



The Organ Donor

Cory Jason Wright

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Murder by evisceration is never pretty, but in *The Organ Donor*, Cory Jason Wright thankfully reins in his pen, preferring to let the reader's mind fill in the bloody details rather than drown his audience in descriptive gore. While his Sterling Angus Patterson is as sick and twisted a serial killer as ever haunted the page, Wright chooses to focus more on the taunting mind games Patterson plays with police and his prey, rather than on the savage butchery he commits on two continents.

There are plenty of gory moments in *The Organ Donor*, but the true horror comes not from what the killer does to his victims but in how he toys with them in the moments before he begins the vivisection. Telling a captured police inspector what he plans to do to the man's daughter is even more terrifying than the scene where he rips the man's still-beating heart from his chest. Wright deftly maintains the tension in scenes where the reader knows it will end badly for the man bound to the chair or the woman strapped to the table, and he plays upon that anticipation to make his murderer all that more malicious.

The Organ Donor does not start out as a story about the killer—in fact, Wright does not introduce him until a third of the way through this short novel. Instead it begins as a police story, with Glasgow detective Patrick Campbell seemingly its main character. Campbell recruits a team of young officers to help track down a killer whose modus operandi is to send the police choice body parts. These deliveries come with teasing little ditties—for example, a bag of intestines arrives with a note declaring that the victim “no longer had the guts to see you today.”

Wright switches his point of view from cop to killer a third of the way through the book, and while this is unusual, it makes for a more interesting read. It only gets better when midway into the novel the killer leaves gloomy Glasgow for metropolitan Manhattan. There, the story broadens and takes on new life as the killer finds a new crop to harvest, facing yet another team of detectives, this one led by New York's Detective Sergeant Martin Navarro.

In Part Two, Wright again begins from the police perspective, only to switch back to that of the killer. Here, Wright adds a twist that turns a murder novel into a bizarre love story. While he unnecessarily complicates that sick romance with an incestuous soap opera backstory, Wright does manage to bring it all to a conclusion—although not the one that most readers of detective novels will expect.

The Ohio-born, ex-Navy cook and aspiring French chef says he wrote this novel to help him recover from a serious accident and to perhaps launch a writing career. *The Organ Donor* is a good first step, and while the story does meander off plot near the end, it nevertheless demonstrates that Wright is off to a promising start.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (June 13, 2013)

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