

Sunshine State: A Jake Longly Thriller

D. P. Lyle

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In D. P. Lyle's engrossing *Sunshine State*, a team goes undercover to solve a layered mystery.

Reluctant but effective PI Jake Longly journeys to a sleepy Florida town to prove that a murderer didn't commit all of the crimes credited to him. Billy Wayne Baker—a self-confessed and convicted serial killer—professes that he only killed five people. Longly and his allies discover that Baker's MO demanded one kill per town before he moved on to the next—but in Pine Key, three women were murdered. Longly and his girlfriend adopt documentarian personas to ascertain if Baker is playing games or if someone used his killing spree as a cover.

The unlikely premise becomes an interesting hook for Longly Investigations, whose team focuses on determining which of Pine Key's seemingly benign citizens had the means and motive to take advantage of Baker's killing spree. Longly and crew's cover allows them to interview and investigate without raising flags until they uncover key evidence. Another murder occurs, leading to a satisfying climax.

This mystery is the third in its series, providing strong context and characterization to entice new readers. The relationships between the major characters build well, with subtle callbacks to previous adventures. Longly anchors the story alongside his girlfriend and PI father.

The social dynamics of Pine Key steal the spotlight. Following Longly's investigation provides ample opportunity for humanizing and casting doubt on several of the townspeople, and multiple suspects rise to the top, even though the team struggles to find proof. Snappy dialogue, fantastic scene setting, and polished prose set the action without hampering the pace.

Sunshine State is an enjoyable murder mystery filled with heart and humor.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May/June 2019)

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