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A serial killer stalks the streets of 1950s Boston--and two friends take it upon themselves to bring him down.

Post-war Boston is down on its luck and looking for change. A year after the Great Brink's Robbery--the largest robbery in the history of the United States--Boston is known more for its seedy underbelly than for its rich, historical past. The winter of 1951 is the worst in recent memory, and the Bruins are suffering another losing season.

Like Boston itself, lifelong residents Cal O'Brien and Dante Cooper are struggling to find their identities after World War II. Cal has built a mildly promising life for himself as an employee of a company providing private security, whether to an honorable businessman who needs a night watchman or to an Irish mafioso who needs to have someone's legs broken. Dante is everything Cal is not. A heroin addict trying and failing to stay clean, Dante feels the call to do good after he discovers that his sister-in-law was the latest victim of a serial killer targeting disadvantaged women.

Woefully unqualified, but determined to help, Cal and Dante take it upon themselves to track the killer--but their daunting quest takes on dangerous consequences when the trail leads them to the highest ranks of city government. There are a few well-placed men who *don't* want Cal and Dante to solve this case.

An absorbing mixture of history and suspense, told with a meticulous eye for detail and character, *Serpents in the Cold* is a moving exploration about two men battling for second chances.

Serpents in the Cold Details

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From Reader Review Serpents in the Cold for online ebook

Kelley says

Novel received courtesy of Goodreads.com giveaway

Set in post WWII south Boston, this is a dark, dark novel. Drug abuse, PTSD, crooked politicians, murder, poverty...the list goes on and on! However, if you're keen enough to push through all the darkness, the story is really good.

Two childhood friends; one just back from the war, the other a heroin addict, try to right the wrongs that were visited upon a family member. That search for "absolution" takes them to and through violent and illegal situations. I enjoyed the novel but couldn't read it quickly because it was so dark.

Jo Dervan says

This is a gritty novel about 2 Boston cousins. It takes place in the early 50s during the coldest winter in Boston's history and involves the infamous Brinks robbery. Cal O'Brien, a former Boston cop, operates a security business near Scollay Square. His childhood friend, Dante Cooper, is a junkie who is indebted to the local loan shark.

When Dante's sister-in-law becomes a victim of a serial murderer, the 2 friends try to find out who did it. The trail leads to mobsters, politicians, the Catholic clergy as well as developers and builders. Fans of Robert Parker will enjoy this book.

Kent says

if you want to play a drinking game, take a drink every time these guys light a cigarette - this book could have been one-third shorter w/o the tedious description of everything that is dark in Boston - which is everything, apparently. no suspense, no redeeming qualities, just a mean dirty grimy story of bad guys getting even with worse guys - skip this one

Alison Large says

Very dark storyline, lots of violence with flawed heroes whose behaviour is often difficult to separate from that of the bad guys. It leaves you wanting to know what will happen next.

Mariah says

I picked up this book while I was in Boston actually. I went to Brattle Books in downtown Boston area and I

found this discounted so I figured why not. Originally as I was reading this book, I didn't think I was going to like it. I felt the story was really slow paced for me and I found I took a break from reading this book to read something else then returned to this book to finally finish it.

It's 1950's Boston; WWII just ended and Cal O'Brien a war veteran is trying to return to a normal life with his wife, Lynne. While Cal is attempting to succeed at his private security company, his friend Dante is a heroin addict suffering from his withdrawls and failures at preventing his wife Margot's overdose. When Dante's sister-in-law Sheila is murdered by an apparent Boston butcher, Cal and Dante team up even though they are 100% unqualified at tracking this awful killer

There's a lot that I didn't expect to this book that turned this rating from a two star to a three star review. I liked the Godfather gangster battles in Boston. It was a nice side story to read about how Blackie Foley who's the brother of a congressman is fighting with the Irish for control of Boston's crime underworld. I imagined this book was going to be tracking a serial killer, but it becomes way more complicated than that. Blackie is a horrible person and when Cal finally kills him, it's a relief.

Also I definitely didn't expect the death of Lynne, Cal's wife. Being burned alive is such a violent way to go and especially in the hands of Blackie. You can see why I'm glad Cal killed him.

The butcher happened to be some random guy with red hair who had a trailer where he tortured people, but not a lot is said in the book about why he did the things he did. He wasn't really the focus of the book.

Congressman Foley ended up killing Sheila because he cared for her, but she returned to her lover. He claimed it was an "accident", but in my opinion he's a sleazy politician so I don't believe a word he says. Dante apparently kills him in the end.

Oh! and McAllister was trying to get rid of a bunch of buildings even though the lower class lived in those buildings because they looked bad in Boston. It would have also made Congressman Foley look better for him running for congress.

This book surprised me not because of the actual reveal of the butcher, but of the side events that happened like the death of Lynne and the whole scheme between Blackie Foley, Congressman Foley and McAllister. I probably won't continue on in this series because I just wasn't in love with this book, but I felt it was fitting read because I visited Boston myself a couple months earlier. If you like Boston and neo noir 1950's themed literature, this book is for you.

Chris says

I won this book in a Goodreads Firstreads giveaway.

I loved it. Bleak, heroes were anti-heroes, violence was not gratuitous but added reality to the themes. I though all the way through that it would, in the hands of a talented director, make a must watch film.

Pat Timpanaro says

This book was OK -- not good, not bad, just OK. I enjoyed reading about Boston before the redevelopment that became Mass General and Government Center. Two of the characters were brothers -- one a politician, one a gangster -- who were so obviously based on the Bulgers as to be annoying. The gangster was even called Blackie. I will not be looking for additional books by this author.

Susan says

This novel is set in post-war Boston. It is February 1951 and one of the coldest winters on record, when some children out walking their dog discover the body of a woman on the beach. The woman turns out to be the sister in law of Dante Cooper; a heroin addict, whose wife Margot is also dead. Dante hears the news of the murder from his children friend, Cal O'Brien, a former Boston cop who still has nightmares six years after his time in the war and who now operates a security business. The former cop and the heroin addict in debt to mobsters seem unlikely heroes and, indeed, this is very much a noir novel – dark, unsettling and taking place largely within the underbelly of a depressed and frozen city.

When Cal and Dante team up to discover who killed Margot's sister, Sheila, their investigation will cause both men to question their lives so far – and will change them irrevocably. Was Sheila one of a series of victims; murdered by the killer known as the Butcher, or was there another reason for her death? From boarding houses to the city dump, through convents and haulage yards, the men find themselves embroiled in a murder which involves the Church, politics, mobsters and corruption. Dante questions how much he really knew about Sheila –was her life a string of deceits, or was she the victim of a psychopath?

This is a novel full of tragedy and atmosphere. The novel is interspersed with photographs from the period, which helps evoke the period and the city of Boston – which is every bit as much a character in the book as Cal or Dante. I found this an interesting and well plotted novel and would certainly like to see Cal and Dante in another outing. Lastly, I received a copy of this book from the publishers, via NetGalley, for review.

Kme_17 says

I received this as a first read. This one was an interesting one. I am just getting into the noir type of mysteries. This one was set in the fifties in Boston. I liked this one. It is another dark one but interesting how the story unrivaled. I liked how the author uses many factor involved in the crime - such as politics and the mob. All in all a good read for those looking for a crime thriller book.

Mina says

Winning this book from the Goodreads giveaway was very exciting. .. when I read the premise, it captured my attention.....it is a very dark book set in Boston during the 1950s...two men both fighting their own demons team up to unravel the murder of ones sister-in-law and if there is a connection to the death of one of the mens wife.....a lot of factors play into this mystery. ..church,politics and the mob....I can see this book being optioned for a major studio movie....

Frank Ogden says

Did not like this book.

Andrew Lennon says

Ok so this was the first book I've ever had from Netgalley.

I just want to start by saying, I'm not one of those people who, for a review, write an in depth description of the story. That's what the blurb is for....

Anyway, here we go

Crime/Thriller, isn't usually my bag, I'm usually more into horror, but this book gripped me straight away. Don't want to give any spoilers, but within the first chapter you will be hooked.

If you read the blurb, you will see that these two vigilantes are off to find a killer. So me telling you that there are a few dead bodies is no shocker. The way these bodies are described is just brilliant. They almost haunt your vision while reading.

As the story goes on, you get to know the two protagonists quite well, you're given their backgrounds and stories and you really start to feel for them.

Sooo as if the murders and bodies wasn't cool enough, then you're given bar fights and gun fights that are worthy of the godfather!

Definitely recommend this book. It was a really fun read and I will certainly be looking out for more from the author.

One other thing, which I want to mention as a sideline, please don't judge the story by this, as I said the story was brilliant. BUT the formatting on this book! I know, it's from Netgalley and not a final copy. But oh my god! It got really frustrating at times. Sentences, sometimes whole paragraphs with not a single space between the words! I felt like I was trying to decipher some crazy code or something.

Like I said, hopefully this will be sorted before the final release, but felt I should mention it.

Paul says

While I love film noir, I have read very few "noir" novels, and the few I have have read were not so good.

The Boston setting drew me to this one, since I lived there for a few years and got to know the city and area extremely well. I enjoyed this novel quite a bit, and it was great fun to see how the authors used the Boston locales, including many that have vanished since the early 50's. I didn't view the story as a "realistic" novel at all, as it is extremely bleak and terrifying to the point of near fantasy. If the reader didn't know Boston from personal experience, one might think the entire city and metro area were-or are-unrelentingly grim. Indeed, some parts ARE as depressing as described here, but much of the area is quite beautiful and pleasant in reality. But I didn't care too much otherwise that the authors took liberties with some descriptions and historical facts, like with the fictional characters behind the infamous razing of Scollay Square and the West End, (an event many still decry even today, as it so dramatically changed a large section of the city, and not necessarily all for the better.) Anyway, this was excellent storytelling.

Cathy Williamson says

I loved this! The characters were strong and interesting, the violence and personal issues were realistic, and the background information was extremely well presented.

A brilliant read :)

Alex Hill says

This book was very dark. None of the characters were particularly likeable and I didn't find myself unable to put the book down. Nevertheless the plot was interesting, if a little depressing and slow at times.
