



Gone Tomorrow

P.F. Kluge

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Fear of failure wreaks havoc on writers in many ways, from writer's block to completely abandoned manuscripts. Perhaps it is even powerful enough to cause a celebrated, talented novelist to perpetrate one of the biggest frauds in American literary history. When George Canaris is killed in a hit and run accident, decades of speculation are brought to a head as a young professor searches for the truth behind the promises of one last great work by the acclaimed novelist.

Kluge is a journalist, nonfiction author, writer-in-residence at Ohio's Kenyon College, and the author of seven novels, including *Eddie and the Cruisers*. No doubt his experiences at Kenyon figure heavily into this newest novel, the story of a writer-turned-professor at a small college. Kluge's writer, Canaris, leaves behind his life in Los Angeles for a job in rural Ohio, believing this move will allow him the time necessary to complete his promised next novel, labeled *The Beast*. Thirty-five years later, with no novel in sight, he is forced to resign to make way for a new superstar author. What follows is a year of reflection on his time at the college and the controversial *Beast*.

Canaris's account of this year is sandwiched between narration by Mark May, a fellow professor who finds himself literary executor of Canaris's estate after an accident. This structure allows for subtle character building; Kluge deftly shows the difference in writing style between the two men. Canaris's section is smooth with fully drawn characters, settings, and descriptions, while May's is not as polished—telling more than showing—reflecting a younger, less experienced, and less talented writer. It is a credit to Kluge's skill as an author that he resists exaggerating these differences and keeps them subtle enough to avoid pulling the reader out of the story.

Kluge's novel is more suspense than traditional mystery, filled with behind-the-scenes college politics, the emotional struggles of a writer facing his greatest work, and vignettes covering influential moments in Canaris' life, from his childhood in old Hollywood to a return to his birthplace in communist Czechoslovakia. These many facets create a novel that will appeal to a wide range of readers, and the underlying question of whether or not *The Beast* actually exists will pull the reader eagerly through to the end.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (October 13, 2008)

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