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Clarion Review ★★★★½ **MYSTERY**

Shank

Steve Williams
CreateSpace (Oct 4, 2017)
Softcover $12.99 (330pp)
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A suspenseful police thriller, Shank *mixes humor and drama.*

Shank is the latest thriller from Steve Williams. Both suspenseful and entertaining, its story follows police partners Sal Mitchell and Eddie Sandovan as they evade assassins, solve homicides, and try to lead normal lives.

Shank opens with the devastating news that Mitchell's mother has been killed in a helicopter crash in Costa Rica—and that she was an artist worth millions. This information sets off a chain of events for Mitchell legally and emotionally, as he struggles to deal with never reconciling with or truly getting to know her. Meanwhile, an assassin has been sent to kill him for past transgressions, so he's also fighting for his life.

The novel is a series installment, and while most of it can be read alone and thoroughly enjoyed, many of its relationships and events were established in previous books. Cursory details keep the plot moving, and while the action is thrilling, the causes behind dangerous scenes will be most clear to those well versed in the series.

An antagonist, Kerak Daniluk, has his story line woven in. He is shown to be driven by grief over his son's death and a thirst for vengeance, but is otherwise somewhat obscure. The two stories do not connect until late in the novel, creating an enormous amount of largely unresolved buildup.

Both Kerak and Mitchell experience highs and lows, successes and failures, and even brief moments of normalcy within their chaotic worlds. More depth is given to Mitchell's story, though Kerak's background is sufficiently established, making his motivations clear as well. Both characters develop well through the course of the narrative. Multidimensional points of view and explorations of inner thoughts all help to flesh the leads out.

From witty banter to deep conversations, the novel's dialogue is a particular delight. Jokes and conversations tend to be succinct, with equal parts seriousness and humor; they define the tenor of character relationships and add a nice layer to the prose. Even background, descriptive paragraphs tend to be broken up by short pieces of dialogue, which serve to maintain the story's steady flow.

Suspense and momentum stay sharp throughout the book's many twists and turns. Chapters are short, sticking to singular perspectives and resulting in quick doses of action. The plot is consistently exciting. Relationships and crimes are reconciled tidily, leading to a very satisfying conclusion.

A suspenseful police thriller, *Shank* mixes humor and drama for a fast-paced and fun read.

JENNIFER MILLER (October 18, 2017)

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