



Stain of the Berry

Anthony Bidulka

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Everyone has their Boogeyman. But who-or what-is scaring Saskatoon locals to death? Private detective Russell Quant is roused from sleep only to fall into a nightmare case when the family of a suicide victim hires him to uncover the real cause of death. But what is real and what is imaginary? Quant works to narrow his list of suspects only to find the number of victims growing. Russell is mystified as the trail of fear connects him to a vast landscape of people, including an elegant potash miner, dubious trailer park denizens, reticent farm folk, the Pink Gopher choir, and a gaseous psychiatrist. Compounding Quant's bewilderment is the complete and perfect disappearance of his once very real friend, Sereena, who has become a ghost he simply can't find. With the Boogeyman always a few paces ahead, Russell struggles to keep the hounds of failure from baying. Travelling from Saskatchewan's summer storms to the menacing Lotus Land of Vancouver, he finally touches down in the Canadian Arctic, where tragic hope resides. Russell returns home to bully attacks, a desperate chase through midnight woods, and a sadistic abduction. As Quant penetrates the truth of the Boogeyman, he finds himself on a perilous suspension bridge between idyllic childhood and grown-up violence.

Stain of the Berry Details

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From Reader Review Stain of the Berry for online ebook

Writerlibrarian says

Fourth book in the Russell Quant Mystery series. Creepier and darker than the first three. The main story deals with people from a choir being harassed and ultimately killed by a mystery boogeyman. Russell follows the clues as the killer becomes more and more bold and dangerous. That plot is interesting and Russell shines throughout resolution. It's also creepy, dark and doesn't end all in roses and joy.

The secondary plot wraps up the whole Sereena's disappearance. It's a little boring and predictable with two minor twists one I hope we will see again.

Overall an entertaining addition to the series. More like 3 1/2 stars

Shawn says

Perhaps I'd have liked it better if I'd read the earlier books. The Saskatoon location is interesting, as are some of the characters, but the mystery is very slight and I suspect that the Sereena plot line seems purely ridiculous to most of the (like me) uninitiated.

Emanuela ~plastic duck~ says

3.5 stars.

Spoilerish.

I renounced some of my sleep time to finish this book, and I would like to do it justice, but there are a couple of considerations warring in my head.

I like dark. I like stories when a story, a setting, a character that should be light and sunny brush with the dark. I got this in the story. The mystery plot is about the consequences of thoughtless acts that seem innocuous, something small and innocent that becomes huge and scary. I think that Russell's investigation was more focused than it was in the previous book, it seemed he was more concerned, even if Sereena's disappearance was always in the back of his mind.

My problem is that the story about Sereena - who has always been a larger than life character - has become incredibly big. So big big big that I found myself fighting with my suspension of disbelief. The single parts of the story were believable, but when put together I couldn't help thinking "No. Way."

All Russell's circle of friends and acquaintances was still charming and interesting to read. Their stories are a thread that makes you want to keep reading just to know what happens to them. I wish Russell found someone for him, and there's something promising in this book, I hope. Russell is less carefree than in the previous books, I think he's beginning to face his inner needs.

This series is easy to read and entertaining, but there are slices of evil creeping through. Looking forward to the next.

Richard Derus says

Rating: 3.5* of five

This is by way of being the fourth Russell Quant mystery...and this time set in gay metropolitan Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada almost exclusively! WOOT!

The most interesting thread from the previous Russell Quant book, "Tapas on the Ramblas", comes in for its full-bore resolution here. Like Russell, I really really wanted to know what was what with Sereena Orion Smith by the end of that book.

Be careful what you wish for. You'd think we'd have all learned that by the time we're (mumble)five. Buuut nooo! Laddies and gentlewomen, chapters 13 and 14 resolve this plot thread.

I cried **buckets**.

And I must inform you that those chapters contain material that is extremely disturbing. It's not graphic and it's not gratuitous, but it's very hard to read. While integral to the plot, it required me to take some breathers. I do not expect others to be quite so sensitive to this (mysteriously talked around) issue, and I certainly don't want to put anyone off reading the book, but forewarned is forearmed.

As with the previous book, the central hired-to-solve mystery wasn't exactly the same high-stakes riveting stuff as the Russell/Sereena plot...until the end, when it most certainly becomes super-high stakes, and deeply deeply scary. Bidulka gives away the identity of the perp of some really stupid-sounding crimes fairly early on, but the "why" remains elusive and is, in the end, pretty damned unnerving when revealed. It's very commonplace, seemingly harmlessly defused, and in fact the catalyst for a series of terrible events. Terrible. Cringe-inducingly awful events. These are graphically presented. They are not in any way gratuitous. They are, I am so sad to say, things that really do happen in the world, and so are in our newspapers, effectively sanitized by their tidily removed-from-life presence in black ink on newsprint.

I will never look at these crimes in quite the same callous way again. My inurement to them is breached. Damn that Bidulka! Couldn't he have chosen to send Russell, who is after all my future husband once we resolve the whole fictional-versus-actual thing, on the Mystery of the Fluffy Bundy Rabbix That Got Losted or something?!

For readers of the series...highly recommended. For newcomers to Saskatoon...start at the beginning, "Amuse Bouche" but be patient, because the rewards get more satisfying the longer you stick with the books.

Grey853 says

I got this book for my birthday, so I was in a hurry to read it. I enjoyed Russell and his group of established characters. I must say I was surprised that it was as serious and as graphic as it was in some parts. There's

harassment, assault, attempted rape, and murder. This isn't a light or cozy read.

Since I haven't read the earlier books, the inclusion of the missing Sereena plot was distracting from the main one.

Also, it's got a rather dark ending, one that left me unsettled.

Still, it was an interesting read and I enjoyed it overall.

Brian Collyer says

I like my detectives to actually solve the crime. Unfortunately, Russell Quant didn't. Yes, he did get the murderer to expose himself. But, the way in which it was done was disappointing.

The book was also filled with a rather needless subplot about halfway though the book that didn't advance the story in any real way. Rather, it tied up loose ends and advanced the story of future books.

Maybe the reason I was disappointed by the book was due to the fact I had read it out of order and knew some of the things that were going to happen. Being spoiled does take away from the enjoyment of discovery and I wouldn't recommend anyone make the mistake I did.

Julie says

Man, I love these books! It's about time someone wrote about a gay private eye who lives in Saskatoon - seriously! I adore Russell's cheeky monkey inner monologue, his thirst for the truth and his prairie-boy views of life, love, the world and murder.

I need to meet Anthony Bidulka for a big-ole hug.

Scotchneat says

Russell Quant is a detective in Saskatoon who's kinda short on cases and missing an old exotic friend named Serena.

Then a series of deaths links an LGBT choir to an unknown killer who becomes their boogeyman and Russell has to figure out who it is.

I like how Bidulka builds in the traditional thriller storylines with smalltown Canada (Saskatchewan and the Arctic) and strong gay characters. Not great, but pretty good.

Philip says

Ok, so I was a fan of Russell Quant from the get-go. He doesn't take himself too seriously (unlike the hard boiled detectives or noir), and he's methodical about what he's doing (as opposed to nosing around digging for information a la Marple). But what I found to be frustrating is that the mystery in **Stain of the Berry** was flimsy at best. Characters we never meet die, under circumstances that would appear mysterious only to the most novice of mystery readers, and we're supposed to care. Truth of the matter is, we don't. For once, I actually found myself more drawn to the romantic aspects of the story more than I was to the actual mystery. A shame really, cos Quant's an engaging and endearing character. He just needs to be given better cases. Then again, I don't imagine that too much murder takes place in and around Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Philip says

Super Read! Probably the best of the series so far. I found the ending a bit vague - obviously leading to the next book in the series, but that's actually OK!

Rosa says

I liked this one a lot. Many things has happened in Russell's life since he returned from the infamous Mediterranean cruise... and I love how the character grows in this book... nothing is going to be the same anymore and we face how life could change from one moment to another. I've grown fond of Bidulka's writing so I'm starting the next one right now.

Elizabeth says

Russell Quant tackles a puzzling case that starts out with the apparent suicide of a fragile girl but on closer examination reveals that even on the idyllic plains of Canada in the midsummer more than waves of golden grain are spreading out and causing people to sit up and take notice and shiver on the warmest of July days.

Sue says

I won a copy of "Stain of the Berry" by Anthony Bidulka, through the Goodreads Giveaway Contest.

"The Boogeyman is gonna get you!"

Russell Quant receives a early morning phone call from a frantic woman "He coming to get me...I don't know why...but I can't take it anymore."

A few years ago, Russell had left his job as a police constable to go and live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and working as a private detective. Currently business was slow in the summer months but by the fall everybody is back at work. Sereena Orion Smith his ex-neighbour has disappeared and was Russell's friend.

Detective Darren Kirsh, from the Criminal Investigations Division, barges in early one morning to Russell's house, telling him to read the paper. Darren is Russells contact in the police department. A young woman, Tanya Cultinare, 31, committed suicide, by jumping from her 8th floor balcony of her building. This is the same mysterious midnight caller who hung up on him several days earlier. Russells' name and phone number were in her cell phone. But Why?

Tanya's elderly parents and son, Warren show up at Russell's office requesting that he investigate Tanya's death. The police had ruled Tanya's death a suicide.

But when Russell starts to investigate further he finds various things that don't add up.

I enjoy reading mystery suspense thrillers, but the mystery in "Stain of the Berry" was flimsy at best. I was looking for more mystery in this novel, the "whodunit" factor, to satisfy my intrigue. For this reason I give this a 3.5 rating.

Scot says

Fourth in the series. This private detective lives in Saskatchewan, has a compelling wry sense of humor, and is gay. I like his dogs and some of the distinctly Canadian perspectives and Canadian prairie life details. This installment was a bit uneven but the mystery component got better at the end, and the blend includes elements of jet setting with the filthy rich as well as a variant of a teen age slasher movie psychopathic killer....so there's something for everyone, I guess, or at least for many.

Larry says

Best of the series so far. Love the fact that we revisited some former characters and tied up some loose ends and made some new ones. The twist at the end was totally a surprise and left me really wanting another Quaint novel. NOW
