Deep Shadow (Platinum Mystery Series) by Randy Wayne White

Doc Ford

Unabridged CDs, 9 CDs, 11 hours

Read by TBA

Doc Ford wrestles more than one kind of demon, in the stunning novel from the New York Times--bestselling author.
Personal Review: Deep Shadow (Platinum Mystery Series) by Randy Wayne White

THE TEASER
A teaser is a loathsome device intended to catch the interest of bookstore browsers with up-front action. In this case, the teaser chapter (mislabeled as "Prolog") begins with a rather bland flash-forward. The effect of the flash-forward is to confuse the timeline and to move the key action several pages deeper into the novel--with the result that bookstore browsers are likely to miss the brutal murders---which is the real hook.

THE SETUP
Low-lifes King and Perry are released from Joliet Prison where a fellow prisoner had told them about a rich old guy living among his orange groves in Orlando. They travel to Orlando by bus, break-in and kill Alfred Hoffstetler, his housekeeper and her children.

COMMENT ON THE "PROLOG"
After first chapter narrated in third-person ("they...") the novel disconcertingly shifts to first-person ("I..."). Ideally, a first-person novel should begin in first person, even if third-person is used for most of the novel. Mislabeling the first chapter as "Prolog" isn't a "fix". The concept of "Prolog" should be reserved for "distant" background material.

Suppose the opening flash-forward had been moved to its actual place in the timeline and the novel opened with the single sentence, "I had been preparing a short expedition to study a sinkhole south of Orlando, and so I had not heard the news about the horrible murders". That would have established Ford as the "first person narrator" and would have been a very effective "teaser", encouraging bookstore browsers to keep reading another few pages to the murders--at which point the readers would be hooked on the novel.

THE SETUP (continued)
Marine biologist, Doc Ford, side-kick Tomlinson, young Native American Will Chaser, are exploring a sinkhole lake when an underwater ledge collapses, burying Tomlinson and Will. With Arlis Futch (who had stayed with the truck) Doc Ford works desperately to free them--while coping with King and Perry who had been hiding nearby. That's the setup.

CRITIQUE
White has obviously heard from his fans--after the preceding novel, "Dead Silence". We've got the old Doc Ford (Travis McGee/Ed Ricketts) character back. Thank you Randy White. Ford's dark side is on clear display. His intended solution to the "problem" is to brutally murder both
bad guys. Ford shows no reluctance, and doesn't even consider alternatives. That being the case, Ford's failure to personally kill them feels like a cop-out (by the author). Ford is either a Jack Bauer character or not. I'd prefer not---but Ford's violent streak is well established in the series. Personally, I would prefer a more reluctant tough-guy hero, like Travis McGee.

Tomlinson's sly hypocrite persona reaches its full flower. Will is an interesting new character.

Although a great action novel, "Deep Shadow" could have benefited from a little humor, and perhaps a few deeper insights into life. Ford/Tomlinson would seem to be perfect characters for "lay-back philosophising"---but White's attempts at such are fairly weak. But then, both Ford and Tomlinson are self-delusional hypocrites, from which deep philosophical insights would not be credible.

For non-Floridians, the anacondas, crocodiles, and big iguanas are for really. Historically, there were once 25' alligators. Environmentalist are concerned that the anacondas are eating the alligators. South American caymans (alligator-like creatures) have recently been introduced.

COMPLAINT
What's with audiobook narrators who can't correctly pronoun words which are pronouned exactly as spelt? For example, the narrator pronounces Osceola (Ahs-see-o-la) as "Ass-sila"--not even the right number of syllables!

VERDICT
One of the best in a great series

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