

Red Sunset Drive: A Ghost and a Cop Series

Jan Walters

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Evil flickers throughout Red Sunset Drive—not an edge-of-your-seat thriller, but one that does involve an entertaining chase.

Jan Walters's *Red Sunset Drive* is a paranormal mystery set in dreary Middle America and packed with cop drama, blossoming love, some humor, and a few chilling scenes.

The story follows Detective Brett O'Shea and the ghost of his great-grandfather, Detective Michael O'Shea, on a bizarre case. Lisa, Brett's love interest and an ambitious young reporter, becomes part of the investigation. Brett's friend Candy, a spunky, talented private investigator, also joins the hunt. In a world where the living and the supernatural coexist, a surprisingly harmonious task force aligns.

A serial killer is targeting prostitutes. The Des Moines Police Department has no leads. The search is underway, but the only clue O'Shea has to go on is the outlandish claim of a smug archaeologist, John Allen, who believes a vampire is responsible.

At first O'Shea doesn't take the ranting of this Indiana Jones wannabe seriously, even though the victims' causes of death are exsanguination from giant neck wounds. Then a stranger arrives in town, and the O'Shea duo question whether he's there to help solve the case or is the killer.

The dark imagery and sinister lettering on the cover capture the eerie nature of the book. Without ever gaining or losing momentum, the pace of the novel moves steadily forward. The leading characters come to life as striking and endearing.

Humor is attempted throughout the narrative and is often successful. The most memorable moments are in scenes that evoke the senses: "Coldness seeped through his body. His heart stuttered. He no longer saw objects—only shadows."

The narrative progresses effortlessly from scene to scene. Walters's cinematic style constructs a visual journey as the characters navigate through dangerous territory. The damp and dismal setting takes on a life of its own. Description is vibrant, whether in the dank cave at the dig site headed by Allen, at the smoke-filled whorehouse, or within the earnest confines of the precinct.

The playful manner in which many of the characters interact is juxtaposed with the unnerving mood of the story. Scenes containing sexual content are often accompanied by violence. The more lighthearted moments when the narrative shifts toward romance are refreshing breaks from the gloom.

Repetition of certain phrases gets tedious, and grammatical errors are disruptive. With the investigation driving the story, character development and relationships are not fully explored. Some of the narrative details feel unnecessary, fight scenes drag, and dialogue is unrealistic at times, especially in conversations between Lisa and Candy.

When a consortium of law enforcers and vigilantes has to put aside their differences to eradicate a killer, their trust in each other is put to the test. Evil flickers throughout *Red Sunset Drive*—not an edge-of-your-seat thriller, but one that does involve an entertaining chase.

BRITTNEY DECKER (April 20, 2017)

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