

Stalked

Robert Wangard

Ampersand (May 8, 2015)

Softcover \$17.95 (320pp)

978-0-9905603-9-5

Wangard is an impeccable writer who strategically maintains a steady dose of suspense.

Stalked, by Robert Wangard, is the fifth book in a series of mystery/suspense novels featuring Pete Thorsen, a corporate lawyer who's moved from Chicago to a lakefront cabin in northern Michigan. It's a fascinating page-turner with many unexpected twists and turns.

Threats to Thorsen begin on the very first page, when an ominous note and a bag of blood are thrown at his door in the wee hours. The note jangles his nerves. "Is this what your blood looks like, Pete?" it reads. But this incident is just the first in a series of menacing events. When a knife and note are found stuck in the door of his stepdaughter's dorm, Thorsen's protective fatherly instincts go into overdrive, and he stops at nothing to figure out the culprit's identity. Luckily, Thorsen has a brilliant legal mind, and uses it quite frequently as he begins a journey through his past and into the present to uncover the stalker.

Stalked includes quite a few imaginative—if not crazy—characters, such as Calvin Seitz, a possible suspect who drives around with a smoothbore (gun) in his old truck and goes squirrel hunting at night. And there are the colorful owners of Heavenly Meadows ranch, Higgle and Sunshine, who suffer a significant loss but truly enhance the story with their eccentricities. What makes this book fascinating is that most of the detective work is done by Thorsen himself, due to a short-staffed police department; and by Richter, the local sheriff, who dislikes him immensely. The shady methods Thorsen employs to research his suspects and gain information are exciting and sometimes dangerous, but he does find his answers. He eventually discovers who is stalking him, leading to a dramatic ending.

The main character is likable and well-described as a handsome, intellectual man in good physical shape. However, delving a bit into his past and painful losses would shed light on his drive and his passion for justice. Thorsen's late wife is an elusive figure whose life and demise are left unexplored. Knowing what happened to her would enhance the story and enable empathy for Thorsen, who was definitely a victim. The storyline would also benefit from examination of his troubled relationships with Richter and Seitz, although Wangard does a terrific job of describing his main character's adversaries in great detail. And Thorsen's social relationships are few but solid, with the exception of the one person who eventually betrays him.

Wangard is an impeccable writer who strategically maintains a steady dose of suspense, brilliantly enhanced by frequent displays of legal expertise—attributable to both the author and main character being lawyers, giving *Stalked* the feel of a John Grisham novel.

This suspenseful mystery could be read by all ages; it's G-rated, but best enjoyed by adults.

TINA VOLPE (July 15, 2015)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.