ForeWord Reviews

MYSTERY

Swan Dive
Michael Burke
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Michael Burke's debut novel, *Swan Dive*, is a deft turn into the modern-day hardboiled detective novel. Pay-ing homage to classic crime writers like Dashiell Hammet and Raymond Chandler, Burke delivers neo-noir that is a little more humorous, a little more risqué, and little more high tech than classic noir. Johnny Heron, also called Blue by friends and colleagues, is a downtrodden private eye with a penchant for women and late night stops at the local Pharm-a-Lot for a nightly dose of sleeping pills. What makes this combination tolerable is Heron's self-deprecating sarcasm and the recognition that he can't rely solely on his own intelligence.

During a routine job—keeping tabs on a man's son—Heron stumbles into a labyrinthine maze of high stakes deceit. George Fuller, head of Fuller Investment Company, hires Heron to ensure that his son Castor Fuller is not having an affair that would endanger his pending marriage to Beverly Whitney. Heron discovers that Beverly Whitney's father, Douglas Whitney of Whitney and Whitney Investments, is in a business deal with George Fuller. And the more Heron tails Castor, the more he learns that this marriage and business merger of Whitney and Fuller is not what it seems. To figure out everyone's motives, Heron enlists the help of some former colleagues at the local police department: Inspector Kathy McGregor, ace researcher, and Chief Inspector, JJ Cakes, Heron's friend and protector. Heron also depends on Henry Cadman, a.k.a. 'Doctor Dollar', a chubby and disheveled financial wizard who gives Heron the inside scoop on the Whitney-Fuller merger.

Judge Plumworth, the judge presiding over the merger, perfects the triangle of intrigue. In the tradition of hardboiled detectives, Heron gets himself involved with a few of the beautiful women who are integral pieces in a deadly game of chess. Helen Plumworth, the stunning, lanky blond daughter of Judge Plumworth, gets under Heron's skin and becomes an unlikely heroine. But Heron's fickle heart is most at home with Inspector Kathy, who is a perfect match for Heron's mind and body. Throw in a couple more conniving seductresses and this romp is complete.

Burke has penned an entertainingly updated version of the noir genre. Johnny Heron is a

man’s man and this is a satisfying read for those who miss the crafty yet cavalier women-chasing private eyes of the pulp fiction era.