



Clarion Review

Mystery

The Game

Kunati

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Five Stars (out of Five)

Aspirin-popping tartan-accented Alban Bane pushes his way through the crowd outside San Quentin with an open umbrella. He carries a badge he says he's allowed to be a jerk. Bane's come to witness the execution by lethal injection of an old nemesis Tyler Hayden who tortured and killed 13 youngsters on a spree from Florida to California. Bane had been with the FBI back then. He'd had a wife back then. As Bane watches Hayden die on the gurney IVs strapped to each arm the killer speaks to him: *Friend Bane* he says. *I know who killed your wife.*

As much as Bane would like to get to the bottom of that sodium thiopental revelation fresh kills keep getting in the way. Less than 24 hours after the execution Bane is in a chopper in the middle of a snowstorm on the other side of the country. As chief detective for Vermont's Bureau of Criminal Investigation he's been called to the scene of the state's biggest money-maker Mason Place mansion home of the reality TV show *Haunted Survivor*. There in a sub-basement dangling upside-down from a beam is an "unrecognizable lump that might have been Colin Lorentz television producer." In a murder reminiscent of Tyler Hayden's style the body is shorn of head genitals fingertips identity. Most ominous of all however are the injection marks one on either arm—not *like* Tyler Hayden's style rather *just like* the dead Tyler Hayden.

Over a period of 21 days from Golden Gate Bridge Park to the bat-filled caves of Vermont's Green Mountains Detective Alban Bane is whirled from victim to victim. Within the labyrinthine Mason Place through attics dungeons and mansion halls the glass eyes and ears of reality TV spy silently from behind walls. Reporters crowd the mansion gates and cameramen crowd the detective's back as the murders become a "game" a personal war of revenge between Bane and the daddy of all killers.

Derek Armstrong writes with tremendous force and self-confidence. The co-author a book of nonfiction *The Persona Principle* (Simon & Schuster) he has another book of fiction a historical thriller in the works at Kunati. *The Game* promises to be the first in a series of Alban

Bane thrillers. Gruesome suspenseful and rich with dark humor Armstrong moves the reader through time and space with a keen sense of momentum and dash. His characters are diverse bold unforgettable from the detective's adolescent daughters to the Renfield-like doctor on the set of *Haunted Survivor*. Armstrong's swashbuckling Scotsman is a welcome addition in the thriller tradition of Weisman and Connolly.