

Diversion

Tom Collins

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This dramatic thriller reveals many dark truths about the opioid crisis.

Fueled by a murder mystery and a missing girl, Tom Collins's page-turning thriller *Diversion* explores the opioid crisis and illegal drugs through myriad plotlines.

A well-known doctor is murdered at a Florida drug clinic that is depended upon for filling prescriptions. The death is a problem for Floridian pill mills, and a number of seamy events follow from it. Drug lords scheme their next moves, a young girl goes missing, and a small town's illegal drug crisis ramps up. Mark Rollins, defined vaguely as a "crime fighter," receives a call from a childhood friend who states that her daughter has gone missing, pulling him into the center of the happenings.

Mark hopes to find out what happened to the missing girl. In pursuit of the truth, he and his team enter into the pit of the crisis, the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in Tennessee. There, connections become clear as the various plotlines weave together.

The book's many antagonists add intrigue and excitement. Lena and Carlos, two drug-dealing crime lords in Florida's pill mill enterprise, are crooked and manipulative, and their scheming creates constant uncertainty as to what will happen next. Tom Lewis and Rocco, two other corrupt adversaries, are sleazy and dishonest, and their role in the story results in astonishing developments.

In contrast, Rollins's presence is arid and spiritless. He is presented as a crime-fighting leader, but is otherwise underdeveloped. His dialogue is emotionless and deadpan.

While the many characters are interesting and are introduced at a steady pace, their numbers lead to confusion, cluttering the text with individual story lines. They are not all sufficiently fleshed out; it is often difficult to tell how a character's role is pertinent to the story, other than adding momentary fresh interest. Bland dialogue between secondary characters hampers the story's movement, and transitions between points of view can be awkward.

Action is light, but the book still moves at a quick pace, with events both introduced and wrapped up rapidly. The conclusion ties up loose ends, but feels rushed.

Prostitution and drug abuse are prevalent throughout the novel, but they are not thoroughly detailed. Though this adds an element of darkness to the story, related scenes are not graphic.

Diversion is a dramatic thriller that reveals many dark truths about the opioid crisis and the illegal drug trade.

HANNAH WILLIAMS (February 12, 2018)

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