A Gritty And Passionate Debut

A me+a7nage a+a6 trois that unites an ambitious London lawyer, a sexually inventive American woman, and a thief named Thirst culminates in a perverse obsession that ends with a courtroom confrontation. A first novel.

My Personal Review:
The core of British author Burdett's first novel is obsession - with love, class and ambition. The story takes place around the events leading to the murder of Oliver Thirst, a charismatic, brutal and intelligent criminal.

James Knight, the narrator, is a bitter, lonely and highly successful barrister about to 'take silk,' or become a Queen's Counsel, at the time Thirst is murdered. He is suspected of the murder, having lost the love of his life, Daisy Smith, to Thirst. But what at first seems straightforward quickly develops kinks.

The cold, austere middle-class Knight reunites with Daisy (the other suspect in Thirst's murder) 'overjoyed that one man had died and I was a fool again.' While savoring a present Knight knows may be brief, he explores the past.

He and Daisy first meet as university students. Rather than the stiff-necked prig he appears, Knight is a former street-kid, an orphan from the slums fighting his way out. An American from the affluent middle class, Daisy is wild, fun-loving and sexually uninhibited, with no comprehension of class rigidity in Britain. She stirs Knight to risk-taking bravado and - in the opposite direction - inspires him to strive even harder for material success in his rule-bound profession.

Thirst is a thief, one of Knight's first criminal clients. While grateful for his freedom, Thirst becomes obsessed with the lawyer, envying him his escape from the slums, despising his middle-class dullness. But, seeing
only a bleak future of poverty and jail, he seeks Knight's help in rehabilitating himself.

Daisy, who's never met anyone like Thirst, is dazzled. He's clever, dangerous, physical and unpredictable where Knight is cautious, cerebral and dogged. Thirst, like a savage version of Knight, reins himself in only to burst out in reckless action. He also shows not the slightest interest in Daisy. 'I should have sat there and took it,' Thirst said as she slammed the door. He was as oblivious to Daisy's anger as he was to her. Her exit might have been a puff of air.'

Burdett depicts a strange world of people who 'help' Thirst, their altruistic veneer quickly stripped (by Thirst) to self-absorbed venal cravings. And when Thirst's efforts at the straight life fail, bitterness supplants ambition.

Meanwhile, as appearances grow ever more essential to the driven Knight, Daisy becomes more hedonistic and demanding until, just as the reader wonders why they tolerate each other, sparks ignite a moment of real passion.

Seen through his narrator's eyes, Burdett's London is claustrophobic, its people eyeing one another enviously from self-constructed boxes. His prose is taut, rich with scarcely alluded meaning, seething with stilted emotions. And when the explosion comes that drives the triangle apart, it seems, not anticlimactic, but pointlessly self-destructive. Circumstances supply the catalyst but injured pride makes it stick.

This is a highly accomplished and complex first novel, rife with human frailty, irony and mixed motivations. It succeeds in portraying characters who are as repugnant as they are passionate, yet keeps the reader interested in what happens to them right up to the last page.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
A Personal History of Thirst by John Burdett - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!