



Slammer

Allan Guthrie

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Newly minted prison officer Nicholas Glass has fallen in with the wrong crowd at "The Hilton," a Scottish prison for violent offenders. The problem is, there's no right crowd. Bullied and abused by inmates and colleagues alike, Glass finds that each day is getting longer than the one before. When a group of cons use outside help to threaten his wife and daughter, he agrees to do them a 'favor'. But, as their threats escalate, and one favor leads to another, he grows ever closer to breaking point. And when Glass breaks, he shatters...

Slammer is a mile-a-minute thriller shot through with Guthrie's unique blend of dark humor and ultra-violent mayhem. His previous books have been lauded as "gripping noir" (*Entertainment Weekly*) and "character driven and exciting" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*).

Slammer Details

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Author : Allan Guthrie

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From Reader Review Slammer for online ebook

Fiona Johnson says

If you've read any of my other reviews of Allan Guthrie's writing then you already know that I'm a huge fan. Even so, when you first discover a brilliant author and then find that there's already a collection of his work to get your teeth into, it's wonderful (if you read the books in chronological order) to see how their writing progresses and matures.

If you haven't read any Guthrie yet (aren't you the stupid one) then don't start with SLAMMER. Go back and read TWO WAY SPLIT, move onto HARD MAN and then, just maybe, I'll allow you to read SLAMMER. You see you've got to be prepared for what Guthrie does to your mind. He's a right twisted so and so and if you don't chuck his book across your bedroom (if that's where you read) floor and shout very bad sweary words then you're a sad person and should go read some Catherine Cookson....no wait...you probably won't have gotten past the first few pages because there's just a fair wee bit of ridiculously bad language (tut, tut...Mr. Guthrie obviously didn't get his mouth washed out with carbolic soap at primary school) but then if you are looking for a happy wee tale of love and romance....anyway, I digress.

The characters in SLAMMER are weak, violent, manipulative, vengeful and pretty depraved. Excellent! Nick Glass is the new prison officer thrown to the lions in a miserable prison where his fellow officers are corrupt and the prisoners can manipulate the system to get drugs on the inside.

Don't feel sorry for Glass though because he's not a particularly likable 'hero' and as he falls down through the cracks of his shattered life, he'll pull you with him.

Guthrie expertly roams around inside Glass's mind, twisting and turning through reality and fantasy, nightmares and hell, leaving not only Glass totally confused about what is actually happening as his life breaks up but challenges the reader to work out what's going on too.

The inner workings of the mind is Guthrie's favourite territory and the exhaustion and confusion felt by Glass is expertly handled in a very convincing manner. SLAMMER is a bit of a slow burner that winds itself up until, like a boa constrictor, it's wrapped so tightly around your neck that with one last squeeze you'll be gone....and yes...the ending did catch me out again..WHAT????

Ben Boulden says

Nick Glass is a rookie guard in a Scottish prison. He's been on the job six weeks with bad results. The other guards make trouble for him and he's not respected by the inmates. At home he has a five year old daughter and a wife. A wife who's at the tail end of an affair and drinks more than she should.

To make things worse Nick is approached by one of the inmates and asked to mule drugs inside the prison. The inmate gives Nick a couple options: mule the drugs and make an easy buck, or don't mule the drugs and his little family gets hurt. Nick is in big trouble because neither choice is worth having, and ultimately both his life and his families lives are in danger.

SLAMMER is the sort of novel that creeps up on you in a hurry. It starts hard and strong and never lets go.

Glass is a regular guy caught in a nasty and impossible situation. He doesn't belong in the prison, as a guard or anything else, because he's a nice guy; weak and fear-filled. Nick, like his surname, is prone to fracture and Guthrie makes sure he does.

Reminiscent of Guthrie's first novel TWO-WAY SPLIT, but Slammer displays a higher skill set with a sharper execution. The prose is hardboiled, lean and smart. The dialogue crisp. The atmosphere weighty and oppressive. A fine example of the new noir: a hopeless, distraught and shameless (in a good way) vision of the human condition.

Seth Lynch says

You could grit the roads in winter with this book.

I read it so late into a Friday night that my eyes started to burn. I didn't want to stop reading. There was one part where I felt physically sick and another where I had to hold back a tear. I wanted to stay on and read it straight through.

As I began to get comfortable with where we were going the book would change direction. This happened two or three times. Keeping me on my toes. I'm rapidly becoming an Allan Guthrie fan.

Nigel Bird says

Slammer. When I got to the end of this book I was questioning my own sanity in ways I've never done before.

The reach and scope of the book is immense and it had me absolutely hooked from the very beginning. This is a complicated book, though on the surface it reads as a straightforward, white-knuckle ride from the crime genre; Guthrie is always a step ahead of the reader and, in spite of laying everything out, manages to keep a couple of aces up his sleeve.

Guthrie is one of my favourite living authors (if he dies, he'll be one of my favourite dead ones) and this is one of my favourite books by him.

Intense, psychological, evocative, crazy and absolutely page-turning. I wouldn't want you to miss this one for the world. And it's such an amazing bargain as a Kindle book it's like one of the dark ingredients to the book itself.

A must read.

J.C. says

Definitely Not A "Slammer" Dunk

I can see the appeal of this book and I can see how some people would like it; however, I hardly enjoyed it at

all. The premise is solid, but underdeveloped. The terrorizing from the inmates to the guard could have been so much greater and the story would have been more of a "throat grabber" had there been more favors, more threats, and... well... more terrorizing. The main character, Glass, is only put in two situations before his life spirals out of control (and the story spirals out of control, I might add). There are parts of the story that are grotesque, but I felt it was more for shock value and could not really buy into those actions.

On top of all that, there seems to be random flashbacks that did not seem to fit in the story for any reason, providing seemingly insignificant details about the characters. Maybe they were significant; but if so, it was poorly executed. The ending was also so unsatisfying and disappointing.

My other concerns with *Slammer* is that there is no writing in the book above a sixth grade reading level. The writing was pretty juvenile and the dialogue was equally juvenile. It is hard to take a dark and gritty story seriously if there are no words over two syllables.

Overall, I say if the premise of the story strikes your fancy, go for it. Given that it is such an easy and quick read it won't take too much time, and you might enjoy it. In my opinion, there are far better books in this category that are executed better and ten times as engaging, with stronger characters; like *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk and each of the books in the *Caught Stealing* trilogy by Charlie Huston.

Good reading,

Plants and Books

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Bryce says

Slammer starts out with an almost Hitchcock-ian, "man in the wrong place at the wrong time" kind of story. It follows Nick Glass, a new prison officer with little aptitude for the job, as he is sucked into a life of drugs, desperation and blackmail. Had the story ended as it had begun, it may have been a neat little psychological revenge story.

Unfortunately, Guthrie took a detour halfway through the narrative. In fact, "detour" may be an understatement. On page 139, the plot is proceeding nicely to a bloody-if-satisfying ending and on page 140, all hell breaks loose. Suddenly, there's hallucinations, a trip to the psych ward, an easily solvable "surprise" murder and Glass suddenly turns into an unreliable narrator.

Believe me, I love the *concept* of the unreliable narrator. When done well, it creates an amazing mindfuck moment, where the reader has no choice but to put the book down and mentally revisit every step of the plot. More often than not, however, the technique is done in a clunky matter, with no buildup or foreshadowing. It's a cop-out and all it does is fulfill an author's need to be as clever as possible.

The most disappointing thing about this book for me personally is that it was a selection for my book club. And it seems I am always the Debbie Downer that shows up to crap on the books that everyone else seems to

enjoy. Well, there's always next month to turn my reputation around, I suppose...

Angelina Rose says

Slightly predictable once I caught onto where things were headed but well written and very believable characters and settings. Don't want to say more, the less you know ahead the better.

Les Edgerton says

This is going to sound odd, but the whole time I was reading Allan Guthrie's brilliant novel, *Slammer*, I kept thinking about a writer I'd read back in the eighties, James Kelman. I couldn't figure out why Kelman kept cropping up at the edge of my brain as I turned the pages, so I went and found a copy of Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, and reread it, trying to figure out where the connection was.

I thought at first it was the subject matter—both books deal with prison, albeit one centers on a guy in prison and the other (Guthrie's) has a protagonist who is a guard, or as we call 'em here in the States, a hack.

But, that wasn't it. It really bothered me. Then, I thought perhaps it was that both were Scottish. Now, I felt I was getting closer to uncovering the connection my mind was making.

And then, it dawned on me. It was the world-view of both writers—their cadence of their expression. I knew then why I had joined two writers of different eras together. It was the same visceral feeling I got when I first read James Lee Burke and Joe R. Lansdale and Anthony Neil Smith and Harry Crews—the feeling that I was reading the spiritual descendants of William Faulkner.

It was a geographical thing—no—more—it was a geographically political thing. While Mssrs. Burke and Lansdale and Smith and Crews all employ particular voices and all are different from Faulkner's (as well as similar), there is an undercurrent in all that make them related. I was seeing the same thing in Guthrie and Kelman. It's a cultural thing I suspect. I wish I could articulate it better than I am here and I may well be far off-base, but I feel what I feel.

Stories are more than a plot and characters doing interesting things. The very best of our literature goes beyond that and allows the reader to see inside an intelligent mind. That's what happens with Guthrie's books. We see that dark place within that only the very best of writers ever get to and it's the definition of honesty many seek but most grow weak when approaching and end up settling for an approximation of truth. Guthrie gets it.

What all the writers I've named here have in common is a dark view of existence. One that I share in my own outlook on life. Which is why I'm so attracted to this sort of writer more than any other.

As an ex-con, I'm leery of novels set in prisons. The vast majority get it wrong. It becomes clear immediately that their knowledge of prisons comes from TV and bad movies. When I encounter terms like "shiv" and the like, I quickly put the book in the "send to the used-book sale" pile. *Slammer* is the real deal.

When I was reading it, my hands began to sweat and I had to put it down often and take a walk outside and smoke a cigarette or two. I've been out of prison for decades now and for the first twenty years experienced nightmares. They've been absent for many years now, but they came back while reading this book.

And that's all right. I'll forgive Mr. Guthrie for this. I may have gotten back the nightmares for a time, but I also received something very important. Genuine and raw feeling. And that's worth a lot.

He gets it exactly right. When I was in the joint, our biggest source for drugs was always the hacks. Either directly or by their complicity. For an apt example, there were two brothers—one inside the walls and one outside—and on visiting days the free brother would visit. They had to plan their visits for when a certain guard was on duty. On those visits, the brothers wore identical shoes, and at some point during the visit, they'd simply switch shoes. Each had hollowed-out heels. In the inmate's would be the "green" (real money) he'd collected for the previous week's drugs, while his brother's kicks held smack. If a righteous hack had been on duty, they wouldn't have been able to make the switch. The thing is, without guards, a lot less drugs would find their way to prison populations and that's exactly what Guthrie's guards are doing.

Right on point.

Alexis-Charles-Henri Clerel de Toqueville said something to the effect that nations are judged by the quality of their prisons. From Kelman to Guthrie, I think I have a pretty good idea of Scotland.

Get this book!

Ctgt says

But these days I'm more philosophical about it all. I've thought a lot about death. And you know what I've concluded, Nick? Anybody can be a killer. Circumstances, you know. Shit happens. You put your head down for a while. When you look up, somebody's dead. You know how it is.

This starts as a straight forward thug-lit/crime story.

Nick Glass takes a job as a prison guard and moves his wife and daughter to Edinburgh away from the meddling influence of his mother in law. He has trouble gaining the respect of his fellow guards and in short order the inmates pick up on this. Caesar, the prison drug trafficker wants Glass to smuggle drugs in and uses his outside contacts to threaten Glass's wife and daughter. So he begins muling for Caesar and only becomes more entangled as the demands grow.

This was moving along at three star clip until I started to notice a few moments, just small sections that seemed to pop up out of nowhere and made almost no sense in the context of the story. As the story unfolds these moments become more pronounced until it finally dawned on me that things were not quite what they seemed. This ended up as more of a look at the psychology of a human under pressure. How does this one character deal with the stresses of family, job and forced criminal activity and to what lengths will he go to cobble his life/psyche together. How many things can you hide from others? How many things can you hide from yourself? How far will you go to convince yourself that things are as they should be?

Dave Szostak says

Another trawl through the gutters of Scotland from Guthrie. Newish prison guard Nicholas Glass is tormented mercilessly by inmates and co-workers alike. Soon he is forced to smuggle drugs into prison to avoid endangering his wife and young daughter, until he decides to retaliate. And that is about it for plot. Bloody, sordid and profane. Very representative of its author and featuring a truly odious cast of characters; even Glass' four-year old daughter tells someone to "fuck off!". A simplistic and straightforward example of lowlife noir. Unsurprising until the ending, when it resembles a certain Dennis Lehane novel.

Alice says

Allen Gutherie is to be speaker for 2015 Boucheron

1st section

Narrative Exposure therapy can be employed for treating any person who went through multiple events that generated traumas. Taking into account controlled trials in various regions and other tests in some disaster areas have proven that this therapeutic approach brings major improvements and relief after a number of three to six such sessions

However, a potential down side of it is the fact that some of the patients don't know exactly which of the past events caused the mood disorders

<http://www.mentaltherapy.com/narrativ...>

2nd section

Confabulation is a behavioral problem caused by producing false memories. Confabulated memories may never have happened or they could be a confused combination of events. The event could be real but the people or dates may be completely wrong. There is always an element of truth in a confabulated memory.

<http://www.braininjuryguide.org/confa...>

3rd section

What Is Cognitive Dissonance?

People tend to seek consistency in their beliefs and perceptions. So what happens when one of our beliefs conflicts with another previously held belief? The term cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feelings of discomfort that result from holding two conflicting beliefs. When there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors, something must change in order to eliminate or reduce the dissonance

<http://psychology.about.com/od/cognit...>

(simpler explanation--<http://www.simplypsychology.org/cogni...>)

Book is well composed -- dissonance is also term used in music theory.

another musical term used in the book is atonal

Book is depressing as hell. Bottom line-- If you become a victim, you'll be a victim until you don't give a f.. OR are we supposed to take comfort that the individual will create their own reality to survive?

Robert Beveridge says

Allan Guthrie, Slammer (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)

I wasn't entirely sure about Slammer for a while there. It was okay, readable if a bit slow for this kind of thriller. That's a big part of its problem—that you can say “this kind of thriller” about it, which translates to “you've seen this before”—but I'm getting ahead of myself. In any case, there's a scene about three-quarters of the way through the book where suddenly all the little bits that seemed out of place come together, and I started thinking that this was a very different kind of book indeed than I had previously suspected. I was wrong, but I was wrong in the best way (and that doesn't make any sense right now, but bear with me). It's asking a lot of your readers to say “wait three-quarters of the book, it's worth it”, but Slammer is a book that justifies it. And surprisingly (given the position most of this comes in the book, which lends itself to major spoilers), I can actually tell you why.

Nick Glass is young, trapped in a rocky marriage, and in his first few weeks as a guard at a Scottish maximum-security prison. It's not a good position to be in, and it gets a lot worse when one of the inmates, Caesar, sends an underling on the outside named Watt to go see Nick's wife and child as a subtle threat. Caesar wants a favor, see, and Glass isn't thrilled with the idea of doing it. After a long conversation with Mafia, another inmate and Glass' only friend in the place—who also happens to be Watt's brother—Glass decides to go along with it. When you give an inch, however, they always want a mile...

Guthrie understands the predictability of his genre (which is, basically, noir, and the second you pick up a noir you know that happy endings are an impossibility), and he plays on that in the first three-quarters of the book, leaving it running along the classic lines while fitting in a detail or two that seems slightly out of place now and again. Then comes the three-quarter point, and you realize that Guthrie has been using that very predictability factor to play you. Even better, he points you in one direction, then another, then another; the last quarter of this book is full of everything Guthrie was presumably saving up while writing the first part. The crowning achievement of the whole thing, however, is the ambiguity of the final pages. Guthrie refused to pull any punches, leaving it up to the reader to figure out what exactly goes on during that final scene. (I think the correct interpretation is pretty obvious, but the way it's written, it's equally obvious that Guthrie wanted readers to draw their own conclusions.) A little slow to get going, but the final quarter makes up for everything and then some. Read this. *** ½

Derrick says

This was one dark trip into the mind of Allan Guthrie. He has penned another outstanding book that details the mind of a psycho. It is no wonder Guthrie is the King of Psycho Noir. No need to rehash the plot, but the plot will have you speeding through this book at the pace of a bullet flying from a gun. I have been waiting for this book to be released in the US and next time he publishes a book I will be visiting Amazon UK to avoid the wait. Guthrie clearly raises the bar for all the leading and unknown noir authors with this book. This is hard edged noir at its best and you would be wise to disregard reviews from the weakhearted. Buy a copy and enjoy.

Jeff says

Prison Guard in Scotland with lots of desperate criminals. Too full of despicable characters and a protagonist too arrogant to fell much compassion for.

John of Canada says

I'm trying to figure out how this got on my to read list. One likeable character, no likeable start, middle, or end. Hope sprang too eternal.
