



Blood Secrets

Joseph Hubbard

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Every once in a while in literature, a voice surfaces that isn't actually unique but takes everything that has come before, those ancient Greek drama and Shakespearean tropes, and stirs them up with renewed vibrancy. In *Blood Secrets*, while being interrogated, Joseph Hubbard's character Guyton, the psychotic killer, says, "The story is a Shakespearean tragedy, no doubt. Hopefully the authors, not just the bit players will be brought down." This little bit of dialogue is pertinent to plot itself, but one cannot help think that it might be a nod to the authors that paved the way for Hubbard; writers of great sprawling American epics like William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, Pat Conroy, Joyce Carol Oates, Stephen King, and especially, John Grisham and Scott Turow.

Blood Secrets begins when Joshua Blevins, an attorney, has his entire world shattered by the deaths of his wife and mother in a supposed accidental house fire. To help in his emotional recovery, Josh accepts an appointment to a new position by the deputy attorney general. Hubbard writes, "He had been told little...about the investigation concerning the Alabama U. S. attorney. Only that the target was suspected of being on the payroll of some sleazy, Washington DC mob boss...Josh would have full and complete supervisory control over the investigation and would make the final decision whether the evidence of corruption was sufficient to seek indictments." En route to his job, Josh's vehicle collides with a deer. A local man brings the injured Josh to an elderly gentlemen physician named Doc Kay and they become fast friends. After his initial meeting with Doc Kay, Josh is suddenly traversing another road of lies, deceit, betrayals, murder, and love.

The author's experience as a district attorney and his exposure to high profile felony cases (some of which were subjects of two books and an *ABC Movie of the Week*) gives *Blood Secrets* authority and excitement.

This work contains a few sentence fragments that can be considered the editing errors of a first time novelist, or stylistic choices. One significant error occurs in a scene where a young version of his character, Nelson, spies a bunch of wealthy men drinking, dropping outrageous sums of money on the poker table, and frolicking with loose women. In this important moment, Nelson makes a decision that will affect all of his future moral and ethical decisions. When Nelson take another sneak peek at the men, Hubbard writes, "The men in the room, their own raucous noise drowning out any that could be made in the kitchen, kept on playing, drinking—and kissing." The end of this sentence implies that the men are kissing each other and that was not the author's intent. The poignancy of this passage loses its power because of this error, and comes off funny instead of meaningful.

Effortlessly, the author weaves a labyrinth of subplots and flashbacks. He makes his readers love any number of these seemingly disconnected characters. Readers might find themselves feeling empathy even for the more despicable characters. The novel has lyrical and gorgeous Faulkner-like language, intertwined at times with the breakneck pace of James Patterson.

LEE GOODEN (June 24, 2011)

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