

Desire

J. M. Fisher

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The cheeky humor of this swashbuckling adventure will keep even that parrot reading over the shoulder entertained.

Rumor has it there's a pirate treasure on Sanibel Island and, naturally, just about everyone thinks they deserve to find it. Reporter Jack Tyler is drawn into the ensuing mayhem along with a motley group of treasure seekers because, as stated in the opening chapter, "frankly, there's a bit of pirate in everyone." Among the wannabe buccaneers is an old nemesis who seeks revenge against Jack for a career-ending story about him, a trio of uniquely named old security guards, and an attractive single mother and her young son. The race for gold brings this strange group together in a tale of greed and revenge peppered with a healthy dose of cynical humor.

As the quirky cast of characters rush for the gold, alleged to have been buried by a pirate "a long time ago," protagonist Jack finds himself tempted right along with all the rest. As the action intensifies, even Jack's constant irreverent humor can't keep him from dangerous situations.

J. M. Fisher's novel is an interesting mix of humor and suspense. Readers will find themselves pulled into the action, curious about which group will get to the treasure first and what the real bounty may be. Characterization is satisfactory, although Jack comes across as the type of guy who treats nearly every situation as an opportunity for a one-liner, whether appropriate or not. He does eventually show depth in knowing when to drop the comedy when things heat up a bit too much. Other characters are adequately realized, and some of their monikers are as goofy as their antics—for instance, Milton Bradley and Cliff Notes, and a reporter named Lois Toldmeso. A particular character that everyone else keeps thinking is dead proves one of the more comical devices in the narrative.

The overall irreverent tone of *Desire* is emphasized by the frequent interjection of Jack's thoughts, as well as the thoughts of other characters. However, these musings often interrupt the flow, as most of them are set apart in italicized paragraphs that tend to disrupt the context rather than enhance it.

Fisher, whose other works include *Dangerous*, his first novel featuring Jack Tyler, knows how to tell a story effectively. The book is structured well, with a conclusion that wraps things up nicely, and the few typos never significantly detract from the narrative. The cover is appealing and hints at elements of the story just enough to intrigue.

The humor in *Desire* may not be for everyone, and at certain points it feels forced or overdone. But the cheeky tone never crosses the line into mean-spirited, and there are genuinely witty moments. While some readers may wish for a more serious tone to match some of the weightier moments, *Desire* will appeal to those who enjoy light-hearted mysteries and palpable comedy.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (November 26, 2013)

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