

Hell Chose Me

Angel Luis Colón

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Bryan Walsh is a marine corps deserter, former IRA bagman, and all around hard case. Back stateside after a stint in Ireland, he's currently employed by a local gangster and barely scraping by, spending his days rubbing out low-lifes who cross his boss. But he's also afflicted by "ghosts": visions of those he's killed, their final words in life nagging at him like the conscience he doesn't have.

But as Angel Luis Colón reveals in *Hell Chose Me*, Bryan may have a conscience after all—it just requires a life-threatening crisis to bring it out. When a hit goes awry, Bryan finds himself on the run from his boss's partners. To make matters worse, his comatose brother Neil—the closest thing he has to a moral compass—ends up in the mob's crosshairs. The fallout leads Bryan into a dark night of the soul, as well as to a possible chance at salvation.

Like its protagonist, *Hell Chose Me* doesn't hold back. Colón's rat-tat-tat prose is relentless. He springs back and forth in time, chronicling Bryan's troubled past and his fateful decisions. Although the story is serious, it also includes plenty of gallows humor, particularly when it comes to Bryan's encounters with his "ghosts." Eventually Bryan teams up with Ayah, a cheeky assassin who's into comic books, and who has stealth weaponry in place of her missing left hand. Throughout the book, Bryan's inner monologue—self-lacerating, laconic, unsentimental—provides kick.

As befitting a noir tale, *Hell Chose Me* has plenty of twists. Down the stretch, the plot becomes convoluted as Bryan must figure out who has it in for him. Although the finale makes sense thematically, it's not quite a cathartic payoff. Nevertheless, those who love hard-boiled pulp will find much to enjoy in *Hell Chose Me*, which moves, and hits, as hard as a bullet.

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