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True Crime

Devil Born Without Horns
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The old adage "don't judge a book by its cover" has never been truer than with this novel. While the juvenile cover art, pedestrian title, and lackluster back cover may be off-putting, *Devil Born Without Horns* truly is an outstanding read. Packed with sardonic wit and dark humor, the story is strikingly original, unexpectedly interesting, and brilliantly written.

The author's writing style is highly distinctive. Perhaps the best way to describe it would be Scott Adams-*noir*. One could imagine that if Dilbert gave up his cubicle, took on a furniture delivery job for a dysfunctional company named Nimbus, and succumbed to his latent antisocial tendencies, he might very well become this book's protagonist, James Pichaske.

Nimbus's owner, Jerry, isn't exactly a pointy-haired boss, yet he is a neurotic, disorganized, and ineffectual boob nevertheless. The central character, James, does not start off as a reprobate. A recent film school graduate, he is both likeable and easy to identify with—highly intelligent, charmingly irreverent, and an extraordinarily hard worker. Through diligence and a bit of luck he quickly finds himself not only making deliveries but also in charge of the company's warehouse.

His optimistic perspective helps him discover virtue in almost everything, at least for a while. When he is forced to deal with recalcitrant co-workers, backstabbing managers, and irrational customers, however, he slowly climbs deeper and deeper into his fortress of cynicism and selfishness. Events ultimately conspire in ways that cause him to reassess his options and embrace his darker side. Unfortunately for our erstwhile hero, things quickly spin out of control. Everything comes to a head when James and his obtuse co-worker Arthur decide to rob their company's wealthy client, an enigmatic cult leader named Purnam.

The book's opening paragraph begins, "Although I'd often been told that a college education would prove useful regardless of whatever else I did in my life, my bachelor's degree was no help whatsoever in making up my mind to shoot someone." This not only grabs reader's attention, but also sets the tone for the rest of the story. You know it's going to be a train wreck,

but it is an exhilarating ride getting there.

Overall, the book is a beguiling read with appealing characters, a surprisingly credible plot, and refreshing effective pacing. If you like dark humor, this one’s definitely for you.