



The Fourth Watcher

Timothy Hallinan

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The author of the Looking for Trouble travel book series, Poke Rafferty is ready to settle down in Bangkok with his fianc  e, Rose, and his newly adopted daughter, Miaow. But trouble isn't ready to let him go; it's back in Poke's life with a vengeance, in the guise of his long-estranged father, Frank, the last person he ever wanted to see again. And Frank hasn't come empty-handed, arriving with a box of rubies, a wad of fraudulent identity papers, and one of the most dangerous gangsters in China in hot pursuit. With a rogue American Secret Service agent targeting Rose for her unwitting part in a North Korean counterfeiting operation, Poke can see trouble descending from everywhere to attack those he lovesâ€”and it will take every skill he possesses to keep them, and himself, alive.

The Fourth Watcher Details

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Author : Timothy Hallinan

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Thriller, Cultural, Asia, Suspense, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review The Fourth Watcher for online ebook

William says

This is a terrific series, and the star of it is Bangkok itself rather than Poke Rafferty. But Rafferty is a fine literary character and the story moves along well.

The upside for me is very good writing. I am struck by how characters have individual voices, and the conversations, say, between Rise and Noi are entirely different than those between Arthith and Poke. The latter are frequently laugh out loud funny.

The plot is a bit more complicated than would be ideal; it sort of lost me at the end, but I was grateful that the full-on brutality of the first book in the series has been reduced.

Anyway, Hallinan is talented, the series is good and these books are fun to read.

Cybercrone says

A good story with a fair amount of factual information about the global counterfeiting "industry" included.

Sue says

4.5 stars

Very exciting story! Great continuation of the characters. I appreciated the way Poke let go of his anger toward his father--I thought it was reasonably and realistically done. Rose has worked hard on his evolution as a Buddhist!

The only reason I don't give it a solid 5 stars is the set up in the beginning--I just felt the book he's researching was a bit far-fetched, and really just a contrivance to get critical elements worked into the story. Other than that, it was a good story and I can't wait to read the next one!

Shorel Kleinert says

Still enjoying this series. Again, I learned a lot about a subject I wasn't as familiar with. This time the counterfeiting and other "mafia" practices of the NK regime.

Onward.

Dorothy says

Poke Rafferty is a half Filipino, half Anglo American living in Bangkok. He is a writer, author of a series of travel books with the title *Looking for Trouble in...* wherever. This is the second book in Timothy Hallinan's series featuring this character.

Poke has put together a family of himself, his fiancee Rose, who is a former go-go dancer, and his newly adopted daughter Miaow, a former street kid. They live together in his apartment and he is looking forward to marrying Rose and living happily ever after.

His idyllic life is interrupted when the cleaning service co-owned by Rose and another woman becomes involved, through no fault of their own, in a counterfeit money scheme. The women find themselves under investigation by local police and a Secret Service Agent who is there because some of the counterfeit money is American. Poke, of course, jumps in to try to help them and gets on the wrong side of the Secret Service Agent.

So far, the plot seemed pretty straightforward, but then it took a radical twist when the long-estranged father whom he thought was dead turns up and contacts Rafferty. Poke has good reason to hate his father and tries to avoid becoming involved with him. But he is kidnapped and brought to meet the man and finds that involvement is impossible to avoid.

The father, Frank Rafferty, has a box full of rubies and fraudulent identity papers, which it turns out that he stole from one of the most dangerous criminals in China. He also has a daughter Ming-Li, Poke's half sister whom he didn't know he had. Soon we learn that that dangerous criminal is hot on Frank's trail. When a man who was a former C.I.A. asset and an acquaintance of Poke's turns up dead, having been gruesomely murdered, it is clear that the gangster will spare no effort to find and recover the items stolen from him and if that means a few more people have to die along the way, he's okay with that.

The plot gets more and more complicated as we learn that the counterfeit money is coming from an operation in North Korea. The repressive regime that runs that country like a Soprano's family business is utterly ruthless in pushing its main export of counterfeit bills.

The Chinese gangster, meanwhile, is determined to get Frank Rafferty and, in pursuit of that aim, he kidnaps Rose, Miaow, and Poke's friend Arthit's wife, Noi. In order to try to recover them, Poke and Arthit, a Bangkok policeman, must use every skill and every asset available to them.

Everything gets very complicated at this point - a little too complicated, actually. Hallinan seems to be straining a bit to keep all of these balls in the air. Perhaps if he could have brought himself to pare down some of the elements, he would have had a better structured, cleaner story.

Still, Hallinan is very good at creating an atmosphere and he brings to life the streets of Bangkok in a very believable way. I've never been there, unfortunately, but he gives us a real feel for the city and its people and especially its climate of frequent rain and hot and humid weather. One can almost feel the rain running down one's back.

Sandi says

An excellent thriller that mixes the well described Bangkok setting and strong characters with a tension filled plot that never falters.

John says

The first book in this series, *A NAIL THROUGH THE HEART*, was flat-out awesome. This entry is a bit of a letdown in that it's just really good. The writing is pitch-perfect, but the story often feels bumpy and contrived. The first third of the novel seems more like a Hallmark family drama than a thriller, but, once the plot kicks into high gear, things get plenty intense. The characters aren't as likable or two-dimensional as they were in *NAIL*, but Hallinan always takes full advantage of his Bangkok setting.

Pam says

AUTHOR Hallinan, Timothy

TITLE The Fourth Watcher

DATE READ 04/07

RATING 4.5/B+

GENRE/ PUB DATE/PUBLISHER / # OF Crime Fiction/2008/Harper Collins/310 pgs

SERIES/STAND-ALONE #2 Poke Rafferty

FIRST LINES: Poke Rafferty had been on the sidewalk less than 5 minutes when he spots the tail.

CHARACTERS Poke Rafferty/travel writer

TIME/PLACE 2008/Bangkok

COMMENTS Poke is establishing more permanent family ties with Rose; she has agreed to marry him. His absent father, who has not seen for many years arrives on the scene with his half sister. Great series!

Will Byrnes says

Hallinan returns us to Bangkok and the world he portrayed so impressively in *A Nail Through The Heart*. As is inevitable in any series after the first entry, the freshness of the new has faded. I enjoyed the book, but I did not feel the gush of satisfaction that I experienced with the prior work.

Travel writer Poke Rafferty is mixed up with seriously unsavory types once again. But this time it is not the child sex trade that is at issue. Now Hallinan presents us with big league counterfeiting by the government of North Korea. When the domestic agency run by Rose and her partner, Peaches, makes a perfectly legitimate withdrawal of payroll cash from a local bank, they run afoul of the dark side when the money they receive turns out to have been bogus. The Secret Service, local police of the straight and corrupt persuasions, the very scary Mister Chu and a long lost relation bring color to this tale of Bangkok. The humor is consistent and, for me at least, entertaining. Family issues are on display as well, as Poke is faced with having to save his new family while coping with his old one.

It is most definitely possible that my appreciation of the book was tainted by the fact that most nights in which I was reading it, I was very tired, struggling to remain awake. Perhaps had I read it when more alert I would have enjoyed it more. That said, I did like the book. But found it maybe a tick below the first book in the series.

EXTRA STUFF

Hallinan has written plenty more since the Poke Rafferty series. He can be found at his site, and on FB and Twitter

Other books in the Poke Rafferty series I have reviewed

- #1 - A Nail Through the Heart
- #3 - Breathing Water
- #4 - The Queen of Patpong

JDK1962 says

Excellent. More of Poke's backstory here, and excellent plotting in the dual storylines. So far, nothing negative to say about this series: I'll be continuing on to the next book after a brief non-fiction stopover (just for a change).

Rachel Brady says

I like to be teleported when I read and Hallinan's Rafferty books, set in Bangkok, certainly deliver. Having never been there personally, I appreciate the sense of place he gives, not to mention the unique family dynamic he writes for his main character Poke Rafferty. The Fourth Watcher has a dark tone, which I enjoy, with brief points of comic relief. This book introduced two new, well-developed characters into Rafferty's already convoluted personal life. I'm interested to see whether they'll be back for his newest release, Breathing Water. Finally, The Fourth Watcher takes a hard look at corruption in North Korea, exploring counterfeit fraud extensively. In his Author's Note, Hallinan explains that this angle of the story is factual. Scary. All considered, an entertaining read with well developed characters and the potential to educate many of us.

Ron says

Gritty and realistic, this second entry in the Poke Rafferty series has a bit more of the wit and charm that I enjoy so much in the Junior Bender series. Nice inter-weaving of story threads into a suspenseful plot. The last 100 pages kept me up into the wee hours. Suspense and characters aside, I like how these novels open a window into Thai/Asian culture.

Jack Laschenski says

Poke Rafferty continues to entertain.

A great novel about corruption in Bangkok, caused by North Korea printing billions of fake currency bills.

In addition, father son relations.

Edge of the seat!!

Barbara says

Started out interesting, but went downhill.....

Grace Post says

Second book in the character series and I certainly enjoyed it.
