

The Reincarnation of Vincent Van Gogh: a novel

Don M Forst

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An architect's creativity is put in mortal danger, and this calls into question just where his artistic talent comes from.

Don M Forst's *The Reincarnation of Vincent Van Gogh* uses a clever twist to combine artistic talent and assassination attempts into a satisfying and enjoyable book.

Mark Reed has been hit by a truck, and what comes of that turns his world upside down, but not in the ways one would anticipate. After his near-death experience, architect Reed can suddenly paint like Vincent Van Gogh. Where is this talent coming from? And could he be the reincarnation of Van Gogh? Reed's talent causes the depreciation of actual Van Gogh paintings, throwing Reed into a dangerous situation with those who wish to stop the decline.

Forst does a fine job creating Mark Reed's world in *The Reincarnation of Vincent Van Gogh*. A retired architect himself, Forst is comfortable in that realm, and in the realm of art, as well. The discussions of Reed's painting experiences are detailed and interesting: "He mixed this color with that, another color with this, and watched the values become darker, lighter, or more intense, and as he did this he felt his excitement building. He loaded his brush with light ochre paint and laid down the first stroke, a sloping line running across the lower left third of the canvas."

The plot itself is a change from the ordinary. The fact that his newfound artistic talent puts Reed in mortal danger adds an element of suspense and intrigue to the story line and serves as a rather clever plot device. Because money is generally considered the root of all evil, the genuine artwork's depreciation provides valid impetus for the assassination plot against Reed. As shady but wealthy art collector Anthony Espinosa stalks them, Reed and gallery owner Allison Weeks find that they must up their survival skills, and the pace increases dramatically.

Thematically, Forst's premise is unusual and interesting. Who "owns" talent, and where does talent come from? What is an artist's obligation to share that talent, particularly when it is so similar to that of a famous artist? The ending of the novel implies a solid connection between Reed and Van Gogh, but the questions raised invite pondering, even after closing the book.

The overall package is well crafted. The Van Gogh-like cover is pertinent and eye-catching, and the print is large and easy to read.

Art enthusiasts and thriller fans may come together in their appreciation of *The Reincarnation of Vincent Van Gogh*. It has a little something for a wide variety of readers.

LYNN EVARTS (June 3, 2014)

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