

Chicago, the Windigo City

Mark Everett Stone

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Urban fantasy infused with Native American legend takes an excursion into the bloody horror genre in this fast-paced, exciting story.

Soul abduction and human cannibalism on the streets of Chicago lead the Bureau of Supernatural Investigation on a gruesome chase into the city's deserted underground passages, creepy places where few would care to venture. As a frightening disease spreads through this major metropolis, victims are of two types: the consumed and the possessed. Once controlled by a windigo spirit, a person turns into a flesh-eating monster known as a Skinwalker. Similar to stories of a zombie uprising or a werewolf attack, this spine-tingling tale offers a new and welcome approach to a familiar situation. Tight prose, a meticulous plot, and good editing set this book apart from countless competitors.

Stone has written a novel difficult to put down. Endless tension along with well-implemented action make the reading experience a necessity, not an option. Even a jaded critic will shudder over descriptive passages that bring to life the ghastly crime scenes, and certain explanations may unsettle a few stomachs: "In the center of the clump of long grass were bones, a good sized mound of them—grayish white and stripped of flesh, not a single shred remaining, not even the pale white of ligaments. Bare and stinking, they lay as if carefully, almost reverently, placed there with the skull on top grinning at the two cops. But what made the scene grisly was not the bones themselves, but what had been done to them. Each one had been gnawed clean and then broken so that the marrow could be extracted."

The novel is divided into two parts and is told from the dual perspectives of investigative partners Kal Hakala, who is the BSI's best agent, and Canton Asate, a Mescalero Apache who is chosen to lead the team because of his special knowledge. Though essential details are conveyed via dialogue and situational narrative, development of these crucial characters does not reach a depth often prevalent in more pondering fiction. This is not a flaw, for the intended impact is predominantly visual, not contemplative. The mood is ominous, and by the end, this sickening metro affliction comes into grotesque focus.

An innovative cover depicting high-rise Chicago through the end of a tunnel, while a shadowy figure of a man stands brandishing a long knife, will capture an audience through its artwork alone. A hint of the Native American theme can be seen in the feathers dangling from the lettering.

A native of Finland and current resident of Denver, Stone has been a fan of mythology since he was a child, and this lifelong obsession has enabled him to create a unique blend of urban fantasy and literary legend.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (Spring 2014)

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