

## The Squad Room

**Robert Nivakoff**

**John Cutter**

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*A diverse group of cops handle a murder, as well as squad politics, in this engrossing mystery.*

Based on the experiences of police chiefs John Cutter and Robert Nivakoff, *The Squad Room* is an intriguing murder mystery with a bit of romance.

Cutter and Nivakoff create a realistic and believable squad of detectives, led by Capt. William Morrison. This book is not for the squeamish. The squad investigates the deaths of several upscale women murdered in a brutal manner, and the scenes are described in graphic detail. Morrison, flawed but likable, is depicted as a “good guy” among a department of officers and detectives who mostly respect him. Rogue cops and an inept and unscrupulous chief complicate matters. Political maneuvers among departments, police corruption, and the bending, sometimes breaking, of rules are explored.

Events reinforce the difficulties and dangers that law enforcement officers face daily. Decision making that takes place on the job, at all levels, is depicted as challenging and subjective. Some decisions are portrayed as heroic, while others are shown to be blatantly unethical and illegal. At times, the bending of rules is condoned as a means to an end.

Several long passages of monologue recount past events. Scenes that include more back-and-forth dialogue, and those depicting action, are more engaging.

Morris faces his own challenges, as his personal life is in disarray: he’s distraught over the death of his son in the line of duty, he struggles with alcoholism, and he has no emotional connection with his wife. When he meets a woman in a bar, he quickly starts an affair that is invigorating for him, though not integral to the story or the character.

Dispelling the myth of the “blue wall,” this mystery shows how officers self-police, to an extent, to expose corruption. The officers are loyal to each other, but not blindly. Further, diversity among the department—in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and personality—is highlighted, and a progressive message is established, particularly with the captain’s acceptance of a newly transferred female detective to the squad.

Throughout, there is an emphasis on how only a cop can understand another cop, but this compelling murder mystery offers everyone a small glimpse into life in law enforcement.

MARIA SIANO (Spring 2016)

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