

Cornero's Gold

Larry O'Brien

River Grove Books

(236pp)

978-1-63299-713-5

In the exciting novel Cornero's Gold, private detectives band together to solve a historical mystery.

In Larry O'Brien's mystery novel *Cornero's Gold*, a daring heist off the California coast unites a disparate group of private investigators and ne'er-do-wells.

In 1939, a well-oiled group boards a gambling ship moored in the Santa Monica Bay to steal a small hoard of gold. The group then vanishes without a trace, leaving a handful of clues as to the gold's final location. Sixteen years later, Kit balances his blossoming career at a local bank with his activities moonlighting at his father's private investigator business. He's given an easy task: take an envelope to a prearranged location and exchange it for a package. The assignment goes awry, though, and Kit unearths a conspiracy involving a corrupt Vegas casino owner—and a tenuous link to the legendary heist.

However, the book's focus on the mysteries around the missing gold is diluted by a secondary storyline, in which Kit reconnects with an old flame, Jacquie, after she is invited to join his father's investigation firm. It's a clear paternal ploy to goad Kit into settling down. And, indeed, as Kit and Jacquie work on solving the mystery, they do rekindle their fizzled-out romance. This further prompts Kit's growth: in tandem with designing a future with Jacquie, he takes fewer risks and commits to his day job.

Aside from a brief epilogue chronicling the heist, Kit's perspective frames the story. His fondness for muscle cars, popular television shows, and celebrities is used to flesh out the era—though the timeline is somewhat undermined by jarring anachronistic language, as with the use of "WTF." However, culture-enthusiastic Kit exhibits little agency when it comes to solving the case; his father's firm excels at ensemble solutions to which he takes a back seat. His uncle (a veteran who's plagued by memories of a wartime affair), the firm's lawyer, and a handful of friends play roles in investigating the conspiracy. They face a few dead bodies and a brief shootout, but in this investigatory family, someone is always prepared to crack a joke and lighten the mood. In comparison, the mysteries are connected and resolved without much fanfare—aside from a showdown, which Kit has only a minor role in.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (October 7, 2023)

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