



# **An Ordinary Decent Criminal**

*Michael Van Rooy*

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## **An Ordinary Decent Criminal** Michael Van Rooy

All ex-drug addict and reformed thief Montgomery Haavik wants to do is settle down with his wife and baby in their new Winnipeg home and work on building a straight life; one free of the day-to-day hustle and danger of being a career criminal. But for a man who's never held down a legitimate job and who faces the daily temptation of returning to the drugs and violence of his past, it isn't going to be easy. When Monty foils a robbery in his new home, killing the intruders, it doesn't make staying on the straight and narrow any easier. He soon finds he has both a small-time crime boss and a star police sergeant looking for ways to ruin him and run him out of town. It's going to take all of the tricks this aging, streetwise ex-con has up his sleeves to prove his innocence and protect his family, all the while avoiding the seductive allure of the life he left behind.

## **An Ordinary Decent Criminal Details**

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Author : Michael Van Rooy

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# From Reader Review An Ordinary Decent Criminal for online ebook

**Richard Derus says**

Rating: 2.5\* of five (p107)

**The Book Report:** Monty Haaviko is an ODC...an ordinary decent criminal. A robber, con man, drug addict salt-of-the-earth criminal, not one of your scumbag terrorist pedophile types. He's decided, now that he's got a wife and kid, that staying straight and off the drugs is the way to go.

Ever thought about how hard that'd be? It's hard. Monty finds that out when some bad men invade his home and threaten his family, and he kills them. Hell, I'd kill 'em too, and the cops would do their duty, arrest me, and the legal system would make frowny faces at me, and before too terribly long my life would go on in its accustomed dullness.

Monty's, well, maybe not so much. The cops beat him really bad, the criminals start hunting him, and his family is in danger the entire time. Why, all of a sudden, is everyone down on his narrow ass? What did he do? And how many more ways are we going to parallel Jack Reacher?

**My Review:** Which is why I gave up on p107. The late Mr. van Rooy wrote nice sentences, and plotted well, but frankly I'm not the biggest fan of ODC fiction, and reading someone else's take on a character I find only mildly entertaining isn't the best use of my eyeblinks.

With each word I jabbed a little harder into Robillard's eye and then I stopped and headed up the stairs. At the top I booked it down the alley, stopping for a second to open the hood and tear a handful of wires loose from Sandra's car. A few alleys over, I wiped down the three guns on a piece of canvas sticking out of a garbage can and dropped them one at a time into trash cans and down sewer gratings.

On the bus home I wondered about Shirley Holmes.

That's as far as I read. That's as good as any of the writing got. That's not bad, but it's not making my needle point north, and frankly (or barbraly, depending on your mood) that is what needs to happen these days for me not to abandon ship and search for the next high down a different alley.

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**Shiela says**

Can't say much about this one. I suppose its about second chances and redemption and heavy stuff like that

but do the ends really justify the means? Was the protagonist really a "reformed" convict? After reading the book in its entirety, I think not, so...what was the point?

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## Mike says

Number 1 in the series begins with a violent encounter in the home of the main character, a former career criminal and drug user. He, buoyed by his wife and small child, has committed to going straight. Although his criminal record is a major impediment to seeking employment. The violent encounter, a home invasion, in which our anti-hero triumphs with the use of deadly force leads to problems with a bent policeman and a crime boss. The characters in the story are well drawn and believable. The tale takes place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, so the reader should be comfortable with the metric system. The first two books in the series worked well for me and I believe that the storyline describing how the main character navigates through the honest world to provide for his family and future can be exciting and interesting. However, I am uncertain whether I will pursue #3 as one review reports a darker storyline involving a serial killer and other intense life events. In any case, #3 will probably be the last in the series if a report of the author's death at age 42 is true.

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## Jason Edwards says

Picked this one up on a whim at the library. I was there to return a different book, and to kill a half hour reading from my e-reader. On my e-reader, another book borrowed from the library, via their online tool. But I was feeling restless, for no good reason, and I didn't want to leave without taking something with me. I looked for Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (the other book had mentioned it) but it wasn't there. Nearby I saw *An Ordinary Decent Criminal*, and figured it must be yet another British crime novel, so I plucked it up.

Real quick, an apology: there's no symbolism in my mentioning Twain. This is a review, not fiction. Okay, fine, it's barely even a review.

I hate to admit it, but the blurb intrigued me: "*An Ordinary Decent Criminal* would have Quentin Tarantino smiling from page one. Doubt me? Read page one." – Michael Koryta. I don't even like Quentin Tarantino movies that much. Not that I hate Mr. Tarantino himself, and he's actually a damned fine writer, so I read page one. And I was indeed hooked.

The rest was momentum. So let me get to the review part. I was wrong about this being a British crime novel. First, it's Canadian, and it's a crime novel, but it's sort of an inverted crime novel. What's that line from *The Godfather III*? "Just when I thought I was out... they pull me back in." It's like that, but the Canadian version of that.

The main character is a hard-ass and a tough guy and wise beyond his years... but he's Canadian. Seriously, that stereotype, the one where Canadians are so polite... this novel's like that. Don't get me wrong, there's violence and death and all kinds of blood and mayhem. But the plot? And the ending that sort of just dribbles out? Canadian.

The word “hockey” appears exactly twice, there’s no reference to maple syrup, and only a few Mounties. So I’m not trying to say this is any kind of parody. This is a good little crime novel, written straight, worth your time if you like your tough-guy books. Don’t believe me? Read the first page.

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### **Bonnie Ferrante says**

I don't usually read crime books so I don't have a lot of experience but this one seems different from the usual. A fascinating study of a bad character trying to be good surrounded by people who won't let him. Amazing details on burglary, fighting, booby traps, etc. Some parts made me a little uncomfortable. Very compelling. Read it in two days.

I met Michael Von Rooley last weekend at the NOWW launch of the e-writer in residence on Sunday and the workshop he gave on Sunday. Two local writers were supposed to read their work before he did. One was ill and I was asked to fill in for him. I was very nervous reading a YA fantasy romance to such a literate crowd, but it went over well. Michael went out of his way to congratulate and encourage me. When I bought this book, he wrote in it how "very much he enjoyed my reading." He was warm, approachable, and open the whole weekend. We were all looking forward to learning from him through the ewriter in residence. I quickly read it and wrote the above review.

I forwarded a first chapter of a YA historical novel I had discussed with him. A few days later, there was an email stating that he had died of a sudden heart attack. I was shocked and deeply saddened. He was only 42 and had a family with three children.

This book is in the process of being made into a movie. Michael was working on the screenplay. I hope the project goes through. The main character is a unique individual and the book would make a terrific movie. I hope his family gets to see it materialize.

So, so sad.

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### **Monica says**

Monty Haaviko, ex-criminal, ex-con, ex-addict is now happily married, a new father, and trying to go straight. When three armed thugs break into his new home before he and his wife have a chance to unpack, he has no real choice but to kill them. Which makes him a whole new set of enemies - the uncle of one of the dear robbers is a local crime lord. The thuggish cop who tries to beat a murder confession out of Monty won't give up till Monty is dead.

But Monty is not easy to kill - he's tough, street smart and then some, and he has many, many devious tricks up his sleeves. Parts of the book read like a comic version of the Anarchist Handbook - it's pretty darn funny. And if you ever want to booby trap your yard against annoying neighbors, this is your go-to book.

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### **Kevin says**

A recovering drug addict and reformed thief Montgomery Haaviko wants to do is settle down with his wife

and baby in their new home and work on building a straight life, one free of the day-to-day hustle and danger of being a career criminal. But for a man who's never held down a legitimate job it isn't going to be easy. When Monty foils a robbery in his new home, killing the intruders, he soon finds he has both a small-time crime boss and a star police sergeant looking for ways to ruin him, run him out of town, or kill him. It's going to take all of the tricks this streetwise ex-con has up his sleeves to prove his innocence, protect his family, and avoid the temptation of the life he left behind.

A quirky and fun read.

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### **Angela says**

I'm a little disappointed with this novel. It started so strong - with a group of intruders breaking into an ex-convict's home. He warned the intruders that he had a wife and child upstairs, and although they did not attempt to attack him (at least in my opinion they weren't hostile) - Monty Haaviko decides to kill them all. And so starts the whole process - cops coming to his house, being taken to the station where he was violently assaulted. The story leading up to this point moved fast, held my interest...I was loving it.

Until, UNTIL the author takes a turn to describe how Haaviko wants to take revenge on the cops that assaulted him. At first I did not know where the story was headed. The author described every small detail about what Monty did - but I never followed. And it never made sense until there was a sentence (later in the book) about Walsh (one of the cops who assaulted him) being framed for insurance fraud, etc. Monty set Walsh up.

I did like that Monty, although reformed and attempted to turn straight - still had the killer instinct in him. But what pissed me off more than anything was that the author ends the book with Monty becoming a babysitter? Are you kidding me? I don't care that people thought that this man was reformed after Walsh got caught assaulting him again...what parent would allow someone with a criminal record watch their children? Really? That is very unrealistic.

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### **Vania Llewellyn says**

A decent read with a likable main character

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### **LEVI says**

**Actually a solid 3.5, maybe 3.75.**

This book was a 4 until I got about 50 pages from the end (18% left). Monty is witty and the narration style is quick and precise, which kept me turning pages--more than I thought I was. However, there is a bunch of stuff in the middle that is pretty domestic and it is good material, but it feels totally disconnected from Monty's problems with Walsh and Robillard. He just suddenly decided to deal with them again in the last 35/40 or so pages, and because of that the way he did deal with them seemed over the top and a bit silly and unbelievable. Amazing beginning, strong middle, but kind of a weak ending.

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## **James Thane says**

Monty Haaviko is just an ordinary, decent criminal--or at least he was. Now he's a man with a new name (legally changed) and a new life. He has a sexy, intelligent wife, a new-born son and a loyal dog. He's paid his debt to society and at this point all he wants is to be left alone to live a simple, quiet life as an upstanding citizen.

Sadly, Monty and his family have barely moved into their new rented house in Winnipeg when three thugs break in late one night, looking to rob them and maybe more. Monty has no choice but to kill the three in defense of his family and when the police arrive to investigate, they quickly uncover Monty's past. One detective in particular, Enzo Walsh, does not believe that a man like Monty could ever turn over a new leaf. He hates Monty instinctively and wants to send him away for murdering the three intruders. If he can't accomplish that, Walsh will mount a vicious campaign to drive Monty and his family out of town.

Before long, it seems like everyone in Winnipeg has learned about Monty's past life and has joined in the crusade to exile him. But Monty is not about to go quietly, and using virtually every trick he ever learned in his past life, he fights back, determined to make a place for himself and his family against all of the odds that have been stacked so heavily against him.

This is a very entertaining debut novel that should appeal to any fan of crime fiction that is a bit on the dark side. Monty could not have been a very delightful guy during his criminal career, but he makes a very sympathetic hero, or anti-hero, and it's fun to watch him fight, if not for his life, at least for his right to live peacefully--and lawfully--in his new home.

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## **Mark says**

They say behind every successful man is a woman. Monty is no different. His wife and baby son's lives are in his hands. Literally. When the three bad guys break in to his home he has to defend his family. Monty just wants to be left alone. Left alone by the police, the local Winnipeg mob, his boss who fires him prematurely, his neighbors and their nasty notes and the landlord who is trying to evict him before his lease is up. See, Monty used to be a really bad guy, but having done his time is trying to live a straight life, if everyone will just let him alone. With the help of an occasional employer, his attorney and his wife and child, Monty tries to solve the problems of his corner of the world. This witty, fast-past, edgy, action thriller will keep you cheering for the bad guy in this debut novel from Canadian author, Michael Van Rooy.

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## **Leigh Terry says**

Imagine that Richard Stark's Parker decided to get straight and settle down with his adoring wife and newborn. That's Monty Haaviko, and he's easily the most interesting fictional character I've met in the past 12 months. He really wants to do the right thing, and he's not afraid to use the skills of two decades of criminal behavior to overcome all the law-abiding and law-breaking obstacles that seem to crop up. Notes of Leonard, Stark, and Westlake permeate the prose -- it's hard to find someone who does noir with such a good

humorous edge. I'm saddened that Van Rooy tragically passed away with only three books in this series completed.

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## **Amalyusuf says**

The thriller novel "An ordinary decent criminal" by the late Michael Van Rooy is a story of a resourceful life long criminal Montgomery "Monty" Haaviko also known as Sam Parker. Monty Haaviko is introduced to the reader as an unemployed criminal with a range of past criminal offences that include theft, robbery, attempted murder and drug addiction. As the title "An Ordinary Decent Criminal" suggests, the author presents Monty as a multifaceted man whose desire to be decent is often undermined by his past misdeeds as criminal. First, to reinvent himself as a reformed decent criminal, the main character Montgomery Haaviko changes his name to Sam Parker, marries the woman he loves Claire and soon becomes the proud father of a baby boy named Fred.

In essence, the author portrays the main character Monty as a former drug addict and a self-proclaimed rehabilitated criminal whose aspiration to redeem himself as a reformed criminal began with the relocation of his family to their new home in Winnipeg. However, Monty's attempt to begin his new family life in Winnipeg is complicated by a random home invasion that leads to the killing the three intruders. Soon, Monty finds out that his desire to be a decent father to his baby boy, a decent husband to his new wife and his wish to rapture his past criminal behaviors are at risk as he is hunted by a small time crime boss Jean Robillard who is linked to the three dead home robbers one of whom is his cousin and a Winnipeg police Detective Sergeant Enzo Walsh who is looking to nail Monty for the murders of the home intruders. Sergeant Walsh is convinced that Monty has gotten away with murder and deserves to be locked up for his past crimes.

In short, the central theme in this novel is the struggles of a small town career criminal that is grappling with self-redemption as he strives to be decent in the face of multiple barriers. Case in point, the author has readers following the ups and downs of Monty's life struggles and his attempts to avoid arrest while protecting his family. In many ways through the successes and failures of Monty, the author reflects on the notion of someone being decent and criminal at the same time. In this respect, the reader is forced to consider the meaning of the novel's title, and as I read the book, I found myself thinking about the questions, can someone be a decent criminal? Is the idea of decent inherently incompatible with having criminal behaviours and past? Or as sergeant Walsh believes, does being a lifelong criminal mean Monty pose predictable risk to the safety of his new community in Winnipeg?

As the reader grapples with the question of whether someone can be a decent criminal, the author reminds the audience to go beyond Monty's flaws as a former drug addict and a criminal and instead to consider the possibility of a man desperate to prove himself as a reformed criminal craving to settle down with his wife and baby in a new town. The author portrays Monty as a sympathetic character that is working hard to establish a life that is free of criminal acts and free of the day-to-day hustle and danger of being a career criminal. The author effectively helps the reader understand that for a man who never held a legitimate job and a man that faces the daily temptation of returning to the drugs and violence of his past, for all his faults, Monty needs to be acknowledged for his efforts to improve his life and provide a different life for his young family. Therefore, despite Sergeant Walsh's attempts to ensure Monty's return to prison and Jean Robillard's desire to avenge his cousin's death, in the end, Monty proves to be a decent husband worth of receiving the support of his wife and friends.

Overall, I found the novel an ordinary decent criminal to be different in that it focuses on the life and struggles of a career criminal that is willing to reform himself for his family. Stylistically, the story is presented from a narrator's perspective with first person experiential stories that enriched the story's plot



line. In this case, the narrator is also the main character Monty. The quality of the writing is easy to understand and accessible for young readers. In addition to finding the book easy to read, I also found the main character's redemptive qualities fascinating and captivating. The book is a thrilling novel with rich and humorous plot lines. More importantly, as I read the book, on the one hand I found myself cheering for Monty to succeed as a redeemed decent criminal, on the other hand, I found my moral values and my sense of what is decent challenged by the very title of the book.

Furthermore, I found that the plot unfolds remarkably well and but is also multilayered. In this context, the reader feels like they are reading two mystery books at the same time. Case in point, "an ordinary decent criminal" comes across as two part book, in the first part the main character Monty deals with removing himself from the potential legal challenges of having killed the three intruders in his house and then moves on to confronting the broader problem of defeating a small town crime boss that wants him dead and a determined detective that wants to see him imprisoned for three counts of murder. To combat impending challenges, there are intriguing scenes in which Monty spots potential pitfalls and he manages to escape out of them before they lead to his downfall. For example, Monty successfully accuses the police of breaking the law by physically assaulting him and forging his confession leading him to escape a prison sentence for the killings of the intruders.

Although the novel "An ordinary decent criminal" by Michael Van Rooy was interesting, thrilling and attention grabbing, in some aspects, I found it a bit disorganized and unpredictable. However, I attribute some of confusion with the book's content and its linguistic style to my lack of knowledge of crimes, criminal behaviours and some of the street language used by Monty. Ironically, Monty's unpredictable life and his ability to live on the edge of society while seeking a sense of normalcy as a father and husband is what makes the book both suspenseful and at times confusing. For example, Monty does not go to prison for killing the three intruders in his home, but Detective Walsh is committed to putting him behind bars for these seemingly self defense killings. Despite detective Walsh's accusation that Monty purposefully committed three counts of murder, Monty was able to avoid prison with appropriate legal representation. So as Monty avoids prison for the two murders and he continues to enjoy the supports his wife, friends and lawyer, the reader is left to wonder if the conclusion of the story defies logic. Nonetheless, this is a fictional thriller novel that keeps the reader engaged and hooked to every page and plot.

Overall, I would recommend "An ordinary decent criminal" by Michael Van Rooy for young readers that crave thrilling crime mystery. While the story is very fast-paced, the author uses language that is easy to understand. The plot is believable but also progresses at a fast pace for the reader to stay engaged. In short, the novel "an ordinary decent criminal" is the story of an unusually clever and witty career criminal seeking redemption in the face of multiple challenges and menaces. The novel's use of simplistic literary language and multilayered plot lines keeps the readers engaged and interested. Through the narration of the story by the main character Monty, the reader is introduced to the world of criminals. However, with Monty's desire to turn his life around from criminal to that of a loving husband and father, the reader is forced to cheer for Monty's success as a redeemed criminal. Also, the readers will enjoy a good thrilling novel while also reflecting on their own perceptions of good and bad. So, I pose the questions, is redeemed criminal the same as a decent criminal? Is there such a thing as a decent criminal as the title suggests?

The author of "An ordinary decent criminal" Michael Van Rooy effectively utilizes the right amount of gentle humour and self-deprecation in his protagonist to make the reader want to believe in the character and so, I ended up wishing Monty success at defeating those who want to ruin his life and undermine his self-journey to redemption. An ordinary decent criminal is an easy to understand crime novel for the young reader who enjoys fast-moving plot lines. As I read this novel, I found that the author of Michael Van Rooy subtly challenges the readers to question their views, perceptions and assumptions about criminals, criminality, forgiveness and the notion of redeemed decent criminal living among us.

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## **Rogue Reader says**

Michael Van Rooy's *An Ordinary Decent Criminal* is about an ordinary decent man, who just happens to be an ex-con and recovering addict. It's the first of three Monty Haaviko mysteries. Read them in order for best appreciation.

Haaviko's desire to live a regular, predictable life is admirable, and it's easy to care for this honorable man. Monty and his family are victims of a powerful and corrupt police investigator and a local crime boss: both spread fearful gossip and send their minions to threaten and torment. The pressures he faces to keep his promise are enormous but Monty's wife and beloved partner never wavers from his side. With almost inhuman self control and brilliant maneuvers, Haaviko establishes his right to live freely in the home of his choosing, to live under his own name, and his right to defend himself.

You know Van Rooy's a must read not only because of lavish reader reviews, but also because of really admirable writer reviews. Michael Koryta says "*An Ordinary Decent Criminal* would have Quentin Tarantino smiling from page one. Doubt me? Read page one.". Steve Hamilton says, "The protagonist is as tough as any character I've ever read, but he also has smarts and a huge heart. This is truly one of the best books I've read all year. Michael Van Rooy is Canada's best-kept secret in crime fiction."

I so regret that Michael Van Rooy passed away on tour with the third Monty Haaviko mystery, in 2011.

Thanks to the Ashland Public Library in Ashland, Oregon where I discovered Van Rooy's writing.

--*Ashland Mystery*

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