



Crown Hunt

R. M. Morgan

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*In the fascinating adventure novel *Crown Hunt*, a detective is torn between curiosity and greed during his investigation into the theft of Korean relics.*

In R. M. Morgan's intriguing novel *Crown Hunt*, a private detective works to solve an international mystery.

During the Korean War, four men smuggled ancient relics from Korea to the US. Fifty years later, their treasures are stolen from their safe house, and one of the four is murdered. The remaining three hire a private security firm to recover the relics. Among the missing items is a priceless crown. If the firm succeeds without involving the police, they'll receive half of the treasure. It's a risky venture, but Don, a private investigator with the firm, is game—even following additional murders that impede his search for the thief and killer.

The mystery progresses at a steady pace, dropping reveals to amp up its suspense at the appropriate intervals. As its events unfold and new discoveries are made, the stakes escalate; the novel graduates from seeming like a generic whodunnit to becoming a life-or-death thriller. Fifty-year-old journal entries and testimonies from people on both sides of the world accelerate the investigation, and the thief's continuing actions result in dangerous obstacles.

Tidbits about the Korean War and Korean culture add an informative element, too, though Korean accents (and the language's structure) are inconsistently represented. Further, there are incongruent flourishes of eloquence in the related prose that act as stumbling blocks. And Don is wont to comment on the Korean characters' English skills without necessity.

Don is an otherwise balanced lead, though. Various modest and stubborn, he wrestles with his desire to learn, and he regards openings for stepping out of his routine with distaste. As a detective, he has a keen eye and strong investigatory skills. He regards his agency's founder, Harriet, as the smartest person he knows; she intrigues audiences from the book's background, stepping in for brief phone calls or meetings in her private office, though remaining largely enigmatic. The rest of the cast, including the man who hires Don and Don's colleagues at the agency, contribute to the storyline without being otherwise distinctive. Still, the book's ending is explosive and cathartic, concluding the mystery, addressing the moral complexities raised throughout the book, and making room for a sequel.

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AIMEE JODOIN (July 26, 2022)

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