

Bitcoin and the Ritual of Kyudo Archery

Beau de Rubempré

Anton Gunzburg (Nov 25, 2020)

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Bitcoin and the Ritual of Kyudo Archery is an immersive contemporary thriller that centers itself in insights about the ever-shifting world of cryptocurrencies.

Beau de Rubempré's modern thriller *Bitcoin and the Ritual of Kyudo Archery* mixes an ancient technique into its story of murder and cryptocurrencies.

Anton is a normal American man. He grew up in cozy suburb in Illinois and did well in school. When he was young, he become friends with Daniel, who is brilliant and handicapped. Anton was one of the first people to recognize Daniel's genius. Daniel grew up to become a Bitcoin titan, and only Anton knows Daniel's secret methods of acquiring, trading, and monopolizing the cryptocurrency.

When someone murders Daniel and steals his Bitcoin passphrase, Anton undertakes a multinational mission to hunt down the killer. Though he begins in Silicon Valley, the Paris underworld is at the center of his investigation. The city's criminal underclass and its tarnished glamour are described with aplomb; such considerations are interspersed with ruminations on kyudo archery, a near silent Japanese art.

Anton's mind never stops. Most of the novel collects his rambling thoughts; he dubs them his "Brain Wallet." He mulls over visiting Paris for the first time, considers the ins and outs of kyudo archery, ponders the possibilities of digital civilization, and muses on the complexities of Daniel's murder. Such passages help to connect the story to its major themes: cryptocurrencies, and human potential in a decentralized economy. But they feature random moments, too, that do not contribute to the story in a meaningful way.

The punchy prose leans on short sentences that conform to the same basic structure. Further, while Anton spends considerable time thinking, he does not say much; his experiences are examined in terms of his thoughts and deeds. The book's focus on his inner life is alienating, as is the novel's structure, which is given to jarring transitions between the linear narrative and Anton's thoughts. Still, the book's ending is logical given all that comes before it. It has a post-post-modern flavor, introducing new identities, new horizons, and new technology. Anton arrives at his solutions courtesy of the internet, more than anything else.

Emphasizing the dirty majesty of twenty-first-century Paris, *Bitcoin and the Ritual of Kyudo Archery* is an immersive contemporary thriller that centers itself in insights about the ever-shifting world of cryptocurrencies.

BENJAMIN WELTON (February 15, 2021)

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