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Clarion Review

Mystery

Bolt Hole
Adam Gontarek
978-1-4389-3980-3
Four Stars (out of Five)

Set in Yorkshire, England, British author Adam Gontarek's *Bolt Hole* begins quickly and tensely on a rain-drenched night. Grant Reid, a self-admitted sex addict, awaits his girlfriend Fay Crosswell for "a sexual encounter" designed by their deviant therapist Hector Katychmar to revive their lagging sex lives. Unfortunately, Fay is kidnapped in the blink of an eye and Grant is immediately suspected due to his addiction and an incident of vividly described rough sex in an elevator, caught on tape by Katychmar. When a murder victim is tied to Grant via a planted, bloody screwdriver, DCI Levi Cosey and his colleagues begin to consolidate their case against him. Fortunately, Grant has found his soulmate, Violet, at the advertising agency where they work, and she believes in him. When he's released as the bait in a deadly game of cops taunting killers, he and Violet set out to prove his innocence. They intend to implicate the therapist and a trio of maniacal brothers, the Whinspers.

Readers have already seen one of these brothers, Vick, savagely beat a woman before being killed by her prostitute sister. Lumaii gruesomely bites off Vick's penis before being killed by another Whinsper brother. Ensuing scenes, in which Violet and Grant are captured by the two remaining brothers, are equally graphic. Katychmar is brought to judgement in a scene of rough justice that links him, the murdered Fay, and a former prostitute with a romantic interest in DCI Cosey in a surprising but cathartic conclusion.

Given its content and explicit descriptions of sado-masochistic crimes, *Bolt Hole* will have limited appeal. But for readers interested in such crimes and criminals, and in novels like *American Psycho*, the book will be a mesmerising read.

While all of Gontarek's characters are well drawn, Grant often overshadows the intended hero, DCI Cosey, and is the more sympathetic of the two. Even the repulsive Whinsper brothers are memorable for the vividly depicted evil they do. To Gontarek's credit, the violence and explicit sex is necessary to the story and the artistic integrity of its characters. Dialogue is

mostly crisp and uncluttered, and the action crackles. The copy editing, however, needs scrutiny and, unfortunately, the cover art is too obscure for optimum promotional display. Nevertheless, *Bolt Hole* is a rewarding read for its intended audience.