

The Price of Innocence

Bryan Devore

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The Price of Innocence, a first-rate suspense thriller by Bryan Devore, delivers gripping action, well-rounded characters, and a tantalizing plot. “Hey, we’ll find your brother, okay? Cheer up—this is going to be fun.” Although these words are spoken to the main character, James Lawrence, the promise offered seems to be from the author to the reader.

Ian Lawrence, a daredevil from Kansas, moves to Germany to continue his perpetual education at the university in Berlin, where he hopes to support his dissertation theories about crime enterprises being run like corporations. Professor Hampdenstein realizes Ian’s fearless potential and introduces him to the White Rose, an undercover society dedicated to bringing down crime mobs from within. Having a righteous cause behind his insatiable thirst for adrenaline only fuels Ian’s eagerness to jump into the fire and see if his thesis works in real life.

James, Ian’s older, more cautious brother, lives a steady life as an accountant. He isn’t “trained to troubleshoot a fast-changing problem on the fly,” and unknown dangers make him “feel sick.” Yet he’ll do anything to help when Ian goes missing. Profoundly disturbed by the world of crime in which Ian has involved himself, James struggles to “strip away his restraint and become as crazy as Ian.”

The Price of Innocence is a complete package of entertainment. Devore skillfully immerses his readers in German and Czech cultures, adding rich international flavors through language, descriptions of food, and detailed observations about architecture and social interactions. As for character development, Devore’s cast offers a phenomenal balance of opposites. For example, James is pulled along on a reluctant adventure, whereas Ian plunges right in. This balance even extends to his minor characters: Vlastos, a mercenary whose life has been dedicated to assassination, finds unlikely sympathy in Wolfgang, a special-forces soldier whose noble ambitions ignite a sense of restoration in Vlastos’ atrophied conscience.

As if an exciting, precise plot weren’t enough, the author also fills his story with subtle but powerful themes, including respect for women, eternal optimism in the face of defeat, and the strength of brotherly love. He also draws parallels between crime organizations and legal corporations: “Health insurance companies deny coverage...Chemical companies poison water supplies... Big pharma charges outrageous prices for medications...In the long run, many of these companies are little different from illegal enterprises. The biggest difference is merely that politicians have been able to give them legal status.”

Fans of John Grisham’s legal thrillers or Robert Ludlum’s intricate action scenes are going to be pleased with Bryan Devore’s contribution. Economics and humanities professors will delight in references to game theory analysis, the Diamond-Dybvig model, and multinational diversification theories, blended together with quotes from Shakespeare and set on a solid foundation provided by the brilliant 1997 treatise, *The Economics of Organised Crime*. Readers of all ages will enjoy this intelligent novel.

EMILY ASAD (March 31, 2013)

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