



## Expiration Date

*Duane Swierczynski*

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In this neighborhood, make a wrong turn and you're history. Mickey Wade is a recently-unemployed journalist who lucked into a rent-free apartment – his sick grandfather's place. The only problem: it's in a lousy neighborhood. The one where Mickey grew up, in fact. The one he was so desperate to escape.

But now he's back. Dead broke. And just when he thinks he's reached rock bottom, Mickey wakes up in the past. Literally.

At first he thinks it's a dream. All of the stores he remembered from his childhood, the cars, the rumble of the elevated train. But as he digs deeper into the past, searching for answers about the grandfather he hardly knows, Mickey meets the twelve-year-old kid who lives in the apartment below. The kid who will grow up to someday murder Mickey's father.

## Expiration Date Details

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ISBN : 9780312363406

Author : Duane Swierczynski

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## From Reader Review Expiration Date for online ebook

### Steve says

An excellent try-to-wrap-your-head-around-this-time-travel story, complete with a whodunit and a surprise ending. Just when you think you've got it figured out, the author throws another twist in the story. And make sure to read the background of this story and how it came to be published. Almost as fascinating as the story itself! Highly recommended.

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### Alina says

Das Buch hat mich jetzt nicht von den Socken gehauen. Es ist schon ziemlich verwirrend aber der Autor hat ein roten Faden den er nicht verliert und das Buch zu ende bringt. Die Geschichte erinnert mich an viele Filme wie Butterfly, In meinem Himmel und noch einer aber da fällt mir der Name nicht ein. Es hat was aber es war nichts für mich, ich dachte es wird bisschen brutaler aber fehlanzeige.

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### Vicki Gooding says

Easy, fast paced book with the feel of a great Rod Serling novel. I have not read anything else by this author but if this is an indication of his style I want to read more of his books.

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### Sarah Sammis says

<http://pussreboots.pair.com/blog/2015...>

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### Mark says

I'd never heard of Duane Swierzyński before I saw *Expiration Date* as one of the Early Reviewer books on LibraryThing. I didn't win a copy, so I purchased one based on the summary of the title and the enthusiastic responses I found to the author's previous novels.

*Expiration Date* is a fast-paced, twisty time-travel mystery written in a first-person hardboiled crime pulp style, and featuring occasional B&W ink illustrations by comic book artist Lawrence Campbell (this is a novel, not a graphic novel). Mickey Wade lost his job and his grandfather is comatose in the hospital, so Mickey moves into his grandfather's apartment and accidentally discovers that the pills in the old Tylenol bottle from his grandfather's medicine cabinet aren't meant for headaches. Oh, and they also happen to cause him to travel back to around the year of his birth in 1972. Now, this could present some interesting opportunities...if Mickey wasn't invisible and allergic to light while in the past.

I'd hate to give too much away, but Wade is juggling problems in both times, trying to piece together family mysteries in the past while convincing his best friend that all that time he spends passed out on the floor has nothing to do with being a drug addict. The crux of time travel stories is usually how the past affects the future and the question of how will a particular author or movie treat the consequences of actions in the past.

Suffice it to say that I consider myself a new fan of Duane Swierczynski and look forward to reading his other novels (already picked up *Severance Package* and just got *The Blonde* from the library). The only complaint anyone should have is that it's only about 235 pages, and will be over before you know it. To be fair, though, the story was conceived as a weekly serial for *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, and you'll probably want to read it again anyway.

I'll leave you with part of the prologue:

"Time's arrow only seems to fly straight when you're alive. Dead is something else. Once you cross that invisible line, you see things how they really are. You see that every moment seems to happen at once.

"Which makes telling this story - or the most important parts of it, anyway - difficult. Usually, you start at the beginning. Or the middle, so the audience doesn't get bored.

"Problem is, I'm very hazy on the beginning and the middle, as I came in at the end. I can speculate, but it'd be nothing more than a wild guess. I guess I should start with the day I moved into the apartment and went back in time."

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### **Don Crouch says**

Duane Swierczynski wrote two of the most entertaining books of the last decade. *The Blonde* and *Severance Package* are a one-two punch from a guy tied in at DNA-level to the noir zeitgeist. Exciting, character-driven and hi-freaking-larious, they scream to be filmed, and they transcend recommendation.

*Expiration Date* is Swierczynski's first novel since joining the Marvel Comics bullpen, and its' essence is highly informed by those days spent telling stories in such a stylized environment. The roots of the story were created for a serialization that he was preparing for the *New York Times*. That fell out, but now we have this, and good for us!

Our hero is one Mickey Wade, hard-bitten former journalist, currently-transitional-something. Circumstances have dictated the need for him to reduce operational overhead, resulting in a move to his grandfather's apartment. "Grandpop", you see, is laid up in the hospital right now....

So here's Mickey, back in his old neighborhood, nadir-bound, attitude sour. He goes to sleep and wakes up in the 70's.

Yeah, there it is. At this point, you are either in or you are out, right?

We'll just say this...STAY IN!

Swierczynski is just getting started, folks. He creates in Mickey Wade a character that makes this journey seem plausible, and after a while you'll be powering through the current-day sequences waiting for the next

leap. Character growth is not something we often pay attention to, but in *Expiration Date*, the growth (or, perhaps, awakening) of Mickey Wade is a key factor in just about every aspect.

His partner-in-time is Meghan, the ever-patient friend-who-is-a-girl that coaches him through some wild situations that Swierczynski has tied together in almost Escher-like fashion; a case of domestic abuse, the death of Wade's father, and a Green River-style serial killing spree....not to mention the great character beats of Wade simply absorbing his new reality.

The result is action-packed, thought-provoking and pays off with a depth you weren't even paying attention to until, well, you feel it.

At its' core, *Expiration Date* is a valentine to family. The journey to that core is what gives a seeming flight-of-fancy its narrative tension as well as its' authenticity. At the end, you will feel the value of that journey, and you'll have had BIG FUN on the trip!

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### **Craig Pittman says**

“Expiration Date” is a mystery with a science fiction twist (or two) that repeatedly reminded me of a line from the TV show “Friends.” The witty Chandler and his less savvy friend Joey have discovered something, and Chandler immediately grasps the implications – but Joey is taking a while, to the point where Chandler shouts, “Get there faster!” That’s what I kept wanting to tell the narrator of this book, Mickey Wade.

Mickey has lost his job as a reporter and moved into his grandfather’s ratty apartment in a bad part of Philly. His grandfather is in a coma at a nearby hospital so someone needs to look out for the place. Mickey finds a bottle of Tylenol in the medicine cabinet, and takes a couple – and the next thing he knows, he’s wandering around this same neighborhood, but back in the 1970s, around the time he was born.

Aided by his friend and former neighbor Meghan, Mickey sets out to explore just what this new capability means. Learning the rules of transporting himself into the past takes about half of the book, which is waaaay too much. Finally Mickey figures out that the thing he should do while in the past is to stop the murder of his father. But when he learns who the culprit is, he has second thoughts.

The book has a clever concept at its core, but gives you both too much info and not enough about the time-traveling part of the story. The ending is nearly clever enough to redeem the whole enterprise.

I have read and admired two other Duane Swierczynski novels, “*Severance Package*” and “*The Wheelman*.” Both of those start with a bang and don’t let up on their breakneck pace until the very end. This book could have used some of that sense of urgency.

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### **Weldon Burge says**

After reading and loving Swierczynski's incredibly violent, fast-paced novels *The Wheelman*, *The Blonde*, and especially *Severance Package*, I was expecting more of the same with *Expiration Date*. I was pleasantly surprised that the novel, while fast-paced, was significantly different from those other books. This is definitely not a bad thing!

*Expiration Date* is, simply stated, a novel about time travel, and Swierczynski handles the plot shifts and twists with admirable precision. If you enjoy puzzles and stories that play with the "butterfly effect," this one

is for you. Swierczynski's signature suspense style is still evident, and his characters are just as quirky as ever. This book is a cerebral thriller--you'll want to pay attention as the story propels itself to its strange yet thoroughly believable conclusion.

The element of Swierczynski's writing that I find most appealing is his integration of setting. I enjoy not just his familiarity with Philadelphia, the setting of this novel, but how he turns the city into a critical "character" in the story--Philadelphia, both past and present, is just as much a character here as Mickey Wade. Swierczynski's knowledge about the history and culture of Philadelphia is woven well into the novel, adding flavor and substance that is essential to the overall plot. Superb!

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### **Rachel says**

I'll readily admit that my failure to love this book is more my problem than Swierczynski's. It's decent for what it is and it's one that I would recommend to comic-book-action-film-noir-lovin' friends (those interests tend to overlap in people, I've noticed). But though I enjoy comics and action films here and there, and certainly books and films that incorporate elements of comics and action, they aren't my main loves. I know...I'm boring.

Swierczynski's writing, although it has nice noir phrasing here and there, is lean, sparse, and very contemporary. Problem is, I like my noir *Lady From Shanghai* style, a little more circular and less straightforward. I realize that this may not be fair as criticism. Not everyone can or wants to be Orson Welles. Unfortunately.

The prose may be straightforward, but the plot is definitely not. Many characters are moving back and forth in time to kill each other in all different ages of life, as revenge for other murders, all of which are committed in the time travel as well. These motives and intentions to kill are all revealed in the last thirty pages of the book, providing a wallop of exposition that threw me off keel.

Around the third time in the span of 30-odd pages that a character reveals that he is going back in time to kill someone to prevent that someone from killing someone else, I laughed out loud. I don't know if it was supposed to be funny, but I couldn't help it. My brain shouted "Diabolical!" and I kept thinking that and laughing all the way through the end. When all's said and done, I did have a good time with it. Absurdity may even have been Swierczynski's intention. He does seem to have a sense of humor.

The best part of this book comes when Mickey first travels back to 1972 and sees his section of Philadelphia before it became a hollowed out slum. Evocation of place is something I clearly go nuts over, and Swierczynski's love for his city comes across in Mickey's longing to travel in time just to see what downtown is like (for example).

I still want to read *Severance Package*. The plot description and preview pages up on Amazon are hilarious.

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### **Kemper says**

The pills in this book should have this warning sticker on the bottle: Side effects may include drowsiness, headache, and traveling through time. Use only as directed.

Mickey Wade is a reporter who just lost his job due to downsizing at his paper. Since his grandfather is in a coma in the hospital, Mickey moves into his apartment to save money, but he hates returning to the neighborhood he grew up in because it's decayed into a slum.

When Mickey takes a couple of pills he thinks are aspirin out of his grandfather's medicine cabinet, he travels through time to the year he was born, 1972. He can walk around and interact with the environment, but most people can't see him. Light also has a horrible effect on him when he's in the past.

Mickey becomes obsessed with time traveling and starts popping more pills than Marilyn Monroe. At first, he's just trying to figure out what's happening, then he tries to figure out a way to make money with his journeys, but he eventually finds out that his trips have brought him to face-to-face with a young boy who will grow up to murder Mickey's father.

Swierczynski has blended elements of sci-fi and crime novels together before in *The Blonde*, and this a decent time travel story with an interesting hook.

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### **Tfitoby says**

A decent little pulp tale of time travel and revenge that's all a bit obvious if intricately plotted, you've surely read or seen this story before but the setting is different and the characters have had their names changed. That's not a criticism of Swierczynski, modern pulp authors have as much right to churn one out on an interesting subject as much as the guys who worked by the word during the golden age of pulps but there's no way you can then legitimately qualify the work as a highlight of their career either. We know Swierczynski is a talented writer who has already given us half a dozen modern noir tales to cherish and none of that talent is missing here, *Expiration Date* flies past like a fun episode of your favourite TV show and even though there's not a huge amount of depth to the characters there is at least something to cling to as he weaves his time travel rug of inevitability, making a subject that seems to positively bamboozle 99.9% of Hollywood appear to be the most uncomplicated thing in the world to read as he effortlessly closes his loop.

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### **? Carol jinx~?~? says**

I read this book in one night. It was great. It went by so fast and I could imagine a movie in my head while I was reading it. I was not disappointed at all with the ending and I realized I had to get to it without waiting for another reading session.

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### **Trin says**

*Hey, dummy! You weren't impressed by the last book you read by this guy, so why the heck would you try another of his titles? What were you thinking?*

But...but this one's got time travel! The blurbs all said it was kind of like *Life on Mars!* I love *Life on Mars!*

*Since when do blurbs ever tell the truth?*

Yeah, okay, that one turned out to be totally bogus. But...time travel?

*There really aren't any interesting time travel ideas in this book. It's boring and pointlessly violent, just like Swierczynski's last book. And he ends it with another bullshit attempt at a twist ending, more idiotic than even the equally hard to spell Shyamalan's usual crap. It's the literary equivalent of a B-movie that would close with a card that says, "The End...Or Is it?!"*

Admittedly that kind of made me want to stab myself.

*So are you going to learn your lesson finally? Please?*

Yeah, if I could, I'd go back in time...and not read this book!

*I am so, so ashamed that we are actually the same person.*

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## Woodge says

Mickey Wade, a newly unemployed journalist moves into his grandfather's apartment in a run-down Philadelphia neighborhood. One night, after quaffing some aspirin he finds himself transported back in time to the year of his birth. Back and forth he goes, and then he decides to thwart the kid who would grow up to kill his father. Some fun weirdness ensues and it's a super-fast read. I'm putting more Duane Swierczynski books in my To Read List.

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## Dave says

A few years back I discovered a pretty cool crime novel called "The Wheelman." It was a gritty caper novel full of interesting characters and blasts of dark humor. I missed "Secret Dead Man" the debut novel by book's writer, Duane Swierczynski, so I had no idea he was interested and capable of crafting a more fantastic but just as entertaining tale. I soon discovered that was the case though. Hints of science fiction showed up in "The Blonde" the author's excellent follow-up to the "Wheelman" and then Swierczynski affinity and flair for the fantastic really started to show when he started writing books like "Cable" and "The Immortal Iron Fist" for Marvel Comics. Swierczynski's last novel "Severance Package" was more of a crime/espionage type thriller story, but in his latest novel, "Expiration Date", the author embraces both the strange and fantastic and the gritty and the grounded. The result is his best novel to date.

In "Expiration Date", Mickey Wade, a recently unemployed journalist, is forced to move into his grandfather's former apartment where he can live rent free. On his first night in the apartment Mickey heads to the medicine cabinet searching for aspirin to cure a headache. He finds some mysterious pills, takes one and is mysteriously transported back to the 1970s. How and why this happening is one of the big mysteries of the book, so I won't spoil it, but I will say it involves the mysterious death of Mickey's father in the 1970s.

In Mickey, Swierczynski gives readers an enjoyable every man protagonist. The first person narrative of the novel means you feel for his plight at the beginning of the novel, and you really sympathize with Mickey when he gets caught up in the strangeness of travelling to the past. You also feel Mickey's sense of anger and

moral outrage when he uses the unique conditions of his time travel to foil some shocking crimes that took place in the past.

Another intriguing character in the novel is Mickey's grandfather. Like Kurtz in "Heart of Darkness" you don't spend much time with the grandfather but his presence looms large throughout the entire story. When you have a character like that he has to be incredibly compelling, and thanks to Swierczynski's prose Mickey's grandfather is.

For me though, The most enjoyable thing about "Expiration Date" was the tone and feel of the novel. At one point in the narrative Mickey uses the unique abilities he gains from time traveling to rescue a kidnapped girl. It's a powerful and creepy scene that seems like it should come from one of the superhero comics that Swierczynski writes. Instead the author plays up the scene in a haunting and surreal sort of way. It reminded me of the scene in M Night Shyamalan's best (and in my opinion only good) movie "Unbreakable" where the main character tries to save a family from a vicious killer.

And speaking of mood, "Expiration Date" features a number of spot illustrations from comic book artist Lawrence Campbell, which enhance the book's creepy and strange feel. They also add to some of the sweetness of the book too; because ultimately "Expiration Date" is about family and how the choices you make affect your family's future.

So "Expiration Date" is an immensely satisfying mystery and science fiction novel about one of the most mundane and important things in the world, family. I highly recommend it.

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### **Josh says**

EXPIRATION DATE tells the tale of a down-on-his luck and out of work newspaper reporter who moves into his grand pop's apartment in a downtrodden and seemingly dangerous part of town. There, Mickey Wade discovers an innocuous bottle of pills in the medicine cabinet which he greedily takes in hopes of them having some medicinal purpose as a means to pre-empt his impending hangover. Rather than take the edge off, they send Mickey back in time, to the date he was born. Being a reporter and naturally inquisitive, Mickey soon learns family secrets best left buried and confronts his father's killer only to learn things aren't quite what they seem.

Wow. EXPIRATION DATE is just as, if not more, impressive the second time round. Like with any reread I found myself noticing details that I didn't take in before, such as the complexity associated with Wade's predicament and the 'butterfly effect' his time travelling sojourns have on the present.

There are some great twists that complement the story, as well as an ending I didn't envision (yes, despite having read it close to its original publication).

With EXPIRATION DATE, author Duane Swierczynski explores the cause and effect of actions of the more violent nature and how a split second decision, one that even seems right, can have dire consequences years down the track. I enjoyed every moment and will no doubt go back for yet another read.

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## **John says**

Very different kind of book. Started out being written as a serial for a magazine then morphed into a fast-paced sci-if thriller. A quick but entertaining read about a laid-off journalist who moves to his grandfather's vacant apartment where he takes some Tylenol that transports him back in time to earlier parts of his life

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## **Johnny PARADOX says**

Had a good concept going but ultimately failed in making it interesting, a large chunk of this book seems like filler and the good parts seem rushed overall not very good

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## **Jason Brown (Toastrx2) says**

I don't know why, but about every few times i go to Powell's Books, i end up checking out the shelf that holds Duane's work. i am never expecting anything new, i don't know what i am expecting to be different, but it looks like repetition does eventually breed results. When i was there over the weekend, look what was waiting for me.. Expiration date, a book i didn't even know was ready for release...

So, what the hell is this book about? self discover and that exact moment when your life ends and becomes seemingly unrelated to everything you know.

okaaay, can you be a bit more cryptic Jason?

fine- Its about a man dying on the floor of page one, breaking it down to you why he has 3 bullets in him.

its about fucking with things just because you can. then, just because you want to... and later... because you damn well know you shouldn't, but do anyway..

Quick synopsis: Mickey Wade is an out of work Journalist with no real drive. he has virtually no money, no girlfriend, no job, and moves into his grandfather's apt in order to save money on rent. grandfather is in a coma and not using it.

His first night in the apartment, with a horrible headache, he cracks into a bottle of Tylenol in the medicine cabinet. something is not quite right with these expired pills, as Mickey finds himself spending the next couple hours reliving his birthday... his actual birthday.. in 1972..

Expiration Date is a Science fiction novel minus the science fiction, a Detective novel with out a detective. it is a nice crossover between Hard-Boiled and Noir fiction, in the classic vein of the Maltese Falcon, but with a sprinkling of Quantum Leap..

All around, Expiration Date was a fantastic read. die hard fans may bitch that it lacked the crazed drive that The Blond/Severance Package carried, but don't listen to those fools. This is definitely a genre novel and is not a negative in the slightest. just buy it and give it a shot, if you are not hooked by page 3, i will be surprised.

oh, and it should be noted, there is some awesome artwork through out the book. :)

Author's website: <http://secretdead.blogspot.com/>

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Note to publisher..

What were you thinking when you made the cover for this book? NO NO.. the image is fine, i like the art. What i am talking about is the fact that you used a glossy cover with a modern feel to it..

What happened to the rough pulp cover that made severance package really feel tangible? the rough cover added to the experience, making the book seem even more like the pulp that likely inspired them all. This would have been a noticed and appreciated touch on Expiration Date as well.

you did something really right with SP, you should have carried it over instead of following the standard publishing paradigm. Shiny does not always = sales!

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xpost RawBlurb.com

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### **Jessica Mcbee says**

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A solid, fun, quick read.

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