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Leaving a trail of bodies in his wake, Bill Wayne journeys across the West to discover which one of his former army buddies shot him in the back and left him for dead.

Say It With Bullets (Hard Case Crime #18) Details

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From Reader Review Say It With Bullets (Hard Case Crime #18) for online ebook

Dan Schwent says

Bill Wayne is touring the country, conveniently stopping at cities where old partners of his live, trying to find out which of them shot him in the back years ago in China and took a shot at him in front of his house weeks before. His tour guide is a girl that had a crush on him when he was in high school. His old partners keep turning up dead and a sheriff named Carson Smith keeps showing up at inappropriate times.

The title of this book is what caught my interest a couple years ago. While it was good, I didn't love it. The action was good and parts were pretty funny but I'm not sure if the humor was intentional or not. Wayne's partners getting whacked got repetitive after the second one. The ending was a little predictable but only because there weren't very many other possibilities.

So, Say It With Bullets was an entertaining read but not one of my favorite Hard Case books by a long shot. Still, love the title.

Josh says

Bill Wayne, crossed by his army buddies and left for dead returns to US soil following a tour in China to redeem the wrongs inflicted upon him. Under the cover of a cross country tour he plots the downfall of his 5 marked men at each stop hoping to get satisfaction and answers of the betrayal that nearly cost him his life.

'Say It With Bullets' is a well plotted pulp that encompasses enough intrigue and mystery to hold the readers attention despite a rather heartless and overly chauvinistic protagonist. While at times displaying cold blooded hatred and an apatite for violence, Bill Wayne is mostly talk unless the situation causes for something more. His overtly adolescent attitude towards tour guide Holly Clarke did get tiresome yet Holly's evolution from puppy in love to a stand-by-your-man-of-sorts overshadowed this annoyance.

As far as the plot progression goes, author Richard Powell does a good job at hinting at who the killer is without giving up the goods. 'Say It With Bullets' incorporated a few tasty twists which made me think twice, not only about Bill's capacity the kill but also the roll of his 5 former bothers in arms, their motives, and overall direction of the novel. This is certainly one of the better Hard Case Crime novels and something a little different to the traditional whodunit capers of the pulp era. 4 stars.

Andrew F says

"At the overnight stop in North Platte, Nebraska, Bill Wayne didn't copy the other tourists in the party when they bought postcards to mail to friends. He was running a little low on friends these days. Once he had classed five guys as friends but they had picked up a habit of doing things behind his back, like shooting at it. The only wish-you-were-here postcard he wanted to send them was a picture of a cemetery."

Oh boy, another absolutely perfect Hard Case Crime book. Maybe the best I have read yet. Light, readable -

very funny, and thrilling enough Hitchcock could have made it a movie similar to *North by Northwest*.

I don't know how these old guys did it, so easily, so frequently and with so few words. I cannot recommend this gem highly enough.

Jim says

Another from the same era as "Night Walker", the Hamilton book I just read. Instead of the communist menace, this one was a war time holdover from a bunch that worked in China after WWII.

The plot was pretty straight forward, but there were a lot of twists & turns getting there. The basis for them was a little contrived, but all in all it was a good book. There were some coincidences that stained the fabric a bit, but nothing too terrible.

Another fun read from HCC.

Nathan Shumate says

Fun little crime novel. The protagonist goes on a bus tour of the west that stops in every town where his old pilot buddies live, so he can find which of them shot him in the back and left him to die in China... but it turns out someone's stalking HIM, and using his presence in each town to kill all the old buddies and blame it on him.

Trekscribbler says

As noir goes, there's a bit to enjoy about *SAY IT WITH BULLETS*, Release Number 16 (with a 'bullet' at least in the title) in the largely stellar run of Dorchester Publishing Company's "Hard Case Crime" imprint. There's Bill Wayne, a wronged man left for dead with a bullet to the back who's come back to the post-War states after his fellow servicemen who were guilty of the crime. There's a shifty girl-from-his-past named Holly Clark, a teacher-and-tour-guide who willingly (but unwittingly) becomes his sidekick and probable partner-in-crime-of-vengeance. And there's even a fortune in buried treasure at the bottom of a mountain lake for the first sucker willing to risk all odds to find it.

Outside of that, "Bullets" fails to fire. Hawked by Hard Case editors as their first 'comic' entry in the series, the novel fails to really reach the level of comedy but admirably achieve smartaleckyness early on and never loses touch. Through Wayne's eyes, the world is a place where nothing is quite as it seems when the men he's hunting start dropping off like flies ... but not by his doing (though, in noir stories, he's bound to get blamed for it ... and he does!). With the sole exception of some terrific zaniness in the book's second half (Wayne visits a small-time casino to hide out from all of the local folks chasing him only to find he can't lose at games of chance, bringing only more and more eyes on him), author Richard Powell does steward's work of keeping this tale quick but only slightly dirty.

The book's cover advertises "first publication in 50 years," and, after reading it, one might be able to figure out why. It's good, but it isn't THAT good that it needed resurrecting alongside other tales from the Hard

Jeff says

Say It With Bullets (1953)

Richard P. Powell is another forgotten noirist and crime writer who cranked them out during the forties and fifties, and finally hit it big with a mainstream novel called *The Philadelphians*. Like so many of these guys, Powell started as a journalist. This one deals with a guy who is tracking down five Army buddies who shot him in the back and left him in China over a smuggling deal. I saw the mystery solution early, but the mystery aspect was never that strong in most of these. He does write good dialogue and there's lively banter between the hero and the girl who is a tour guide on the bus tour that just happens to stop in every town across the west where his army buddies are. Clean prose.

John says

Say It With Bullets is a solid noir set in the '50s with all the standard ingredients: Knock out fights, gritty hotels, hard-to-read babes, car chases, and dead bodies. All relatively predictable. Like eating a TV dinner hot from the oven -- you know what you are getting isn't great but it doesn't make it bad. In fact, you kind of like it. Particularly once in a while.

Ralph says

As far as I know, no one ever made this 1953 crime novel into a film, but someone could have, probably should have. Alan Ladd or John Garfield could have starred as Bill Wayne, the flyer shot and left for dead by one of five "pals" in China as the Communists were edging out the Nationalists. By the time he awoke from what was supposed to have been the big sleep, nursed back to health by a couple of Chinese peasants who hid him from the Reds, his "buddies" had absconded with their plane, heading for the US of A. Seven years later, Bill's back in the States, gets written up in the local paper, and then someone takes a shot at him. It wasn't good the first time, when he was left face down in a pool of his blood at a Shanghai airfield, but he'd put all that behind him; he never wanted to see his former friends again...until that second shot came out of the darkness.

The would-be killer had to be one of the five, but why? That's the question that eats at him...and who? Bill finds out where the five lads now live, then joins a guided bus tour that goes through all five cities. Safety in numbers, he thinks. A reason for being there should events go awry, and they do. As he visits his first man, Russ, he gets brained by a tire iron, and when he wakes up Russ is dead, shot with Bill's gun and someone has gone through the trouble of pulling off one of his jacket buttons. A very neat frame. Someone, likely one of the remaining four, wants to get rid of his partners, and Bill makes the perfect little patsy for the crime...soon to be crimes shortly after he pulls into Reno.

The narrative of this fast-moving crime novel is crisp and clean, the characters well portrayed, from Bill Wayne, who is his own worst enemy, to Holly, who can't seem to keep her nose out of Bill's business, to Frankie, the weak link of any chain who is forever trying to coax jackpots from slot machines. The dialogue

propels the story without resorting to cliches or melodrama. Powell deftly weaves together many disparate plot elements, including a lost plane filled with gold, into a gripping adventure laced with suspense.

Craig Childs says

I've been making my way through the Hard Case Crime backlog, and I'll admit I had my doubts about this one. The title sounded like a bad Sylvester Stallone movie, and the premise could be charitably called preposterous: WWII vet Bill Wayne takes a bus tour across the American West, ostensibly to relax, but he is really tracking down his former Army buddies to find out which one shot him and left him for dead.

But this book turned out to be a lot of fun. Like a good Quentin Tarantino movie, this book revels in the over-the-top excesses of the noir genre, but it's mostly tongue-in-cheek. The author writes against many of the typical stereotypes. Bill Wayne is not the usual brooding, intelligent, self-reliant archetype that you normally see.

He mopes, stumbles, and bumbles through much of the action, and it is clear to the reader (if not always to the protagonist himself) that Bill has started something he cannot control. Meanwhile, his love-struck dame proves time and again to be faster, smarter, and more resourceful than the man she moons after.

The book suffers somewhat from an abrupt and predictable ending, but it all adds up to a few entertaining hours of reading, at least.

George K. says

Το μυθιστ?ρημα αυτ? κυκλοφ?ρησε στις ΗΠΑ με τον ενδιαφ?ρων τ?τλο Say It With Bullets πριν απ? εξ?ντα περ?που χρ?νια και επανακυκλοφ?ρησε απ? την σο?περ σειρ? παλπ αστυνομικ?ν βιβλ?ων Hard Case Crime πριν απ? ?ξι-εφτ?. Μ?ναν μικρ? ?λεγχο, η ελληνικ? μετ?φραση δεν ε?ναι ακριβ?ς πλ?ρης, κ?ποιεις φρ?σεις ?χουν συντομευτε? για να γλιτ?σει φα?νεται ο εκδ?της καμι? δεκαπενταρι? σελ?δες, αλλ? αυτ? δεν με εμπ?δισε στο να περ?σω αρκετ? ευχ?ριστα ?να δ?ωρο.

Πρωταγωνιστ?ς ε?ναι ο Μπιλ Γου?ιν, πρ?ην αεροπ?ρος, που ζητ?ει εκδ?κηση για τον πισ?πλατο πυροβολισμ? που δ?χηκε στην Κ?να απ? ?ναν απ? τους π?ντε συνεργ?τες του, που τον ?φησαν στην ξ?νη αυτ? χ?ρα, πιστε?οντας ?τι ε?ναι νεκρ?ς. ?τσι, ο Γου?ιν πρ?πει να περ?σει απ? π?ντε διαφορετικ?ς π?λεις της χ?ρας, Τσερ?ι, Σολτ Λ?ικ Σ?τι, Σαν Φρανσ?σκο, Ρ?νο και Λος ?ντζελες, στις οπο?ες διαμ?νουν οι π?ντε εχθρο? του, για να τους βρει και να κλε?σει τον λογαριασμ? μαζ? τους. Και ?να τουριστικ? πο?λμαν που ?χει ακριβ?ς αυτ? το δρομολ?γιο, θα τον βολ?ψει τρομερ?. Αρκε? να μην τριγυρν? στα π?δια του η παν?μορφη συνοδ?ς του λεωφορε?ου, που την τρ?ει ο κ?λος της... Και στην μ?ση υπ?ρχει και ?νας θησαυρ?ς αξ?ας πεντακοσ?ων χιλι?δων δολαρ?ων, ο λ?γος ?λων των αναποδ?ν και των φ?νων...

Δεν μπορ? να πω ?τι συγκλον?στηκα απ? την πλοκ?, σχετικ? απλ? ?ταν και δ?χως πολλ?ς καλ?ς εκπλ?ξεις, διαβαζ?ταν ?μως ευχ?ριστα λ?γω της παλπ ατμ?σφαιρας. Η γραφ? τ?ποτα το ιδια?τερο, με λ?γο χιο?μορ, ?κανε απλ?ς την δουλει? της.

Στα ελληνικ? απ? τις εκδ?σεις Κισσ?ς, με τον τ?τλο "Θ'ανο?ξω π?ντε τ?φους".

Chris says

Bill Wayne is on a Treasure Trip tour through the American Southwest to see five old war buddies—guys he got into business with, flying cargo around post-war, pre-Communist China. Only Bill isn't out to collect souvenirs and postcards. One of his buddies shot him in the back, and Bill means to find out which one. So he's tracking them down, one by one, looking for answers on why he was left for dead. And if they're not up for talking, his .45 will talk for them. There's just a couple of snags. Bill isn't sure he can actually go through with the dirty deed himself—will he freeze up if things come down to killing? Worse, he perpetually has to dodge tour hostess Holly... the home-town girl who swooned at his high-school football stardom. Then there's the issue of the millions of dollars in Chinese gold bricks buried in the middle of a lake...

In a lot of crime fiction, the protagonist is completely hard-boiled: no qualms about lying, stealing, or especially killing. What makes *Bullets* a more interesting and complex piece is the fact Bill doesn't fit this mold: he's mad as hell and wants vengeance, but he's unsure he can actually go through with it. The first scuffle leaves a man dead, but Bill's not sure he's the one who pulled the trigger. And when he finally comes clean to Holly in the middle of the book, she postulates the theory of a sixth shooter: someone from his days in China that Bill's memory has completely repressed... someone using Bill as a patsy to shield their own murderous revenge. There's a lot going on here: plenty of mystery and ambiguity, a plot of surprising depth, and a multi-faceted protagonist.

Say It With Bullets is a solid mix of great tough-guy lines and twisty-turny mystery, making it more than a simple revenge tale. *Bullets* is a great example of why many retro pulp and noir novels deserve to be reprinted: it's fast, it's complex, and most of all, it's fun. There's nothing really wrong with the book, though I can see its humor falling flat or not working for some readers.

(Full review found [here](#).)

Dave says

It only takes a few notes to know if you'll like a song, just a few frames to know if it's your kind of movie, just a glance to know if you are going to be nuts about a gal. Powell sold me on this book before I finished page one and I stayed sold until I reached the conclusion the very same evening. This book takes you on a high speed journey and there simply aren't any brakes.

In this case, the publisher's blurb on the cover gets it right. Bill and five buddies were doing business in China when the war ended. The Reds were taking over in 1949 and they had to scram but someone, one of his buddies, put a bullet in Bill's back and they left him for dead as the Communists took over. Four years later, Bill recovers from his wounds and returns to the States. Immediately, someone shoots him. Someone, someone he thought was his buddy, is out to knock him off.

Bill decides he'll look his buddies up in Cheyenne, in Salt Lake, in Reno, in San Fran, and in LA. He's got a .45 and if he doesn't get answers he likes someone else is gonna take a bullet and be left for dead. He signs on with a western bus tour that stops in these cities. He's got an alibi now -- just a crazy tourist. He's too bent on revenge to notice the hot blonde tour guide is someone from his childhood, too crazy

with anger to convince her he belongs with the middle aged slobs on the bus trip. Maybe he's getting paranoid. Wouldn't you if someone kept trying to kill you? Powell writes like someone's hot on his heels. A fantastic piece of literature. Wow!

Jason DeGroot says

Great hard-boiled crime novel. From the opening paragraph:

"At the overnight stop in North Platte, Nebraska, Bill Wayne didn't copy the other tourists in the party when they bought postcards to mail to friends. He was running a little low on friends these days. Once he had classed five guys as friends but they had picked up a habit of doing things behind his back, like shooting at it. The only wish-you-were-here postcard he wanted to send them was a picture of a cemetery."

And on we go from there. Great, tough-as-nails narrative, with a hapless tough guy as the hero and a plucky dame as his sidekick. And a fast read, too, read it in about a day; definitely a good one to take with you on a plane, fast and enjoyable.

Robert Clay says

Nothing profound, just good for what it is: a fast-paced, noir adventure with a tough guy who does a lot of talking in his head, a smarter-than-your average dame, and a lot of dead bodies and hot lead. Loved the setting and atmosphere (post war, tracking down old USAAF buddies across the scenic Western States, trying to figure out who shot him in the back and left him for dead). I breezed through this one in all of three sittings (which is fast for me). Perfect summer pulp.
