

Buzzard Bay

Bob Ferguson

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In the song “White Powder” that appears on the first page of *Buzzard Bay*, Bob Ferguson shares an ominous warning with Bahamian locals and tourists alike. It reads, “There’s a sayin in the islands an that sayin say / If you want to go on livin, stay away from Buzzard Bay.”

In this first installment of a proposed series in which cocaine-dealing characters “continue to move the white powder around a modern-day world,” Ferguson, a Canadian expat, substantially confirms the Bay’s infamous mythology as a site best avoided. However, his adult-themed, action-packed novel is saturated with too many erotic sex scenes and too much graphic violence to recommend the otherwise well-written book to a mainstream audience.

Ferguson’s story concerns the misadventures of a hardworking Canadian couple, Bob and July Green, who are ensnared in a drug-smuggling scheme with tentacles reaching to their teenaged son and daughter and a pair of family friends. Known as “the Canadians,” Bob, July, and their son move to an undeveloped farm on Andros Island and gradually develop it into a viable operation. Unfortunately, the farm’s nearby airstrip and the port at Buzzard Bay become a haven for drug dealers from the United States, Europe, and Central and South America. Because of the Canadians’ various run-ins with cartel members, a contract goes out to kill them. Ferguson weaves the ensuing chases in cars, boats, planes, and helicopters through several backstories and to an intriguing ending.

In addition to being adept at creating unique scenes of suspense and even hair-raising terror, Ferguson has a knack for breathing life into his characters, including the despicable ones. As well, there are insightful scenes of El Presidente—known as “the Referee”—and his dealings with Colombian and Mexican cartel members, which foster the success of the drug trade worldwide, despite the best efforts of the CIA, FBI, RCMP, and Interpol. Also to his credit, Ferguson’s settings, especially the Bahamas and northern Saskatchewan, are truly evocative of the sun and sand of the former and the cold and snow of the latter.

But where Ferguson’s narrative leaves the mainstream reading audience behind is in its gratuitous sex and violence. Several scenes of sadistic and deviant sexual encounters, for instance, border on the pornographic in their descriptions, including the mutilation of a female corpse and the application of electrical shocks to the genitals of a male that leaves little to the imagination. Even at the best of times, the women in the story, such as Green’s wife, July, are treated as sex objects and praised for their physical endowments, sexual prowess, and ability to manipulate males through aggressive sex.

Despite an annoying spate of typographical errors, Ferguson has an authentic talent as a storyteller. He concludes his novel by stating, “But then there are lots of stories in the islands.” Perhaps his next book will be a bit more palatable to a mainstream audience.

WAYNE CUNNINGHAM (November 28, 2012)

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