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Thriller

Souls on the Wind
Roger L. Conlee
Pale Horse Books
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The Civil War, past lives, Austria's Crown Jewels, and a story of love that transcends even the greediest of souls all converge in this satisfying thriller by Roger L. Conlee.

The book finds narcotics police officer and history buff Tom Cavanaugh and his fiancée, the plucky Cass Nesbit, traveling to Germany and Vienna to return a precious jewel—the beguiling Maria Theresa Emerald—to its rightful owners. But Tom—who's begun having oddly realistic dreams about being a soldier during the Civil War—soon uncovers a nefarious plot by someone who wants the priceless gem, at any cost. And then the Föhn begins to blow.

> *The waiter told them the Föhn was blowing, a warm wind from the south that made people do strange things. 'They go a bit crazy, ja? It is on nights like this that stifled little husbands finger the edge of a kitchen knife and contemplate their wives' necks.'*

Legend has it that the souls of the dead ride the Föhn, something the pragmatic Tom doubts. The "lanky narcotics cop who'd rather be teaching history" is always on alert, doubtful of everyone, casing joints with his reflexive cop's instincts; Cass, with her more tolerant nature and quick wit, is a smart foil for Tom, and gives the book a softer, more feminine edge and point of view.

A former journalist for the Chicago Daily News and San Diego Evening Tribune, Conlee has authored three other books, two of which took prizes in the San Diego Book Awards. Souls on the Wind will appeal to fans of suspense who like to exercise their brains while reading, whether it be learning about symbols, a la Dan Brown, the stark landscape of Sweden, a la Stieg Larsson, or history tinged with a bit of science fiction, as in Conlee's tale. The only time the author stumbles is in the beginning of the tome, when he keeps reinforcing how the emerald gives people the power to travel through time, and when some of the dialogue between Tom and

Cass feels a bit forced. Otherwise, Conlee is masterful at weaving suspense throughout the pages; a number of fast-paced twists and turns will have the reader gasping and constantly questioning the motives of the people around the main characters.

How the souls and ancillary characters are bound through time becomes clear in the final pages, as Conlee pulls the threads of the novel's narrative arc into a satisfying conclusion while the Santa Ana winds—California's version of the Föhn—"kiss" Tom's cheek. The book is a gratifying, quick read—no words are wasted here—leaving fans thirsting for more adventures with Tom and Cass.

Dana Rae Laverty