



The Bird Boys: A Delpha Wade and Tom Phelan Mystery

Lisa Sandlin

Cinco Puntos Press (Jul 16, 2019)

Softcover \$16.95 (306pp)

978-1-947627-13-0

In Lisa Sandlin's spare mystery *The Bird Boys*, a two detective team tackles cases and learns how to work together.

Delpha and Tom have settled into a normal routine with their detective agency, with some exceptions. Then an elderly man hires them to find his missing brother. The brother turns out not to be missing, but hiding, and the mystery around him deepens into surprising darkness.

Set in 1970s Texas, the story places Tom and Delpha in interesting circumstances and finds them grappling with tough choices. Delpha once killed someone in self defense, and her past incarceration, and Tom's connection to the chief of police, layer in compelling character dynamics. Delpha steals the spotlight as she attempts to prove her value to society, Tom, and herself. She refuses to let anyone see weakness in her, but over the course of the story lowers her guard and forges deep connections.

Snappy, staccato writing results in a gritty noir sensibility. Characters speak with realistic accents and colorful slang, displaying personal quirks that bring them to life and doling out exposition bit by bit.

Where the pace lags, strong narration helps to keep the engagement level up. More so than focusing on its compelling central mystery, which ends in an appropriate but painful way, or on its engaging but short-lived side cases, the story centers on an examination of Delpha and Tom's relationship as they feel each other out as partners. Where they're headed is hinted at, but their evolution happens in an organic manner.

The Bird Boys is an intriguing literary thriller that helps to build up a capable new detective team.

JOHN M. MURRAY (July/August 2019)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.