



New Blue

John D. Drake

Kevin C. Kozak

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New Blue is a realistic novel about the vicissitudes of a rookie policeman's year.

John D. Drake and Kevin C. Kozak's picaresque novel *New Blue* concerns the rookie year of a police officer in a Florida beach town.

The novel, which is set in Fortuna Beach, has elements of a police procedural, a black comedy, and a coming-of-age tale, though it's most concerned with its character study of a first-year cop, Jerry. Jerry starts out as a know-it-all nineteen-year-old from a middle-class family with local connections, but his experiences on the job teach him humility and respect for the complexities of police work. In the process, he experiences the emotional turbulence of a thankless job: he suffers and triumphs, and feels alternately weary and full of new energy. He's chewed out by his captain, and he comes close to quitting and burning out, but he also learns to love wearing blue.

Short chapters move the story along at a brisk pace. Their trajectory seems aimless—more concerned with presenting snapshots of Jerry's career than following a clear plot. Still, they are potent because of the realism of their portrayals of Jerry's job. One covers police boot camp with intriguing details; another is a touching scene in which a police veteran gives Jerry sage advice.

Jerry is flippant, and the writing often matches his attitude. This is most true at the beginning of the novel, when Jerry discusses his growth from a headstrong kid into a college-age recruit. The text matures as Jerry matures, matching the story's emphasis on how one's state of mind contributes to, and influences, the job.

But the book's straightforward sequencing does not mean that its plot is straightforward; Jerry's life and work are not subject to overarching themes beyond the truth of his experiences. The book's passages of dialogue seem ripped from real-life experiences, and its descriptions of crimes are often more mundane than sensationalist. A prolonged examination of Jerry's psychology factors in, complemented by the fact that he's always talking about his day and his plans, and is always earnest about his emotions.

Rather than ending per se, the book leads into a new assignment for Jerry, hammering home the ouroboros nature of police work. Jerry is forced to drop personal matters and respond to a fellow officer in distress—a reminder that nothing ever ends until you retire.

Functioning as commentary on the nature of police work, *New Blue* is a realistic novel about the vicissitudes of a rookie policeman's year.

BENJAMIN WELTON (May 25, 2021)

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