ForeWord Reviews

MYSTERY

Hazardous Material
Kurt Kamm
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Biker-gang thriller seduces readers by putting them in the driver's seat of its protagonist's journey.

Hazardous Material, a thriller by Malibu, California, writer Kurt Kamm, is a worthy exploration of the down-and-dirty, dope-and-Harleys landscape while being an equally compelling character study. It's a tightrope narrative that allows the reader decent entertainment in under 220 pages.

Bucky Dawson is no stranger to tragedy. An orphan whose sister abandoned him for a life of partying and mayhem with the hooligan California biker gang The Vagos, Bucky is a seasoned firefighter with experience battling oil fires in Kuwait and now working in Los Angeles. But after an investigation of a meth lab fire that may have involved his estranged sister, coupled with his growing addiction to Percocet, Bucky becomes hell-bent on finding the truth behind the mysteries of his familial past. At the same time, he's trying to take down the brutish biker gangs—what he calls society's "one-percenters," thanks to his late father's disdain of the subculture—that may have an official corrupt connection to Dawson's own profession.

Hazardous Material is Kamm's fourth outing and his talents of tight plot construction and fleeting prose are more than apparent. It's no chore for the reader to remain interested in Dawson's obsessive quest and personal struggles together. In fact, there's a lot of mental satisfaction from *Hazardous Material*'s combination of human drama, rough-edged violence, and richly detailed and researched fire scenes. These elements all intertwine together with ease. However, like other similar thrillers, it's often hard to overlook certain details that seem either overwrought— i.e. "Next step: Biker Revenge"; old school, using names like "Bucky"; or the somewhat-constant demonizing of all things biker. While Dawson is interestingly complex, his antagonists are not so much and this can become a bit tedious.

On one hand, *Hazardous Material* seems like just another thriller with a unique topic not found commonly in other books. But on the other, its overall lack of pretension seduces readers

by putting them in the driver's seat of its protagonist's journey. This point of view makes *Hazardous Material*'s world interesting and keeps readers on a ride that is, inevitably, exciting.

James Burt