FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Six-Pound Walleye
Elizabeth Gunn
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Was it an accident, or did someone deliberately gun down the seven-year-old boy waiting in front of his home for the school bus? One thing seems sure: police detective Jake Hines can't blame this tragedy on SAD (seasonal affective disorder), an affliction to which he's been giving much thought.

"I know the chief dismisses SAD as a piece of medical quackery," Hines muses, "but personally I think there's something to it." In Rutherford, Minnesota, where Hines works, he knows that the short, sun-bereft winter days can drive people to do strange things. "Old grievances and bitter regrets creep along the street in the lengthening shadows and pounce on me like predatory beasts," he admits.

Naturally, Hines has more than the shooting to keep his mind occupied. There's been a student brawl at the high school involving the police chief's rebellious son. More chilling still, Hines's live-in girlfriend, Trudy, has just signaled her discontent with him by hurling his warm boots out into the snow.

Six-Pound Walleye is Gunn's fourth Jake Hines mystery. She has endowed her detective with the easy amiability of a small-town cop and the energy and technical grasp of a metropolitan crime-buster. Raised in foster homes, Hines still has his share of insecurities, sometimes drinking far too much to relieve them. But he is tenacious in his pursuit of a case and masterful in leading his crime team. The original crime and Hines's own tough upbringing provide a forum for the author to thread in some wise—but fitting—observations about the fragility and resilience of children.

Gunn never succumbs to that common flaw of police procedurals: dwelling excessively on process, technique, and departmental politics. She relates just enough of these to establish authenticity, and then it's on with the chase. The story flows swiftly to a conclusion that not only surprises but shocks with its violence.

Edward Morris