

Cobra Clutch

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NeWest Press (Apr 15, 2018)

Softcover \$18.95 (255pp)

978-1-988732-24-4

In this side-splittingly funny action mystery, a retired wrestler becomes embroiled in a strange kidnapping case.

An old wrestling buddy calls on “Hammerhead” Jed Ounstead for a favor. It seems someone has kidnapped his pet snake for an exorbitant ransom. Jed finds himself drawn into an official investigation after the hostage exchange goes awry, leaving his friend dead.

Using his old wrestling contacts, his father’s police connection, and a colorful cast of characters, Jed delves deep into the world of small-time wrestling. Violence, sleaze, and sharp humor abound as Jed seeks revenge for his fallen friend and discovers who’s pulling the strings.

Cobra Clutch is a deftly balanced, fast-paced thriller with strong characterization and raucous humor. Its action leads to an explosive showdown on the streets of Vancouver; it isn’t just relegated to guns but includes expert melee bouts between trained wrestlers and overeager goons.

Some of the best scenes take place between action sequences and include fantastic characters like a former IRA shooter turned bartender and a mismatched pair of wrestlers named Pocket and Tubbs. Jed’s characterization steals the show and unspools perfectly over the course of the story. Subtle clues about his past pepper the narrative until he is finally fully revealed in a critical moment.

The apt humor nearly outshines the twisting mystery, as when Jed explains how he earned the nickname Hammerhead: by “breaking a two-by-four piece of Western red cedar over my head ... It also might explain why I’m not very good at crossword puzzles.” It’s clear, though, that Jed is whip-smart despite his repeated brain injuries.

Cobra Clutch masterfully blends humor, mystery, thrills, action, romance, and heart into a hell of a story featuring a lively wrestler-turned-PI hero. The action scenes are intense, the quiet times heartwarming and engaging, and the humor expertly interjected to accentuate characters and breathe realism into the story.

JOHN M. MURRAY (March/April 2018)

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