



Bring Me the Head of Yorkie Goodman

Rowdy Yates

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Alongside a portrayal of mobsters clinging desperately to their masculinity, Yates reveals the nonsense of violence and revenge.

The assassins: two hit men from North Carolina. The target: a Hoosier farmer named Yorkie Goodman. The purpose: hard to say. Every player in this pulpy, character-driven crime novel has his own agenda.

Hit man Wallace sees Yorkie's death as a means of atoning for leaving his wife fourteen years earlier. Crime lord Boss uses the ensuing chaos as a means of toughening up his stepson and nominal heir, Abel. Carp, a bizarre murder savant, merely wishes to be thorough and professional in achieving his goal. As bodies pile up and the theoretically simple mission becomes complicated, the members of the conspiracy against Yorkie Goodman will be tested, tormented, and maybe, just maybe, will live to see their own brand of justice served up to an unfair world.

Despite its preponderance of middle-aged mobsters, Rowdy Yates's *Bring Me the Head of Yorkie Goodman* is a coming-of-age tale, a song of accidental and often abortive manhood. Couched in a combination of selfishness and guilt, Wallace's attempt to take responsibility for his wrecked relationships flies in the face of what he must do for Boss. It is incompatible with his status as an emotionally responsible adult, unresolvable right down to the cinema-worthy climax. Boss's own fraught relationship with Abel speaks to his desire to pass on, at all costs, a violent hypermasculinity that has become nonsensical in its new modern context. One word neatly describes all of the men of *Bring Me the Head of Yorkie Goodman*: obsolete. They are dead ends struggling to hold onto the memory of the good sons, good husbands, good workers, and good fathers they believe they could have been, if only for their own idiotic mistakes.

Sparse, clean prose recalls westerns, pulp and noir fiction, and the cadence of another age. An easy read, *Bring Me the Head of Yorkie Goodman* is an entertaining few hours that leaves a larger impression than a book its size has any right to do. A highly recommended treat for fans of crime fiction.

ANNA CALL (Fall 2015)

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