FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Foreword Review MYSTERY

## Last Words: A Coleridge Taylor Mystery

**Rich Zahradnik**
Camel Press (Oct 1, 2014)
Softcover $13.95 (248pp)
978-1-60381-207-8

*The tenacity of the main character will resonate as he overcomes barriers and reclaims his former life.*

Fighting for his professional reputation, reporter Coleridge Samuel Taylor attempts to solve the death of a young homeless boy, the big news story that will redeem him with his bosses at the *New York Messenger-Telegram* after he's demoted to writing obits when a previous source proves unreliable. Set in 1975 New York, *Last Words* is a captivating and engaging novel written by a long-time journalist.

Taylor seems to have found his big story when he questions the death of a young homeless boy he discovers in the morgue of a local hospital. Fighting for his professional reputation and eventually his life, the thirty-four-year-old works his informants, possible Irish mob connections, and the sometimes-grimy streets of New York City as one crucial week in March unfolds.

Accompanying Taylor is colleague and potential love interest, Molly Wheeler, who only wants to be taken seriously as a female reporter. Other well-drawn and colorful characters include his Greek coffee-shop-owning grandfather, homeless advocate Harry Jansen, and the elderly story-telling hobo, Mark Voichek, whose one-of-a-kind army jacket the dead boy is found wearing.

The tenaciousness and single-mindedness of the main character will resonate with readers who want to see Taylor succeed against the barriers set up against him and reclaim his former life. The author gives him a droll sense of humor: "He tuned in WABC on the Emerson all-in-one stereo system. 'Have you ever been mellow?' 'No,' he said aloud." Taylor's moral compass is fine-tuned to the have-nots of society, as evidenced by his thoughts when he discovers the boy: "The victim's story already bothered him. The boy was going to disappear. Taylor was watching it happen. No last words for the family. No notice taken anywhere by anyone. It had happened before, with Billy. This was going on now in Taylor's city. There was no excuse for it." The protagonist is also dealing with family issues: the estrangement with his college-professor father and the death of his younger brother in Vietnam two years earlier.

The author, a former long-time journalist, has written a fast-paced, deeply entertaining and engrossing novel. *Last Words* is the first book in a mystery series featuring the intrepid investigative reporter. Readers will be glad these aren't the last words from this talented author.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (Winter 2015)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*

Source: https://www.forewordreviews.com/reviews/last-words-a-coleridge-taylor-mystery/