Different as they are, the Varela brothers are bound by a decades-old secret surrounding the events of one long-ago night during their childhood back home in their native Belize. Today Patrick is the Miami-Dade County commissioner and a probable candidate for mayor of Miami, while his brother, Leo, a sometime poet and mental health worker, spends more time getting high than anything else. Still, they’ve both been struggling for years to completely sever their ties to their father, his illegal businesses, and his secrets.

But those years quickly vanish the moment an old friend recently released from prison asks Leo to release a patient from the mental hospital where Leo works. He calls it a favor, but the threat is clear to Leo, Patrick, and---more dangerously---the men with a stake in Patrick’s political career. The request sets off a chain of events destined to lay bare once and for all the
truth about what happened that night, and maybe even to pit brother against brother in their efforts to finally set things right.

Moody, atmospheric, and evocative, Lonesome Point showcases the distinct and rhythmic voice that makes Ian Vasquez a unique talent among today’s crime writers.

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**Personal Review: Lonesome Point by Ian Vasquez**

Creatures from the Belize Lagoon:
Noir Mysteries from an Emerging New Belizean Talent

Reviews of Ian Vasquez' In the Heat and Lonesome Point

By LAN SLUDER

An important new talent has emerged out of the sands, swamps and condos of Florida, bringing a Belizean edge to crime novels some are calling Caribbean Noir.

Ian Vasquez, who was raised in Belize and now lives in the Tampa Bay area, where he is a copy editor at the St. Petersburg Times, has published two novels, In the Heat in 2008 and Lonesome Point in 2009. A third, Mr. Hooligan, is set for publication in summer 2010.

In the Heat is set entirely in Belize, mostly in Belize City with some of the action taking place at a jungle lodge in Cayo. Miles Young, an aging boxer coming off a loss of a bout at Bird’s Isle, is hired to find the run-away 17-year-old daughter of Isabelle Gilmore, a wealthy, Caribbean Shores matron. The girl has taken a gob of mom’s ill-gotten cash and is with the son of a former Belize police chief, now a well-connected owner of a Belize City security company. Soon, Miles is caught up in a tangled web of murder, corruption and money laundering. "Man, Belize was going to hell in a hand basket," says Manny, a shady boxing promoter.

Vasquez’ second novel, Lonesome Point, takes place in Miami and Tampa, with flashbacks to Belize. Two Belizean brothers, Leo and Patrick Varela, though still bound together by a deadly family secret of their youth in Belize City, have drifted apart since they moved to South Florida. Patrick is a successful attorney and Miami-Dade County commissioner, with a
beautiful home and trophy family in Biscayne Bay, while Leo is a would-be poet and night shift worker on a dead-end job in a hospital psych ward. One night, a figure out of Leo's Belizean past shows up and demands a favor of him: Get a patient, an old man with apparent schizophrenia, out of isolation to take a middle-of-the-night meeting. If Leo doesn't cooperate, things that happened at Lonesome Point in Belize may be brought to light. Soon, Leo is in the middle of a nightmare, on the run from his Belizean past, desperately trying to save the life of his pregnant girlfriend, the patient, and himself. Leo is hunted by his one-time Belizean pal, Freddy, along with Bernard, a hulking, 290-pound black weightlifter, and perhaps even by his brother Patrick.

I came to the two novels with the wrong expectations. Misled by blurbs comparing Vasquez to John D. McDonald, I was expecting Travis McGee transplanted to Belize. But Vasquez is his own man. Unlike the stories featuring McGee, Spenser, Marlowe, Millhone and some of the other classic heroes of mystery and crime fiction, Vasquez’ tales are told in the third person, with omniscient narrators. His main characters are accidental detectives, rather than professionals. Instead of boldly forging ahead, like skiffs on the Caribbean, they are often buffeted by the winds of chance.

Lonesome Point, to be sure, is the more powerful of the two books. From the first to the second, you can see Vasquez’ growth as a writer in the more complex plotting, easier handling of narrative and the harder, steel-cut dialog. Vasquez, now only in his early 40s, has the time to flower like a flamboyant tree in Belizean summer.

The weakness of both novels is in the main characters. In the Heat’s protagonist, the washed-up boxer, Miles, is sketchily drawn and appears in surprisingly few scenes. Leo Varela, the knock-about in Lonesome Point who smokes weed to get through his night shift, is better, but in the end Leo doesn't have a lot of appeal, more victim than victor.

Several of the secondary characters, by contrast, are vividly painted. Isabelle, the bitchy, sexy Caribbean Shores matron of In the Heat, deserves a book of her own. Also in the first novel, Harry Rolles, an expat American deeply involved in Belize’s dark underbelly of crime, cries out for a bigger, uh, roll. Marlon Tablada, In the Heat’s corrupt ex-police chief, could have made a fascinating if amoral protagonist. The hulking Bernard in Lonesome Point easily could have carried the novel. Several of the other minor characters in both novels are sharply if quickly presented.

I also liked the measured way Vasquez uses the Belize setting. Exotic, colorful locations like New Orleans, or Belize, can overwhelm character and story line. Vasquez matter-of-factly names streets and landmarks in Belize, only once in a while getting things wrong (he suggests that the Macal flows west) but doesn't get lost in the Belizeness of it all. He recreates some of the patterns of Creole, and plants a word here or there, along with some Spanish and Spanglish but wisely doesn't make the
Anglophone reader struggle to understand the language. Some of Vasquez’ scenes, such as when Isabelle and the boxing promoter, Manny, are caught in bed by Isabelle’s husband, who suffers from Alzheimer’s, are dark but laugh-aloud funny.

But I digress. What's important here is that we have a new thriller writer on the scene, a Belizean published by a name New York publishing house, who very likely is going to become a major international crime writer. I'm eagerly awaiting his third novel.

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Lonesome Point by Ian Vasquez 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!