



Cuts Through Bone

Alaric Hunt

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Featured in The New York Times Magazine!

Winner of the PWA Best First Private Eye Novel Competition

At first, Rachel Vasquez found her new job working for private detective Clayton Guthrie promising. He got her a gun and a license and took her to target practice. But lately she's just been doing surveillance, and it's not her idea of an exciting time. She is contemplating quitting when Guthrie lands an intriguing case that will take all their wits and guts to solve.

Camille Bowman, a beautiful blond Columbia student and Manhattan heiress, is found dead, shot by a gun that belonged to her fiancé Greg Olsen, an Afghan war veteran. Guthrie is hired to prove Olsen's innocence, and fortunately he thinks Olsen smells clean. The detectives return to the scene of the crime where they see a vagrant who claims he heard the shots and picked the girl's wallet. Tiring of their questions, the vagrant flees, and Vasquez and Guthrie must track a man who's an expert at disappearing while also butting heads with the NYPD, cracking doors at Columbia University, and crawling through the city's subterranean tunnels.

To complicate matters, the murder could be part of a spree of killings being called the Barbiedoll murders, in which women are killed for no apparent reason and with no suspect in sight. The NYPD would like to pin them all on Olsen, and his life will depend on Guthrie and Vasquez catching the real culprit. In a race against time, the detectives gather clues that culminate in a bloody chase of one very determined and surprising killer.

Cuts Through Bone is a suspenseful ride, a novel that is atmospheric, stylistic, and gritty to boot. In Vasquez and Guthrie, youth and brashness meet experience and resolve, making for one of the most intriguing PI teams around. Debut author Alaric Hunt has penned a riveting hardboiled mystery, a contemporary story with the feel of a classic PI novel and a scope as large and complex as New York City, and even reaching beyond.

Cuts Through Bone Details

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Author : Alaric Hunt

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From Reader Review Cuts Through Bone for online ebook

Jacqui says

If you are tired of the typical thrillers from the usual voices, read Alaric Hunt's debut novel, "Cuts Through Bone" (Minotaur Books 2013). Aside from the fact that the story deals with detectives, murdered innocents, and the good guys are flawed, there's nothing usual about this book.

The story deals with a gritty older detective who's breaking in a raw new female partner. As luck would have it, a serial murder falls in their laps so her learning curve accelerates and we get to see the many tricks of the trade that made our seasoned PI--Guthrie--survive as long as he has. He is sharp, school-of-hard-knocks smart, which he probably got from the author himself who's serving a life sentence in South Carolina. The plot, too, is smart, and complicated. Hunt cleverly peels it away like an onion, never too fast that you miss the fun or too slow that you want to stop.

That's not what will make you read this book, as appealing as the two characters and the plot are. It's the author's voice. It's so authentic, I don't know what he's saying 10% of the time. His scene descriptions put me right there, crawling through the sewers, sweltering in the New York heat.

So what don't I like? There are a few complaints I could make about most young new writers. First, the story's choppy. Part of that is because Hunt's writing style is jumpy. Not stream of consciousness, but definitely not smooth. He tries to weave the backstory into the plot and runs into a few bumps. Second, Guthrie has an astounding number of friends who owe him favors. Every time the story hits a snag, Guthrie comes up with a friend in high places who bales them out. Is that realistic? Maybe. Not sure. Third, there are oddly-phrased sentences. See if you agree:

* Guthrie's shot squeezed in between the lighter bullets like a zesty piece of roast beef sandwiched between two slices of plain light bread

* "You were doing something there that could get somebody shut up."

* As the afternoon declined...

* Steady running earned grudging passage from the trees...

By the way, I love the backstory on the title. I won't give it away, but think 'rich', 'historic', and 'worth waiting for'.

Because of newbie mistakes, I'd probably give this 3.5, but that's not available, so I'll round up. Alaric--you owe me half a point in your next book.

Marcia says

I won this book from Goodreads. It is one of the best written suspense novels I have read in years. The main character Clayton Guthrie is a little like Harry Bosch. He is a small man, but extremely capable. The title is explained just before the end. The setting descriptions are extremely well done. The author does not rely solely on sight, but also describes the sounds and smells, which is a technique not used much today, although Sue Grafton adds it to her novels. The action strings out a bit in the middle before the Guthrie settles on who the serial killer is and why. Once the focal point is established, the action rushes forward to the climax of the

firefight and its aftermath.

Naomi says

Read my full review: <http://bit.ly/14BYNXX>

My rating: 3 Stars on Amazon/Goodreads. Realistically, more like 2.5 stars

My opinion: I could BARELY warm up to this book. This was a very short book that should have realistically taken me less than a day to read, but it ended up taking me several days to read it. I agree with other reviewers who have stated they felt they were reading a Phillip Marlow story because of the language choices that the author used, as well as the fact that it was very heavily laden with cliches, innuendos and "cheeky" language. If not Phillip Marlowe, one could compare it with the cheesy movies of the 1970's.

Kathy Martin says

Alaric Hunt channels Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler in this mystery that is reminiscent of the hard-boiled detective stories of the 1930s and 40s. However, Hunt does bring the mystery up to the present by adding computers, cell phones and a young female Puerto Rican assistant to our hard-boiled detective.

Raquel Vasquez is new to the detective business. All she has done so far is learn to shoot and learn to observe. Surveillance isn't holding her attention though. When her boss Clayton Guthrie gets a new case, things start to look up.

Guthrie is hired by one of New York's Old Money types to find out who killed his niece. Another niece is convinced that it wasn't her boyfriend Greg Olsen even though the police have arrested him. Guthrie and Vasquez begins a hunt that takes them among the homeless in New York City, involves the Russian mob, and has roots in the war in Afghanistan.

I liked Raquel as a character and empathized with her struggles to be her own person while not disappointing her loving parents. I disliked that Hunt continually described her as Puerto Rican as though nothing else about her mattered as much.

I liked the colorful descriptions including "grilled her like a sandwich" but disliked the amount of description because I felt that it slowed the pace of the story and was sometimes inappropriately placed (like in the middle of a conversation).

I thought Hunt captured the grittiness of a hunt for a murderer, and the tedium of an investigation that required hours of following leads that may or may not pan out, well. I thought that the many threads that Guthrie and Vasquez discovered added to the richness of the story even though some of the threads were left hanging at the end.

Fans of the hard-boiled detective stories of the 30s and 40s would be a good audience for this title.

Darcia Helle says

I've long been a fan of PI novels and, since this book won the PWA Best First Private Eye Novel Competition, I expected to love it. I didn't.

First, there is absolutely no character development. We follow the PI and his very young sidekick through the story, but I wasn't able to ever really connect with either character. I wanted to know more about who they were and what drove their behavior.

Second, all the characters had the same speaking style. This is partly a reflection of the lack of character development. It might also be due to the author having been in prison since 1988, giving him a narrow view of the world and speaking styles.

The plot has a lot of potential. I enjoyed the author's phrasing and I saw glimmers of greatness. Overall, though, the story didn't hold my interest.

Dianne says

I must say, **Cuts Through Bone** by debut author Alaric Hunt surprised me with its intensity and magnetic pull from start to finish! I'm ready to re-join the PI mystery groupies again!

Clayton Guthrie is a middle-aged, life-hardened detective, street-wise and well-known for both his gift for getting to the truth and his soft heart. His sidekick is the young, tough and beautiful Rachel Vasquez. As Guthrie's protégé, Vasquez learns quick, becomes bored fast, and has to learn the idea of having patience and taking advantage of the street and what it has to say. Together they make an unlikely team that somehow works well!

Camille Bowman is a beautiful and wealthy college student found brutally murdered. When her much older, less financially endowed fiance becomes the prime suspect, Guthrie is hired to prove that Greg Olsen is innocent. A possible witness is found and promptly disappears and Rachel is further educated in the life of a private detective when Guthrie goes up against the NYPD, and the dregs of the streets in order to find the elusive man. With street characters like Stoop-O, Black-haired John and the elusive Ghost Eddy, the tale picks up that hard-boiled, gritty flavor of classic detective mysteries, but keeps its contemporary feel. Is the NYPD looking for an easy win in this case and several others by wrongfully pinning it all on Olsen? Will Guthrie's methods yield results or could it get the odd detective team in more trouble than he can maneuver them out of?

Alaric Hunt has sharpened his pencil and created a new pair of heroes who correspond to the times, losing some of that dark and grimy feel of old detective thrillers. The dialogue between characters was real, the background descriptions of the streets of New York had me walking the pavement with Guthrie, ready to take notes! I look forward to more about this duo!

An ARC edition was provided by NetGalley and St. Martin's Press/Minotaur Books in exchange for my honest review. Publication date: May 14, 2013

Nancy says

A Rather Slow PI Novel

Greg Olsen, an Iraqi veteran, is accused of killing his girl friend, Camille Bowman. Michelle Tompkins, a friend of both Olsen and Bowman doesn't believe he's guilty and hires Clayton Guthrie and his female Puerto Rican assistant, Rachel Vasquez, to investigate the crime.

Much of the action in the book involves surveillance and educating Rachael in the need for patience and close observation. A potential witness, Ghost Eddie, is found, but disappears. As we follow Guthrie and Vasquez in the search for this elusive individual, we meet a number of interesting characters, and see some unusual settings., however, it didn't hold my interest.

The procedural aspects of the novel like the unusual characters and settings are interesting. However, the character development is poor. The focus of the book is on the activities of Guthrie and Vasquez, including a great deal about Vasquez's difficult home situation. Since this doesn't directly relate to the crime, it gets boring and encourages you to skip to the more interesting parts. We hardly meet Olsen and Tompkins, the characters closest to the crime.

I found this book difficult to get interested in. The plot when it finally evolves at the end of the book shows a great deal of promise, but getting to it is long and drawn out. I put the book down several times and had to force myself to finish it. If you really love PI novels, you may enjoy this one, but it's not one of my favorites.

I reviewed this book for Net Galley.

Angela Risner says

I tried, I really did. But this novel just couldn't hold my interest. The writing style felt off and it was difficult to keep track of the characters. My mom read it and said it was hard to get through the entire book.

Skip it.

Maggie says

For a mystery, it was just too slow for me. I find myself consistently pulling away from the plot. Maybe it's just because mystery is just not my genre? Thank you to Alaric Hunt and Goodreads for the book!

Christa says

This was a pretty good PI novel whose main characters were an older private investigator who was teaching the business to a young woman. Clayton and Rachel were both interesting characters, and I enjoyed the storyline. I wouldn't mind seeing this turn into a series.

Jaye says

I gave this one four stars, but I have mixed feelings about the book. I was attracted to this book by a story I read in The New York Times Magazine last year.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/12/mag...>

I hope Mr. Hunt is permitted to write more of these.

Jan says

The book was surprisingly suspenseful but I agree with many reviewers that the plot could have been expanded and the characters developed more fully. Also found it troubling that the author is a man who's spent decades in prison and has decades more to go on his sentence.

Chandler says

I must say, Cuts Through Bone by debut author Alaric Hunt surprised me with its intensity and magnetic pull from start to finish! I'm ready to re-join the PI mystery groupies again! I've mainly been reading romance genre with a little suspense in them but I think it might be time to mix it up a bit!

Claire G says

Now I am not usually one for mysteries, though I am beginning to branch out a little with reading, but let's call this morbid curiosity.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world...>

I'm curious about the book. So, the book and his actual crime are in no way connected, but it still makes a girl a little more curious that a synopsis usually would.

Julie G says

Rachel Vasquez does not want to go to college. So, when Clayton Guthrie offers her a well-paying job as a PI, she jumps at the chance. As the story opens, this may not have been such a great idea, after all.

Other than getting a gun and lots of time at the range, Rachel is bored out of her mind. On the day she's decided to quit, they finally get a case that gets her out of the office and, quickly, in over her head.

Clayton Guthrie is a little man, a fact that is pointed out ad nauseum, who runs the PI business he inherited from his mentor. When a Columbia student and heiress is murdered, Guthrie is called into action, by the man who keeps him on retainer, to prove the dead girl's boyfriend is innocent.

It won't be easy, since the murder weapon belongs to Greg Olsen, the ex-GI boyfriend. Not to mention, there have been other similar murders and the police would really like to pin them all on Olsen.

Hunt manages to take us all over the five boroughs, above- and below-ground, as Guthrie and Vasquez chase down leads, witnesses, and bad guys. There are few leads, fewer witnesses, but a lot of bad guys.

I can't say I loved this story, though it was entertaining overall and downright heart-pounding in places. There was just something off-putting about the author's excessive use of almost-derogatory descriptions like 'the little detective' in lieu of character names. Rachel, typical of a 19-year-old, tended toward whiny and annoying.

Overall, I'd say that readers who enjoy detective novels will probably find something to like in '[[ASIN:1250013305 Cuts Through Bone]]'.

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Disclosure of Material Connection: I received a complimentary electronic galley of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.com [...] professional readers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. (Originally posted 05/14/2013, on my blog.)
