FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ MYSTERY

Et tu Brady

Joseph Collum
CreateSpace (Jul 29, 2013)
Softcover $14.99 (652pp)
978-1-4826-0147-3

Joseph Collum's skill with descriptive detail creates action scenes of startling immediacy in this adventure spanning three centuries.

Suspense, intrigue, and shifting time frames fuel Joseph Collum's hefty sequel to *Brady's Run*. In this mystery, Max Brady embarks on a fast-paced quest to catch a vicious murderer who may plan to include Max among his victims. An unhappy past and determined hope for a romantic future drive his sleuthing activities, which border on the superhuman.

The plot begins with a pirate ship lost off the southeastern coast of Florida. Three centuries later, thirteen-year-old Max Brady and three friends find a few antique gold coins while scuba diving and plan to look for more of the sunken ship's booty. Max's curiosity leads the foursome into circumstances resulting in tragedies—events that follow them into adult life. He returns to Ft. Lauderdale, after nearly thirty years away from his birthplace, leaving legal and law-enforcement careers behind in New York City. Max enjoys a less frenetic life owning a beach bar and avidly courting City Commissioner Rose Becker, but the past resurfaces when his old friends start dying, just as the city grows crowded and chaotic with pre-Super Bowl excitement.

The book's title, a play on the famous line in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* ("Et tu, Brute?"), represents a clue found on several murder victims. Primarily set in present-day Florida, the novel also makes use of frequent flashbacks that focus on Max's early teenage life. The narrative moves even further back in history to reveal, through excerpts from the journal of the pirate ship's sole survivor, the shipwreck and promising clues about the lost treasure. In this way, Collum moves skillfully among the multiple time periods of his novel. Suspense builds steadily, with evidence pointing to conclusions that may or may not be definitive, and the drama continues for more than six hundred pages.

The author includes interesting asides throughout the narrative. After Max tells his learned friend Victor a little-known fact about the word *bookkeeper*, he replies, "Max, you are an endless font of fascinating yet utterly useless information." Although generally cogent to the action, these diversions slow the story's pace and extend its length.

Collum's skill with descriptive detail creates action scenes of startling immediacy. When Max comes upon a fatal car accident, indirectly caused by corruption in city government revealed later in the book, he assesses the situation and attempts to rescue a little girl by crawling into the crushed, about-to-incinerate vehicle: "He flipped onto his back, lay against the SUV's ceiling, and shimmied inch-by-inch until he felt something soft brush against his face. The little girl's blonde locks."

The author maintains a confident grasp of the tangential plot threads, flashbacks to changing locales, and quirky characters. Each personality's dialogue is distinctive, although banter occasionally borders on formulaic. Overused phrases include "get a good night's sleep" and "unnamed confidential informant." Some typographical and grammatical errors are present. Plot credibility diminishes in the last quarter of the book, with several quintessential denouements that lead to an unconvincing final ending.

Despite these concerns, *Et tu Brady* offers clever writing that mixes adventure spanning three centuries, political intrigue, many forms of human fallibility, and determined sleuthing.
MARGARET CULLISON (December 27, 2013)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have

his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Review make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.