

Love and Death at the Encierro: A Harold Gatewood Mystery

Hal Graff

Harold Graff II Publishing

(169pp)

978-1-960684-95-0

In the romantic thriller Love and Death at the Encierro, a baseball player is caught up in a murder investigation in Spain.

In Hal Gaff's romantic thriller *Love and Death at the Encierro*, a Spanish festival is a site of danger.

Harold is a former baseball player who is desperate to return to the sport he loves. But he's been injured, and his doctors have ordered him to rest. Thus, he travels to see the Running of the Bulls in Spain. The Spanish setting and atmosphere are outlined in detail as Harold explores; he takes photographs and makes plans to publish a book about his experiences beyond baseball.

While at the festival, Harold meets a model, Lore, and falls in love with her. But a twisted murder investigation ensnares his interest, too: multiple gruesome deaths are linked to a prolific serial killer, though they could also be acts of terror designed to disrupt the festival (references are made to years of terrorist events connected to the Basque freedom movement). The book is mechanical in covering such background information, though—as it is with delivering information such as that there have been eighteen deaths at the festival since the early 1900s and that all sections of the 826-meter course have lost runners to death by the bulls' horns.

The book's characterizations are off-putting: Harold's love interest is first described as "trouble," and much information about her centers on her appearance. She has "a beautiful mouth" and "well-placed curves"; comments are even made about her weight. Her personality is outlined in superficial terms that are at odds with her actions: she is credited with "sophistication" and is said to have a "down-to-earth, quirky sense of humor," though there's no shared evidence of either. Her connection with Harold is underdeveloped and underwhelming; more time is spent emphasizing that he has "had the honor of being with many of the world's most beautiful women, and he had been pursued by hordes of ... baseball groupies over his career," as if his being accustomed to women's attention is enough to explain this particular romance's staleness. Harold himself is a flat lead as well: called "determined" and "a man who never gave up," his love for baseball remains his defining trait. Still, the murder investigation changes Harold's life and career goals, giving him a new sense of purpose.

In the frenetic thriller *Love and Death at the Encierro*, a former baseball player is caught up in a murder investigation in Spain.

ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (June 22, 2023)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.