

Capone, the Cobbs, and Me

Rex Burwell

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1920s Chicago comes to life in this dialect-filled, fast-paced adventure of gangsters, baseball, and the smart man who overtakes them both.

April means spring training and baseball fever. And what better way to celebrate America's pastime than by enjoying a novel set during the Roaring '20s with some of the giants in baseball as main characters? *Capone, the Cobbs, and Me*, by Rex Burwell, is just such a book for those readers who enjoy reading baseball stories, albeit spiced with murder, sex, and intrigue.

Most of the characters in *Capone, the Cobbs, and Me* will be instantly recognizable to baseball fans; there's notorious gangster Al Capone, Hall of Famer with a mean streak Ty Cobb, baseball commissioner Kennisaw Mountain Landis, even musician Louis Armstrong. The protagonist, attorney and baseball player Mort Hart, is a member of the Chicago White Sox, the very same team where eight members were accused of intentionally losing games in exchange for money. Mort wasn't one of the accused and for a while tells himself he's a pretty decent human being—even though he's sleeping with Cobb's wife and engaging in shady deals with Capone. In fact, Mort is wanted dead by both Cobb and Capone, so he must outwit them both in order to save his life and that of his beloved, Charlene Cobb.

Fans of noir thrillers will love this book. The author captures the swinging, distinct dialects of his characters—from jive-talking Mezz Mezzrow to slick Chicago gangsters to Princeton-educated Mort Hart. The story is fast paced and fun, and maintains the time and voice of the period.

So much of baseball is wound up in statistics, yet there are thousands of stories involving larger-than-life personalities in almost unbelievable situations. Burwell has done an excellent job of picking a moment in America's history when so many outrageous personalities were living fast and loose and swinging for the fences.

BARBARA NICKLES (Summer 2015)

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