



The Puppet Show

M.W. Craven

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A serial killer is burning people alive in the Lake District's prehistoric stone circles. He leaves no clues and the police are helpless.

When his name is found carved into the charred remains of the third victim, disgraced detective Washington Poe is brought back from suspension and into an investigation he wants no part of.

Reluctantly partnered with the brilliant but socially awkward civilian analyst, Tilly Bradshaw, the mismatched pair uncover a trail that only he is meant to see. The elusive killer has a plan and for some reason Poe is part of it.

As the body count rises, Poe discovers he has far more invested in the case than he could have possibly imagined. And in a shocking finale that will shatter everything he's ever believed about himself, Poe will learn that there are things far worse than being burned alive...

The Puppet Show Details

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From Reader Review The Puppet Show for online ebook

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I'm so very pleased to say that The Puppet Show is a fabulous book! I had high hopes, and you know high hopes high falls, so I'm especially glad when I realized not only is the book engrossing to read, it features two new favorite characters Detective Washington Poe and very socially awkward civilian analyst Tilly Bradshaw. Oh, their working relationship makes me think of Ash Henderson and Alice McDonald in Stuart Mcbride's series about Ash Henderson. Poe and Tilly just click, and there are so many wonderful moments, both funny and more serious.

Anyhow, this is a crime novel so of course, there is crime happening. In this case, brutal murders, with the emphasis on brutal. Yes, being a man reading about the mutilations must be hard. I love the setting of the story, I really get a rugged landscape before my eyes and those stone circles that have been there so long time that no one knows what they are for. Now they are used for human sacrifices and Poe has to figure out who is killing these men and why and the investigation starts to reveal hints that the answers lie in the past...

The ending is great, I started to have my suspicions towards a certain person towards the end and I was one the right course. It was such a fabulous ending, at one moment I was afraid it would end with a cliffhanger, and in a way it did, but in a good way. The book ended with me feeling satisfied and eagerly awaiting the next book!

I want to thank Little, Brown Book Group for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!

Whispering Stories says

Book Reviewed by Stacey on www.whisperingstories.com

Washington Poe was the Detective Inspector of the National Crime Agency (NCA) until a mistake saw him put on suspension whilst an investigation began into his conduct. He headed home to Cumbria and bought a small house in the middle of a field with no neighbours. He was happily leading a quiet life with just himself and his dog Edgar for company.

That was until acting Detective Inspector Stephanie Flynn showed up with an Osman warning (a police warning that his life was in danger) regarding a serious case that was ongoing. She also wanted Poe's help with the case so offered him the job as Detective Sergeant until the case was solved.

The case in hand was that there had been multiple men found tortured, their private parts had been removed and then they had been burned to death in stone circles around Cumbria. The latest body, number three, had also been found with something cut into his skin – the words Washington Poe and what looked like the number five. Giving the reason for the police believing that Poe was in danger and the targets fifth victim.

With a target on his head, Poe has to return to work and help solve the case before he becomes a victim. But Poe isn't a man who follows the rule book and it's not long before he finds himself following his gut rather than the evidence, much to the annoyance of DI Flynn and her bosses. If there is one man you want on your

team to find the sadistic killer it's Poe, but can he find the killer before losing his job, again?

The Puppet Show is an absolutely perfect crime thriller following the police, especially Poe and Criminal Analyst Tilly Bradshaw as they work closely together to uncover the 'Immolation Man', what the papers have dubbed the serial killer.

The book took a different route to what I was expecting. I was expecting the book to be one that would keep me awake at night having nightmares, hence when I began the book I did so during the day opting for something different to read the night before. However, the book is more about Poe and his team trying to find the killer and less about the killer him/herself. This type of book is perfect for me as I love police procedural novels.

Poe is an aging detective who has been on the job long enough to know that you can't always follow the paper trail, sometimes you have to do what you think is right and if that means having to make a few tough decisions that go against his bosses then so be it. He knows it could backfire on him. He also knows that nine out of ten times his hunches are right.

Tilly is an absolutely remarkable character. From the description of her and her actions, you get the feeling that she has Asperger's. She is exceptionally clever and talented but doesn't understand humour, emotions and takes everything that people say to her literally. I have a teenage son with this condition so I could understand Tilly perfectly. You can't help smiling at the girl as she comes more and more out of her shell and is vital to the investigation.

The book had me engrossed from the very beginning. M. W. Craven's writing has a natural flow to it and he knows how to write superb characters that have their flaws but are exceptionally likeable and intriguing to read about. They are also perfectly realistic. He also knows how to send you up the wrong path with his many twists and turns, definitely keeping you on your toes.

As serial killer/detective books go, this has to be in my opinion one of the best. As the killer's victims mount up you start to wonder how is this person ever going to be stopped and how are they choosing their next victim as everything seems to be very calculated and they certainly know the Cumbria area in detail as nothing is left to chance. As Poe starts to close in the tempo of the book seemed to pick up and I did feel like I was sat on the edge of my seat at times.

I now can't wait to see where M. W. Craven takes Washington Poe next in the series and I do hope that Tilly is still by his side. If you love thrillers/crime books, you need to read this one.

Paromjit says

You can always tell if a piece of crime fiction is special and MW Craven's debut marks the arrival of a gifted and natural crime writer with a bright future ahead of him. Set in the sparsely populated Cumbria with its numerous stone circles, Washington Poe, has settled into and fixing up his recently acquired croft, suspended as a DI in the National Crime Agency after being mired in scandal in his last case. He has no intention of returning to his job, but his name has been found carved in the burnt body of the latest victim of the serial killer dubbed 'The Immolation Man' by the media along with the number 5. DI Stephanie Flynn, the woman who replaced him, and the NCA want him back working the case. Overcoming his initial reluctance, he cannot resist trying to find out why the killer is targeting him, and returns to the NCA. He is demoted to DS,

working under Flynn, and partnered with SCAS crime analyst, Tilly Bradshaw.

One of the main highlights of the novel is Tilly, an Asperger's afflicted young woman, the best analyst in the NCA. She has 2 PhDs from Oxford, with remarkable abilities when it comes to statistics, data, computer skills and programming, pattern recognition and more. She is naive, innocent, having been sheltered from the world, takes everything literally, has problems adapting to situations and is targeted by bullies. Tilly is shunned, obsessive, a gaming aficionado, has the habit of saying the unexpected, unaware it may be unacceptable, breaking social norms and expectations on a continual basis. Watching her relationship develop with Poe is a true joy, both poignant and comic, she becomes considerably more resilient, coming out of her shell as she and Poe bond. Poe is unmanageable from the point of view of his superiors, relentless as he pursues the killer, ignoring the obstacles and people standing in his way in his search for the truth. He has some very dark corners within his personality that make him a compelling and charismatic central character.

This is a novel that takes in the worst that humanity can do, a killer that has spent years planning his revenge on those complicit in not only destroying his life, but those of others. You cannot help but feel for the killer, facing insurmountable problems when it comes to getting redress through the corrupt judicial system and up against powerful forces intent on preventing the truth emerging. Poe is shocked to discover just how personally close to him the case emerges to be. Everything about the novel is brilliant, the twists, the plotting is exceptional and I am hoping we see the return of Poe and Tilly as soon as possible. This is a superb, entertaining, full of twists and tension, an utterly mesmerising thriller that I recommend highly! You will be missing out if you do not read this. Many thanks to Little, Brown for an ARC.

Melissa (Mel's Bookshelf) says

THIS Ladies and Gentlemen, is how you write a good procedural thriller! WOW! I purchased The Puppet Show when I randomly saw it in Big W. I loved the cover. It wasn't until I got home and looked up the goodreads reviews that I began to get excited! Every one of my friends rated it a 4 or higher so I knew I was going to read something awesome. Absolutely the best police procedural I have read this year! In fact, I would put it as my second favourite start to a police thriller series of all time! Just behind Lacey Flint.

Poe is brought back from suspension when a serial killer leaves his name carved into one of his victims chests. What a welcome back! Teamed up with socially awkward analyst Tilly, Poe has to find this serial killer, and discover why the killer used his name. Is he the next victim? Or is it something different? What does the killer want from him.

WOWEE! When it started I thought "Yeah this will be ok", but then as I kept reading and getting immersed in the story and characters I began to really enjoy it and upped it to "Yeah this is going to be really good"... And then the action started, and there was twist after twist after twist! AMAZING!!!

Yes I guessed who did it! Yes I am awesome! (or just read too many thrillers), but IT DIDNT MATTER!! Usually it does and I deduct stars because I enjoy being surprised. But even though I got it right THERE WERE STILL MORE TWISTS! I LOVE THAT! Just when you get cocky BAM there is another spanner in the works!

And the characters! Loved all of them! Tilly and Poe just WORKED together! What a team!

There was something really great about the writing and the atmosphere the author creates in this book. Although it sounds like it will be just another thriller, something about it makes it stand out. Maybe it is in the way the storyline moves, or the characters, I can't quite put my finger on it. It is just a really fabulous read!

Would I recommend The Puppet Show?

YES! If you enjoy thrillers pick this one up - it was great! I have no idea when he is going to write the next one, but I AM THERE!!!!

I purchased The Puppet Show on a whim, at my own expense.

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The Book Review Café says

There is nothing more satisfying than coming across a new crime series that sets the pulse racing. I read so many crime thrillers that I find it's getting more difficult to find one that really excites me, but hells bells The Puppet Show by the very talented M.W. Craven blew my socks off! What a fabulous start to a "must read series". I knew from the shocker of an opening chapter The Puppet Show was going to be an exhilarating and thrilling read, I loved this novel for so many reasons, with a gripping storyline and fabulous characters The Puppet Show has "best seller" written all over it.

Dark and gruesome are my favourite kind of crime thrillers, (make of that what you will!) and The Puppet Show fits the bill perfectly. As serial killers go this ones pretty terrifying, burning people alive, carving into their charred remains, the author certainly has a vivid imagination, and his descriptive writing help you to visualise the gruesome scenes. With no clues the police are helpless, and enlist the most unlikely pairing I've come across in crime fiction, Washington Poe (love this name for a detective, not one you will forget in a hurry) and socially awkward civilian analyst, Tilly Bradshaw.

The stars of this book are definitely the characters, oh how I loved them, Tilly was like a breath of fresh air, her naivety and innocence contrast beautifully with Poe's cynical views, their budding relationship was endearing, and the dialogue between the two offered lots of humour in what could have become a dark and depressing read (due to the difficult subject matter). M.W. Craven has created characters who are unique and engaging, and I would go as far to say they are probably two of the most exciting characters I've come across in a crime thriller for a long time.

Rather like the investigation team the reader has no idea who the serial killer is, when the killer was revealed I'm sure my jaw hit the floor, I can honestly say "I didn't even come close" to working out the killers identify. The author taunts the reader by throwing in titbits of Poe's past, which I'm desperately hoping will be the focus of one of the books in the series, very intriguing to say the least. You may have noticed my review is vague but I'm hoping it's piqued your interest, my advice? Just buy it, if you are a fan of crime thrillers then this is definitely one book you don't want to miss. I'm already desperate to read the next book in the series, and have everything crossed that I don't have to wait long. Highly recommended

Lisa *OwlBeSatReading* says

Call me a psychic! A five star psychic! I predicted that The Puppet Show was going to be brilliant, and I was bloody right! I knew it! I just knew it!

It gave me those vibes, you know what I mean? You pick up or hear about a book, feeling all attracted to the cover. Come on, we ALL love a bit of sinister looking cover art don't we? The synopsis gives you that 'oooh, this could be juicy' feeling. And it gets put right to the top of that enormous TBR, winking at you, beckoning you to pick it up. This one went straight to the top of mine and I couldn't wait to get stuck in.

Much to my delight there's murder and fire and stone circles and a copper who's got the DRIEST sense of humour ever. And there's a REALLY COOL CHICK too, who wears band tees and happens to be a mathematical genius. I'd also like to mention that there's a Spaniel called Edgar.

That gives you a basic rambling idea of the two main characters, but I'm going to cast my mind back to my last read for a moment, Murder at the Mill (I'll call it MATM for short) by M B Shaw. Why am I mentioning my previous read I hear you cry?! Particularly in another book review as well! Shocking! Let me explain.

Similies. Descriptions. Creative writing in general. It has to be good. Clever. Funny. Emotional. Flowy. I could go on. I'm a tough reader to please. MATM is a perfect example of how NOT to do it. In contrast, The Puppet Show is a perfect example of how it SHOULD be done. It's creative, witty, well planned and brilliantly researched. Craven's similes are CLASS. After my last read I was so relieved that this author can write. He can write goooooood.

'The chief constable walked like a man badly in need of a stool softener.'

'He had a drinker's nose and his upturned chin resembled a jester's boot.'

If there's one thing I enjoy when I'm reading, it has to be when characters' personalities shine through and they become so real.

'Poe pointed at the BPhil after Francis Sharples's name and asked, 'You know what that means, Tilly? 'Bachelor of Philosophy, Poe.' Poe shook his head. 'It means he's a cock.'

Dry, British humour always gets a thumbs up from me, particularly if there's some cracking insults in the mix.

The Puppet Show is one hell of a ride, I read it in just under two weeks but I wanted to read it in one sitting. Life got right in the way, and I found myself drifting off thinking about it when I should of been concentrating on work. I really wanted to cancel a family occasion as well because I just wanted to read. I love how a great book can make me feel so unsociable and selfish.

I've always been a fan of crime fiction, especially when it's about a serial killer, my first being Silence of the Lambs twenty-odd years ago. I have also recently discovered Robert Bryndza and J D Barker for new reading in this genre. M W Craven is now up there for me as a go-to author as I just love the Britishness he

injects into his story.

I cannot fault *The Puppet Show* in any way, I highly recommend it. It is pretty graphic in places and there's a bit of swearsy dialogue, but it all fits a treat. For a debut novel, this is exciting and gripping from start to finish. And I'm pleased to say that the author is currently writing #2. I will undoubtedly read the next instalment of Poe and Bradshaw solving gruesome murders in their quirky and entertaining way.

Many thanks to Netgalley, Little, Brown Book Group UK and M.W. Craven for an advanced copy of this awesome book in exchange for an honest review. The pleasure was all mine.

NZLisaM says

This is how a Police Procedural should be done!

Immolation

[im-uh-**ley**-shuh-n]

1. To kill as a religious sacrifice.
2. To kill, especially by fire.

There's a serial murderer loose in North West England – dubbed the **Immolation Man**, he burns his victims alive, choosing one of Cumbria's many stone circle monuments as his kill site. When a suspended, subject of an internal investigation, ex-Detective Inspector's name, is discovered carved into the charred remains of the third victim's chest, *Washington Poe* is reluctantly recalled to duty. With the clock ticking, and the body count rising, it's a race against time to identify, and catch the killer.

Holy crap, this one really broke the mould, and I couldn't be more impressed. I'm not sure what wowed me more – the plot, characters, setting, dialogue, relationships – everything just gelled. Once I started reading, I couldn't stop, and the last 150 pages saw me staying up until 2am to finish! With shocks and surprises at every turn there was no way I couldn't.

The two main characters, while complex and captivating, were admittedly somewhat clichéd. We have the disgraced, undisciplined ex-cop using unorthodox policing to solve the crime (**Washington Poe**) partnered with the extremely socially awkward, off-the-charts IQ, introverted, crime computer analyst (**Tilly Bradshaw**). Having said that, they are tropes that I'm all for, so no complaints here. By the end of the novel both had shown unique sides to their personalities to make them fresh and different.

I also liked the fact that both *Poe* and *Bradshaw* displayed genuine sympathy and anguish towards the victims, and weren't afraid to show it – they were shocked, saddened, angry, and even cried on a couple of occasions, making them all the more real, human and vulnerable.

The developing friendship the two characters formed was another highlight – the way *Poe* and *Bradshaw* protected and looked out for each other, and the way they worked seamlessly together, was a delight to read unfold.

Prologue aside, which I will talk about in a moment, and the first chapter, which is voiced by *Bradshaw*, the

remainder of the story is told via *Poe*. All viewpoints are in the third person. Chapters are short, 2-4 pages, but that doesn't matter, as I mentioned, you won't be able to put the book down.

The prologue, in the third victims POV as he's about to be set alight, is pretty gruesome and horrible, and there's also some pretty graphic descriptions of atrocities committed in other parts of the book, so it's certainly not a cosy crime novel. The cover description is pretty much a given – **'He pulls their strings. He watches them burn. Welcome to The Puppet Show'**. If you've read any of the following authors – *Karin Slaughter, Tami Hoag, Lisa Gardner, Karen Rose* or *Tess Gerritsen* – then you will be fine. Same goes for those who are regular reader of **crime, horror, or fantasy**.

I'm very excited for the next instalment – not only because I can't wait to revisit *Poe* and *Bradshaw*, but also because the last few chapters introduced a subplot, as well as opened a can of worms, that has me dying to find out what happens next. Book 2, **Black Summer**, is scheduled for release **June 20, 2019**. I will be counting down the days!

Author has also published novels under the name **Mike Craven**, so I will definitely be checking out those books as well.

Liz Barnsley says

The Puppet Show is a brilliantly twisted, horrifically wonderful serial killer thriller where the killer and thriller is totally outdone by the imaginative, engaging and purely emotionally resonant characters.

Ok so we do have a mystery that is intriguing, compelling and utterly riveting whilst being totally hair clutching scary if you stop to just think about it for a moment – but then we have Washington Poe and Tilly Bradshaw – the best literary duo since, well, I don't know when but a long time. Poe is fascinating, a rogue to out rogue Jack Bauer in 24 whilst doing it for all the right reasons of course, whilst Tilly is socially awkward yet highly intuitive and super intelligent. She says what she thinks when she thinks it and see's the nuance that nobody else catches. Together their developing friendship and working relationship gives "The Puppet Show" an edgy, vibrant feel that raises it above any other thriller of this nature you'll read at the moment.

The author has such an eye for both plot and character development, you fall into this book and live in it's pages – there are plenty of gorgeous little twists if you are into that sort of thing and the ending is terrifyingly edge of the seat. I loved every single moment of it, the settings are vivid and alive, the characters pop, even the peripheral ones and it is unpredictable and highly entertaining.

I have literally nothing bad I can say about this one. Go get it. Don't worry – you'll survive. Probably....

HIGHLY recommended. More please.

Mark says

Washington Poe!
Remember his name!

Tilly Bradshaw

Remember her name!

These are the lead characters in this superb thriller, I have to admit it took me a few chapters to 'get' them both but when I did I REALLY did

Washington is at times a reckless cop with a past and Tilly a phenomenal data analyst (who speaks and answers literally as she thinks but is bullied at her police job for it)

Together they embark on finding out who is literally burning men to death in Cumbria, there is no motive, no clues and nothing to go on....until this pair get started..... and what a team they make, non conformist and determined they have to fight to get to the truth

I loved the way they worked together, Washington's brashness and Tilly's innocence worked fabulously together, the other characters fitted in and round them both but they, to me, were the draw

The story itself is brutal, upsetting, at times graphic yet emotional and a whole host of issues are dealt with, with honesty, vigour and (hard to explain) but a gentleness that at times made a book about a serial killer quite moving, I know, I know but once you have read it you will understand!

The descriptions of Cumbria are majestic and created a perfect mindset of images for the story and the police procedural aspects detailed yet fascinating

The conclusion was great then got even better and then better again!!!

I am really pleased this is Book 1 in the series and genuinely look forward to Book 2 and what the author does with Washington

A book that will stay with you, guaranteed, its one you will want to tell someone about and get them to read it so you can share your thoughts etc

Loved it!

Has to be 10/10 5 Stars.

G.J. says

I am having a really good run of books at the moment ! The Puppet Show is a great story, set in Cumbria, Washington Poe is tasked to track down a serial killer. He has an unlikely sidekick in the form of Tilly Bradshaw, a mathematical genius and socially awkward young woman. An unusual but very entertaining team! I don't want to give anything of the story away, suffice to say it keeps you on your toes. It's a story that draws you in and keeps your attention the whole way, I loved it !

Peter says

Vengeance

The Puppet Show is a fascinatingly dark serial killer hunt that is packed with intrigue, subterfuge, vengeance, and characters that provide such enthralling dynamics that make this a truly outstanding thriller. A brilliant read.

Washington Poe is an ex-Detective Inspector with the Serious Crime Unit and is currently serving a suspension pending an enquiry into how he let confidential police documents fall into the hands of a victim's family enabling them to take their own revenge. Poe is a highly driven person with an acute radar for injustice and often unreserved in how he would dispense retribution. There is a dark streak in his personality and he will forcefully jump to the defence of an abused colleague and be intolerant with those he disrespects or gets in his road, regardless of position. I read a post online suggesting that if it went to TV the perfect

actor to play his part would be Idris Elba – I totally agree.

Tilly Bradshaw works for the NCA as a data analyst and is quite the genius with numbers and data patterns. She lives with a personality disorder on the autism spectrum, and Mike Craven has drawn this wonderful innocent character that we really care for. In her own way, she is very determined and strong willed but appears fragile with her naive and soft demeanour.

DI Stephanie Flynn has temporarily replaced Poe within the NCA and is performing as a capable, methodical and reliable boss that knows how to maintain police protocol. This is the important balance against the undisciplined activities of Poe and as a DI provides a much better stabilising and cohesive influence on the team.

The latest victim of the 'Immolation Man' has Poe's name carved onto his chest, thereby pressuring the NCA to return Poe to the force and assist in solving the murders. Each victim of the Immolation Man is found burned to death within a stone circle in the Cumbria region. There is a modus operandi: a significance of the stone circles, a method of murder, a disfiguration, and they are all elderly men. The victims don't seem to be selected at random but who is seeking revenge and for what. To find the connection requires Tilly and Poe to utilise their unique talents, especially in the face of a plot that is full of surprises and a revealing link to a set of crimes from the past. Poe is reminded of the Chinese proverb

"He who seeks vengeance must dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself."

Mike Craven is a very talented writer that has created a debut novel and start of a series, with extremely appealing characters that readers will thoroughly invest in. His craft of the plot is captivating with layers of mystery and suspense that are totally engrossing. The additional elements of humour and colleague conflict are very entertaining but not overplayed, and the remote landscapes of Cumbria are vividly drawn.

I do feel fortunate that I've picked up on this series from the beginning. I would rate the book very highly and would have no hesitation in recommending to anyone that enjoys the murder/crime/mystery/thriller genre. I would like to thank Little Brown Book Group for a copy of the book in return for an honest review.

Sarah says

Oh My Goodness Me! Having read a couple of the authors other books, I knew I would be in for a good reading experience, I hadn't been prepared to be totally blown away though as this book isn't just good, it's brilliant!

There are so many detective books out there that I think it can be hard for an author to make their's stand out. M.W. Craven has well and truly gone for gold with his new series. Poe and Bradshaw have got to be the most amazing characters I have ever come across and it has left me absolute desperate for more.

Poe is your typical main protagonist who has issues but what makes him stand out is how he takes Bradshaw under his wings. Their unlikely friendship was something that instantly appealed to me and they are going to be one sought after crime duo.

Tilly Bradshaw is going to win new fans over in droves. Craven has uncovered an absolute diamond with this character and if someone doesn't snap this series up for television then there is something seriously

wrong. You really need to read this book for yourself to understand the appeal of Bradshaw. I can't put into words just how fantastic a character she is and I really urge all crime fans to read it.

Not only is there an amazing cast of characters, there really is one gripping case the team find themselves working on also. With a shocking and horrifying opening to the story, the reader not only gets drawn in instantly, it also gives them a taster of just what they can look forward to in the rest of the novel.

The Puppet Show is this years must read. It just had everything I could have hoped for from a crime book and more. Brilliant, just brilliant. I now have to go through the agonising wait for the next one in the series.

Laura says

Book reviews on www.snazzybooks.com

This is an explosive start to a new crime series which looks set to be one of my new favourites! Great characters and an addictive plot meant I didn't want to put this down.

?Tilly's character is, in particular, really refreshing to see in this genre - she is definitely shown as on the autistic spectrum and is a character I loved, especially teamed with Poe who is straight-talking, bold and, most importantly, not overly stereotyped as a detective. He's bright, incredibly fast-thinking and has his own problems but they're not overplayed within the plot. In other words, he feels like an actual person - and a likeable one at that! He stands up for people who need it, even when it could disadvantage himself, and I really liked that.

?The plot kept me completely absorbed and I found that, although there are plenty of dramatised parts, it didn't feel ridiculous. The setting - in Cumbria - was really interesting to read about and added an extra sense of atmosphere to the story. MW Craven's writing is brilliant and I found The Puppet Show to be utterly compelling. In fact, I'm already eagerly anticipating his future releases.

* Many thanks to the author for providing a copy of this novel on which I chose to write an honest and unbiased review*

Lou says

There are three reasons why I requested this - firstly, the endorsements of Peter James and A.A. Dhand, both authors I love. Secondly, the cover, and finally, the synopsis appealed to me as it sounded pretty dark and gruesome. Everything about this book screamed that it was going to be a fantabulous rollercoaster ride!

I appreciated the setting, the Lake District is not very far from my home. I know it can be a very desolate place, so it's ideal for a serial killer to use as his stalking ground, so to speak. I am so pleased that this is a series opener, meaning there is much more to come from M. W. Craven, I will be following this series through to its conclusion if the rest are as amazing as this was.

The 'Immolation Man' is a serial killer that burns his victims alive inside the stone circles of the Lake District. Washington Poe and his team are the ones tasked at stopping him claiming any more victims, but can they identify and locate him before he strikes again?

Books that are gory and dark seem to call out to me, and this, my first read by Craven, certainly didn't disappoint. Craven's writing is fantastic and draws you into the story from the first couple of chapters, once it's got you, it refuses to let you go! The friendship between Tilly Bradshaw and Poe warmed my heart. I look forward to their relationship and characters developing throughout the series.

I would like to thank M. W. Craven, Little, Brown Book Group and NetGalley for the opportunity to read an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Keith Nixon says

A stunning novel that I suspect will be one of the novels of 2018 if not right at the top of the pile. If you read only one book this year make sure it is the puppet show.
