

Paradise Cove

Davin Goodwin

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With propulsive energy, Davin Goodwin's murder mystery *Paradise Cove* covers a wave of violence on a tropical island, Bonaire.

R, a retired detective, runs a small hotel on Bonaire, where he pursues scuba diving and tries to put police work behind him. But after a diving instructor's leg washes ashore, R's commitment to his friends obligates him to help solve the case. A romance with Arabella, an ambitious officer, complicates his efforts.

The story is told in R's staccato, hard-drinking voice, peppered with just enough humor and self-doubt to make him likable. His frequent mentions of drinking beer are repetitive, but his memory for details and loyalty to his friends make him reliable. And the emotional entanglements and backstories of the rest of the cast contribute to his investigation: a local police inspector, for example, suspects his wife of infidelity; he trades police records for R's promise to track her activities.

When the police inspector's wife turns up dead, too, R suspects that the murders are connected. His increasing sense of urgency about identifying the killer clashes with Bonaire's laid-back, "island time" culture, which is marred by the violence. R's swift inquiries are marked by snappy exchanges and complemented by the book's concise structure: its short descriptive passages often focus on physical actions, like swimming and diving, that are a perfect match with the novel's visceral events.

The island residents' assumptions about the faces of evil are tested as the gruesome body count rises in *Paradise Cove*. As R and Arabella uncover the truth, the boundaries between police and civilian identities blur, raising thematic questions about how much—or how little—one person can accomplish alone.

Paradise Cove is an exciting murder mystery set on a tropical island, where human fallibility and connection take center stage.

MICHELE SHARPE (March / April 2022)

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