

Keppan: The Blood Oath: A Connor Burke Martial Arts Thriller

John Donohue

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In John Donohue's thrilling mystery novel *Keppan*, a martial artist balances taking over his master's dojo with investigating the suspicious death of a celebrity yoga instructor.

Connor is still reeling from the sacrifice that his master, the respected swordsman Yamashita, made by giving his life to protect his dojo and students. The trauma continues to weigh on his mind, but Connor must contend with the physical injuries as well. Yamashita appointed Connor as his successor—a role Connor isn't sure he's capable of.

A welcome distraction from the loss of his master and the dojo issues comes in the form of his PI brother: a case involving the death of a yoga instructor. The death was claimed to be due to an ancient yogic practice that involves the release of intense power. Connor becomes embroiled in the esoteric Asian arts as he attempts to sift the mystical from the mundane.

The depictions of Connor's practice are intense but also meditative as he moves through the forms and maneuvers learned over years of practice. The physical prowess he displays is mirrored only by his mind—honed by years of research and education before he transitioned into the martial arts. His unique mindset makes him perfect for the case, as he has a foot in both worlds: martial arts and investigative research. The danger mounts as it becomes apparent people kill to honor ancient codes but also to ensure the flow of money goes into the desired hands. With sharp dialogue wherein what's not said is just as important as the superficial conversation, Connor and his allies ascertain why the yoga master died and who might gain from it.

Keppan is a tense but steady thriller centered on a mystery shrouded in mysticism and hiding a common motive: money.

JOHN M. MURRAY (September / October 2023)

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