



The Point Guard

Edwin J. Sprague

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Edwin J. Sprague's novel *The Point Guard* is part political science and criminal justice treatise and part murder mystery law thriller and police story. This dangerous combination results in a convoluted roller coaster ride through the dark caverns of the human psyche.

Accountant Mike Lane's wife Tina is brutally murdered in their driveway during a gang initiation. To his horror Lane discovers that Tina was pregnant when she died. Broken hearted and furious at a legal system that allows his wife's murderers to go unpunished because of technicalities and their youthful status Lane designs the Point Guard a revolutionary reform that could drastically change the current judicial system giving it a better series of checks and balances that would provide true justice. The Point Guard system garners the attention of Senator Jeff Wheatly an unscrupulous remorseless creep of a politician. To pass it off as his own work Senator Wheatly convinces his assistant and lover Anthony to steal Lanes's hard copies of the document and erase his computer files. Lane is shot as a result of this scheme: "...like a claustrophobic bear escaping from its cage Anthony kicked violently on the closet door knocking it off its hinges. He flew out and crashed into Lane...the gun discharged with a loud bang...Lane thrashed on the floor...Blood gushed from his throat and he attempted in vain to halt its steady flow"

Lane's shooting is the precursor to more terrible and shocking events that involve Organized Crime the Philadelphia Police Department the CIA the Secret Service the IRS the Senate Ethics Committee the Attorney General and the President of the United States.

The premise of Sprague's novel is superb. *The Point Guard* has similarities to John Grisham and Scott Turrow's legal thrillers with elements of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct novels. Sprague did his homework and obviously dissected the bestselling novels in those genres. There is nothing wrong with emulating the masters but it can only be taken so far before talent and hard work must persevere. Sprague manages to capture some of their essence in his own work but the incorporation of too many plot devices from other established works creates an uneven and slightly clichéd narrative. A lack of diversity in the names of the characters adds to the reader's confusion. The last names of Mike and Anthony (Lane and Kane) are too similar. Worse during a crucial scene consisting of crackling dialogue between detectives Farrel and Lewis another Mike is introduced who is also a "financial whiz."

The author has been a free agent in the NFL an inventor and an entrepreneur. *The Point Guard* showcases his talent as a storyteller. Sprague has an ear for realistic and rapid dialogue that progresses the story reveals characterization and creates a wonderful dynamic between characters.

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