The Retribution by Val McDermid

Disappointing Effort All Around

Val McDermid is a world-class crime writer whose books have sold millions worldwide. Now joining the Atlantic Monthly Press list for the first time, she is back with a chilling, high-velocity thriller featuring her immensely popular creations, clinical psychologist Dr. Tony Hill and detective Carol Jordan.

Tony Hill has had a good run. He and detective Carol Jordan have put away scores of dangerous criminals at a rate that colleagues envy. But there is one serial killer who has shaped and defined their careers, and whose evil surpasses all others: Jacko Vance, ex-celebrity and sociopath whose brilliance and utter lack of remorse have never left Tony’s mind in the ten years since his imprisonment. Now Jacko has escaped from prison?even more twisted and cunning than before, he is focused on wreaking revenge on Tony and Carol for his years spent in prison.

Tony and Carol don’t know when Jacko will strike, or where. All they know is that Jacko will cause them to feel fear like they’ve never known. A chilling, utterly gripping tour de force, The Retribution is the ideal introduction or re-introduction to the world of Tony Hill and Carol Jordan. It is an unforgettable read.

Retribution-1. Something justly deserved; recompense.  
2. Something given or demanded in repayment, especially punishment.

Jacko Vance, a serial killer of seventeen teenage girls, and a police officer, has escaped from prison where he was sentenced to life. He was once a British Television Presenter and an almost Olympian athlete. He may be the most diabolical and ruthless killer that Val McDermid has introduced to
Val McDermid is one of the more inventive and exciting mystery thriller writers from the UK. Her name excites visions of her readers sitting for long periods of time, red sleepless eyes, and extended periods of tachycardia.

We begin with Jacko Vance and his years in prison planning his escape. He has assistance from the outside, millions of dollars placed in offshore accounts, and people who believe he is innocent. He also has inside help from other prisoners who will do anything for money. His plans are so efficient, timely and well thought out that I found myself fascinated and entranced with his character. He tells his story from his persona, and we get to examine his thought process. He is a charmer and is able to convince almost any woman what he wants them to believe about him. Tony Hill knows him all too well, he and DCI Jordan were the essential law enforcement officers to put him in prison. Now he has escaped and they may be at the top of his list for Retribution.

At the same time, DCI Jordan, finds her department is about to be dismantled due to budgetary effects. She and her group have solved every serial murder case and other cases brought her way, and her boss feels she is too expensive. Well, she has shown him up in every case, that may be the real problem. DCI Jordan has found a new position in a city near-by. Tony Hill has also decided to move with her. They have a very complex relationship, loving friends, impotence by Tony is mentioned, and we wonder if the sexual failure has become the real problem for them. Whatever, they work well together, and seem to solve most of the cases that come their way. As one of DCI Jordan last cases comes a serial killer who is murdering prostitutes and leaving a tattoo on their wrists. Jordan and her team are on it. Simultaneously trying to hunt down Jacko before he kills again.

Val McDermid keeps the novel moving quite adeptly between both cases. She has the ability to convey such caring of her characters that we become very fond of them. We like the entire MIT team, and we dislike the villains and the upper echelons of police who try to hinder investigations so they wont show up as fools. It is the relationship between Carol and Tony that we most care about. They are both damaged souls from their past and their work. We think they belong together, but at the same time, wonder if they are too damaged to have a true relationship with anyone.

The ending left me feeling a little verklempt. I am not sure where this series is going, but we do know that much is left unresolved, which opens the door for at least one more book with DCI Carol Jordan and Tony Hill.

Highly Recommended. prisrob 10-28-11
Fever of the Bone: A Novel

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