEARTWOOD by James Lee Burke is 341 pages in hardback form. It is #2 in Billy Bob Holland series.

#### Brief Description:

Central to Burke's second Billy Bob novel (Cimarron Rose was his first) is Wilbur Pickett. Wilbur had a brief moment of glory as a rodeo cowboy before sliding into a downward cycle of luckless enterprises. He ends up laboring for a wealthy family, the Dietrichs, in the Texas town of Deaf Smith. The Dietrichs accuse Wilbur of stealing some bearer bonds, and Billy Bob--now a defense attorney--reluctantly take his case. He is hesitant (because he idolizes Peggy Jean Dietrich), and for good reason: Billy Bob discovers that her husband Earl may be involved in shady, even violent, business practices.

Other ghosts from the past also haunt Billy Bob: he accidentally killed his former partner on a drug raid in Mexico and still hears his voice. And then there's Holland's illegitimate son Lucas, who is growing up with problems of his own. The weight of all this back-story might overwhelm a lesser writer, but Burke manages to make it seem as natural as the soft wind that stirs the tumbleweed in the town of Deaf Smith. --Dick Adler

I love James Lee Burke and his dark characters. The fact that his characters are not perfect makes them even more interesting. Billy Bob does live with demons and that is why he has trouble with people, because they can't live with him and his demons.

Billy Bob is a very good guy though even under his the dark side. He never forgets to help Pete his neighbor and takes him places he would never be able to go. I love when Pete says, "I knew you were going to say that". Even though Pete is a child you do see that he does understand and wants to help if he can.

Billy Bob doesn't do things the way a normal way, but usually gets the job done. It is not a book you can finish and then just forget. Some of the things in the book just stay in your head for a couple of days. These books are normally violent in some ways so one must be prepared for that. It is not only violence to bad people, sometimes the violence is put upon the good ones too.

There are several turns in this book and one that I didn't see coming, but that was okay. I am still not sure what happened in the end, but that is okay too. I don't think you really need to know. I think you just need to accept the fact that sometimes things don't get all tied up.

I am giving this 4 out of 5 stars and am going to try and read the rest of this series.

BUY NOW: Conniesbookshelf.com \$7.50 Hardcover

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### Geoff Leach says

James Lee Burke has an ability to capture people and places in a lyrical yet economic style. I can hear his characters talking and his heroes have a classical stature. No one does Louisiana and Texas like he does. The perfect book for a long plane trip.

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### **Will says**

"In my mind's eye I saw Ronnie Cross and Esmeralda Ramirez flying down an empty six-lane highway through the countryside, the chromed engine roaring, the green dials on the walnut dashboard indicating levels of control and power that seemed to transcend the laws of mortality itself.

I thought of horsemen fleeing a grass fire in Old Mexico and civilian soldiers who waited with musket and powder horn at an adobe wall and a preacher who baptized by immersion and created a cathedral out of trees and water and sky. I smelled banks of roses and saw Ronnie Cross speed-shift his transmission and floor the accelerator, tacking up now, the rear end low on the road, the twin exhaust pipes thundering off the asphalt. Esmeralda twisted sideways in the oxblood leather seat and grinned at him, pumping her arms to the beat from the stereo speakers, she and Ronnie disappearing down the highway, into the American mythos of gangbangers and youthful lovers and cars that pulsed with music, between hills that had been green and covered with sunlight only an hour ago."

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### **Suzy says**

I sometimes feel like my 'Great American Detective' shelf should be called 'Great American Vigilantes', considering that Spenser and Jack Reacher share space on it with Harry Bosch and Elvis Cole. (It's a very chauvinistic category I've created for myself, here. Have to see about fixing that.) Billy Bob Holland is a lawyer, and justice is more important to him than fitting nicely into the system.

Burke is amazing storyteller, and I don't mean just that he has a knack hand with plot. He uses language in a way that makes me linger over these books, often reading passages aloud to myself. His descriptions of Texas - both scenery and society - are fascinating. He's the kind of writer who makes me want to be not only a good writer, myself, but a great writer.

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### **Mikel says**

The Billy Bob series is a great one. Burke really captures Texas (warts and all) very well. Looking forward to more from this series, as Dave Robicheaux can't go on forever.

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### **L.A. Kent says**

Liked this and can appreciate that it is really well written. Just not as pacy as the Robicheaux series and the characters and storylines are quite gloomy, although very interesting.

I've just finished re-reading Heartwood and really enjoyed it, having forgotten the review I gave (above, 4 stars) after the first reading! This time round I didn't see the characters as gloomy at all. There is a very varied mix of characters, and the storylines hang together well. While using very evocative descriptions of the locations they are very different from those of Louisiana, in the heat of Texas mostly, but equally well

done. Yep, thoroughly enjoyed it and would have read it much more quickly if i hadn't been so busy with work! I especially like the 'psychological visions' and discussions with the dead! Something that is also well done in the Robicheaux books.

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### **Carol says**

Burke is one of the best writers, maybe the best writer I've ever read.. Heartwood #2 book in the Billy Bob Holland series. I read this about 10-12 years ago but was worth reading again..Holland an ex Texas Ranger now an attorney in a small hill country town west of Austin trying to find justice against all odds. His best friend who he accidentally killed visits him still....

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### **Geri Taylor says**

I picked up this book on tape at a garage sale for fifty cents. (Sorry, Mr. Burke, no royalties there) but it did get me started following this magnificent author and his two characters, Robicheaux and Holland, along with his short stories.

Generally, I enjoy reading books with strong female leads, but Mr. Burke has been hooked!

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### **Lindsay Luke says**

I recently read the 4th Billy Bob Holland book and wanted more. This is #2. Billy Bob is still in southern Texas. He's a lawyer (and former Texas Ranger), and his future wife Temple is his investigator.

Billy Bob's girlfriend from his teen years, town beauty Peggy Jean, is now married to wealthy Earl Dietrich. A down on his luck rodeo rider with a blind psychic Native American wife gets involved in the theft of an antique watch and some bearer bonds from Earl. Meanwhile, some Mexican gang bangers are involved with Earl's son and Billy Bob's son. Throw in a couple of escaped cons and you've got fertile ground for James Lee Burke's wonderful story telling and beautifully descriptive, if a little wordy, language. Now I have to find books 1 and 3, so I can find out how it all begins, and how Billy Bob and Temple end up in Montana.

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### **Johnsergeant says**

Downloaded from Audible.com

Narrator: Will Patton

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio, 2001

Length: 5 hours (abridged)

#### **Publisher's Summary**

In this story of haves vs. have-nots, past vs. present, justice vs. the justice system, Texas defense attorney Billy Bob Holland has his work cut out for him. According to Billy Bob's grandfather, you do well in life by keeping your roots in a clear stream and not letting anyone taint the water for you. But in Billy Bob's dusty little hometown of Deaf Smith, local kingpin Earl Deitrich has made his fortune running roughshod and

tainting anyone who stands in his way. Now Billy Bob finds himself fighting Deitrich in court and fighting his own desire for the kingpin's beautiful wife, Peggy Jean.

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### **Ron says**

Totally deconstruct F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*; swap around the characters; add drugs and some Native American magical realism; make the narrator a former Texas Ranger; set the story in the hill country west of San Antonio, and you will have something close to this crime novel from the fertile mind of James Lee Burke.

It even ends with a dead body in a swimming pool and a melancholy closing image much like Fitzgerald's—not “boats against the current,” but a boy and girl in a customized car speeding into the night, unaware of any rough road that lies ahead...

More at my blog.

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### **Clare says**

I love any book by James Lee Burke and am determined to read them all. I especially enjoy his descriptions of the Louisiana landscape. This book is different: it takes place in Texas and stars Billy Bob Holland, a lawyer. I am so enamored of Burke's other hero, Dave Robicheaux, that I couldn't help but wish he was in this book too. I think I'm getting a little crazy when I'm starting to think of a book character like Dave as real but that gives you an idea of how good James Lee Burke's writing can be.

For lovers of this author, I heartily recommend this book.

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### **Marti says**

I always give James Lee Burke's books five stars, because they are all outstanding. This time (1999) the main character is Billy Bob Holland, and it is before he marries Temple Carrol, his investigator. There are all kinds of interesting characters, most of whom could use the services of Billy as a lawyer, and the ghost of his former Texas Ranger partner, whom he tragically and accidentally shot to death. Lots of action, murder and some suspense.

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### **James Seawel says**

James Lee Burke does not disappoint in Heartwood. It's not my favorite of his, but it's solid. Burke continues to paint a perfect portrait of the landscape and of the times of which he writes. He captures social classes and the regional identities of his subjects wonderfully. He continues his theme of good versus evil, battle of the sexes, and battles of the haves versus the have-nots. He tells the story of how Heartwood trees grow in layers from the inside out; this was told to the main character, Billy Bob Holland, by his grandfather when he was river-baptized as a teen. The story is passed down and the symbolism has significance in this novel.

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**Larry A. Hunter says****Never Fails to Entertain**

I am sad to say I have now read all of Mr. Burke 's books, including the short stories. I am pretty good at a few things. But my prowess at any of them falls well short of his as a storyteller.

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