Drama City by George Pelecanos

The real test of an authors skill is sometimes to be found not in an unusually conceived work, but in his or her ability to create a consuming tale out of what, in outline form, might sound like an all-too-familiar or mundane plot line. In another novelists hands, for instance, Drama City might have been a perfectly serviceable but regrettably unmemorable story of redemption and revenge set in the grittier districts of Washington, D.C. But with George Pelecanos at the reins, it becomes a poignant, profound yarn about men--the good, the bad, and the still undecided--trying to find their footing amid the centrifugal forces at play in a modern inner city. Pelecanoss first standalone after four consecutive novels starring private eye Derek Strange (including Soul Circus and Hard Revolution), Drama City introduces Lorenzo Brown, a young, black onetime criminal enforcer whos recently returned to the streets after doing eight years in prison on a felony drug charge. Crime and criminals had always been fundamental to Lorenzos existence. (Yall know how that is. I ran with some boys, one in particular, and when those boys and my main boy went down to the corner I went with em. They were my people, the closest thing I ever had to male kin.) Since his release, though, hes been serving as a Humane Law Enforcement Officer with the Humane Society, protecting animals from the panoply of domestic cruelty, trying to leave both the drugs and the thugs behind. This attitude has won him a few champions, notably Rachel Lopez, his striking half-Jewish, half-Latina probation officer and friend, who spends her days telling other people that they need to stay on track, but then goes off the rails at night, haunting hotel bars, picking up inappropriate guys, always frightened by the idea of a relationship where she was not in complete control. Of course, these delicate balances of individual behavior are only possible in the absence of the unexpected. When a seemingly inconsequential mistake incites a lethal turf battle between rival gang bosses Nigel Johnson and Deacon Taylor, and Rachel is stabbed in the chest by a volatile, hopped-up gunman, Lorenzo finds his killer instincts returning to the fore. He must decide how far hes willing to go--and how much hes willing to lose--in order to exact retribution. A simple plot on its face, yet given high stakes and a heroic edge by
Pelecanos portrayal of Brown as a man-in-progress struggling to secure his liberty from the past, helped along by his unexpectedly sympathetic former boss, childhood friend Nigel Johnson. Less satisfyingly rendered is Lopez, whose acrobatic swings to the wild side provide merely arousing diversions, without adequate character development. Bearing soul as well as teeth, Drama City gives off the air of a Greek tragedy. You know things are going to get bad before they turn worse, but Pelecanos keeps you riveted throughout. --J. Kingston Pierce

Its hard not to like a character who loves animals, even mean animals - the mad ones, the dirty, the underfed, the sick, vermin infested animals too, some trained to kill. Dogs, cats, parakeets, etc., theyre Lorenzo Browns thing. Hes an officer for the Humane Society Law Enforcement team in Washington, D.C., and likes his job, a lot. Lorenzo figures if something is off with an animal, its a humans fault, and is ready to paper offenders and serve search and/or arrest warrants if necessary. He saved his own dog, Jasmine, the night before her scheduled euthanization. She is the first pet he has every owned.

Brown is an ex-con, out on parole after 8 years in prison for a drug charge. He is determined to stay straight. Each morning, when he walks Jasmine, he passes the home of Nigel Johnsons mother. Occasionally, he will see Nigel there, along with a couple of young men wearing thick platinum chains. The troops lean against their rides - BMW coupes and sedans, a black Escalade, tricked with spinners in the mix. The black GS430 with dual pipes and aftermarket rims belongs to Nigel, now a powerful drug kingpin, who is usually busy directing business, talking on his Nextel. Lorenzo and Nigel, both smart and ambitious as kids, had run the streets together, going back almost twenty-five years. Brown had done the righteous thing by his friend. He stayed silent when he was pressured to give Nigel up. Brown chose to serve his time instead. Now he has had enough of the life. His old friends dont quite get it, however.

Rachel Lopez also loves her work. She is Lorenzos parole officer and one of the finest. She comes on tough initially and lays down the rules, but she wants all her people to make it. She has invested much of herself in their ultimate success. Rachel knows Lorenzo has committed crimes not included in his jacket. To have advanced in the game as far as he had, he probably did some violence, maybe even killed. She also knows that now, in the present, Lorenzo is not a bad man. But Ms. Lopez has problems of her own. Her own life is spinning out of control, and her late nights are taking their toll.

Officer Brown needs Officer Lopez support right now. He needs all the help he can get. A stupid mistake concerning turf boundaries has triggered enmity between local gangs. A psychopathic youth is on the streets, looking for a way to escalate the problem; waiting for the slightest opportunity to kill. A war is about to go down and our man could very well be sucked into it.
I have long been a George Pelecanos fan. Over the years, I have read all his books, and to tell the truth, he has only written novels that I love, and others that I like a lot. This one is special though. I was deeply moved by the character of Lorenzo Brown, a really decent man trying to straighten out his life. The author lets us in on his thought processes. Mr. Brown is far from perfect. He carries within himself a strong streak of humanity though, which is his saving grace. Then there is Rachel Lopez, whom I also grew to care about. She is battling, against the odds, to keep her head above water. They both are having a real hard time in this world, yet always look to give someone else a hand up.

No one captures the mean streets of the neighborhood like Pelecanos. His gritty prose, street-smart dialogue, fast-paced narrative and wonderful character development are what make his books bestsellers - literate ones! Highly recommended!

JANA

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Drama City by George Pelecanos - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!