Special Agent Patrick Bowers had only met one man who made him truly afraid. Until now. When he's called to North Carolina to consult on the case of an area serial killer, he finds himself in a deadly game. Cunning and lethal, the killer is always one step ahead of the law, and he's about to strike again. It will take all of Bowers's instincts and training to stop this man who calls himself the Illusionist. And just when the pieces start to come together, Bowers realizes they're not quite adding up. Can he unravel the pattern and save the next victim? Or will the Illusionist win the game by taking one of his opponents pieces? Thrilling, chilling, and impossible to put down, The Pawn will hold suspense lovers in its iron grip until the very last page.

Yeah, you read that right...Steven James really makes me mad. I'll tell you why in a moment, but this is a review of his novel and I'll start with that.

On the surface, The Pawn looks to be yet another in a long, somewhat wearying string of serial killer novels. I mean, how many more of these can we read before the genre dies? Pun intended. The reason the genre remains strong, however, is because of well-crafted thrillers such as this, ones that include believable characters and original villains. In fact, I suggest that The Pawn elevates and transcends its market niche.

The book's protagonist, Patrick Bowers, is struggling to understand his wife's death from cancer and the resulting estrangement from his stepdaughter. He doesn't have much time for such things, though, while trying to track down a ruthless and brilliant games-man, a killer who leaves chess pieces at the site of each murder. These are workable elements for any such novel, yet nothing that new to the market; it's the manner in which James ties them together with larger conspiracy theories and historical mysteries that turns this into a true page-turner. Not only do we care about this killer being stopped, we care about Bowers and his relationships. We
care about the future victims. We care about others caught up in the dizzying maze of deception.

So why am I mad? Well, as a published novelist myself, I often wrestle with my own inner editor while reading other novels. This makes it hard to enjoy some of them. In the case of James, I found myself challenged instead to sharpen my craft even more. Not only that, he combines in The Pawn some of the elements that it's taken me two or three books to explore--a love of coffee, an eye for chess, and an interest in history. In fact, I've had some readers doubt the history in my novels, and I've told them to go read the facts. I thought, in the case of Mr. James, maybe I'd catch him sleeping on the research, but no...I looked up his underlying historical premise--and it's right on target. Wow! In his debut thriller, he trumped my books and raised the bar.

Yeah, that really torques me! And I can't wait to read his next, The Rook.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
The Pawn (The Patrick Bowers Files, Book 1) by Steven James - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!