



The Night of the Flood: A Novel in Stories

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The Night of the Flood uses an original and intriguing premise as a playground for seasoned crime writers to spin sordid but captivating tales.

A group of strong activist women protesting the first execution of a woman in Pennsylvania in modern times blows up a dam, flooding the fictional town of Everton and ushering in a night of chaotic lawlessness and looting. This “novel in stories” uses this premise; a handful of writers present their unique riffs on the scenario.

They write about truck thieves, looters, lowlifes, thugs, tough guys, kidnappers, and killers who run rampant while the town is partially submerged. The writers think through all the various repercussions of an anthropogenic disaster, such as the sudden ability to make a quick buck ferrying the stranded out of town, property owners hell-bent on defending what’s theirs, and opportunists seeing the perfect chance to strike.

One scenario involves a hit man who pays an unfriendly visit to a local barman, who cleverly sends him to a neighborhood watch meeting where the would-be vigilantes are armed with baseball bats. The narrative does not go as one would expect, a credit to the author’s gift of storytelling.

Almost all of the stories veer off the well-trodden path. They are written by accomplished, acclaimed thriller authors who have contributed to esteemed publications like *Thuglit* and *Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine*. The various entries crackle with tension and high stakes.

One quickly warms up to the parade of new characters, who invariably find themselves in danger or at least extremis. Though the stories are not explicitly interrelated, they're tied together expertly, including with an epilogue that includes a killer, masterful, drop-the-mic twist. While the collection includes various styles and voices, it feels as though it was masterminded by a single ingenious author.

The Night of the Flood shines, showcasing talented writers making the most of an inventive starting point.

JOSEPH S. PETE (March/April 2018)

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