

## Line of Darkness: A Colleen Hayes Mystery

**Max Tomlinson**

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A simple missing person's case takes a far-right turn in Max Tomlinson's novel *Line of Darkness*.

Colleen is known to law enforcement for being both an ex-felon and a private investigator. She's also known for being involved in high-profile cases, through no fault of her own. Her newest case is no different.

An older German woman would like Colleen to find her missing adult nephew. Suspicious, but unwilling to turn down good money, Colleen starts investigating. She finds him at a rundown motel, but she also finds an SS ID card and a loaded gun. Her case solved, she should be content to move on, but doubt lingers. When a woman with a concentration camp tattoo is found dead, Colleen knows that there is more to the case.

The book captures the grittiness of late 1970s San Francisco, in particular focusing on the details necessary to carry out investigations during that time. Colleen lurks, snaps photographs, and greases palms to obtain information. Her moral compass is a little skewed, but it always points toward justice. Her status as an ex-felon is somewhat central to this entry: she dodges physical dangers and takes on a new role within law enforcement proper, in addition to her PI business.

With the initial case solved, there is nothing but room to explore how the SS ID came to be in the nephew's possession. An even deeper mystery is uncovered; it reaches back to the end of World War II. This opens the door for the book to begin straddling the timeline between 1942 Germany and 1979 San Francisco, using the past to inform the present, and the present as a magnifying glass for the past.

*Line of Darkness* is an engrossing noir novel that grows darker and more complex under the lingering pall of Nazism.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (July / August 2022)

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