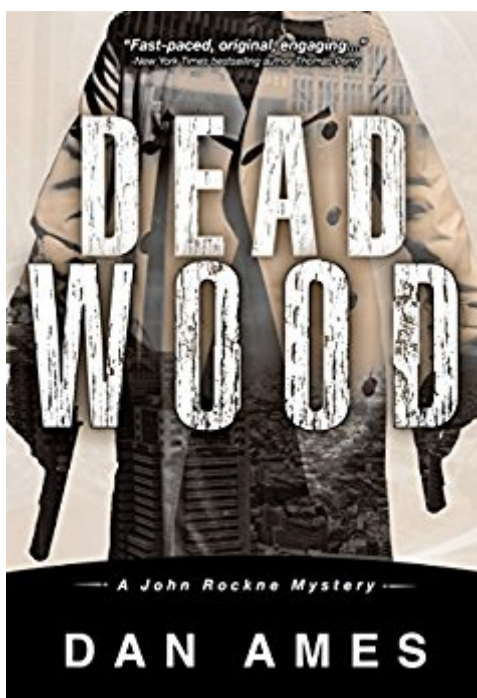


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Dead Wood (A Hardboiled Private Investigator Mystery Series): John Rockne Mysteries 1



Synopsis

An Ex-Cop Who Lost Everything. A Killer Who Will Stop At Nothing. By the author of the Jack Reacher Cases, written with permission from Lee Child. In the exclusive enclave of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, a woman who builds custom guitars is murdered. A disgraced ex-cop turned private investigator is hired by the dead woman's father and immediately becomes the target of a violent ex-convict. An enigmatic music star performs damage control on her links to the dead woman. And a professional killer who idolizes Keith Richards is brought into town by a mysterious employer. *Dead Wood* is what great mysteries are all about: love, hate, faith and vengeance, all wrapped up in an explosive story that simply refuses to let up. "Dead Wood is a fast-paced, unpredictable mystery with an engaging narrator and a rich cast of original supporting characters." -Thomas Perry, Edgar-winning author of *The Butcher's Boy*. "From its opening lines, Dan Ames and his private eye novel *DEAD WOOD* recall early James Ellroy: a fresh attitude and voice and the heady rush of boundless yearning and ambition. Ames delivers a vivid evocation of time and place in a way that few authors achieve, nailing the essence of his chosen corner of high-tone Michigan. He also deftly dodges the pitfalls that make so much contemporary private detective fiction a mixed bag and nostalgia-freighted misfire. Ames's detective has family; he's steady. He's not another burned-out, booze-hound hanging on teeth and toenails to the world and smugly wallowing in his own ennui. This is the first new private eye novel in a long time that just swept me along for the ride. Ames is definitely one to watch." -- Edgar-nominated author Craig McDonald "Dan Ames's writing reminds me of the great thriller writers -- lean, mean, no nonsense prose that gets straight to the point and keeps you turning those pages." --author Robert Gregory Browne "As gritty as the Detroit streets where it's set, *DEAD WOOD* grabs you early on and doesn't let go. As fine a debut as you'll come across this year, maybe any year." --author Tom Schreck

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Customer Reviews

John Rockne: A young police officer who makes a terrible mistake that ends up costing the life of a teenage boy. Fast forward: Convinced his daughter was murdered by her boyfriend, Clarence Barr hires John (now a private investigator) to prove or disprove his theory. And so it goes. John is a likable, believable and sometimes hapless man who works hard to find answers for his client. He still feels guilt for his past mistake but we aren't inflicted with prolonged angst, nor is he a boozier or recovering alcoholic. He's just an ordinary guy with two daughters and two strong women in his life; his wife and sister. The murdered woman was an artist who made fine guitars and was killed while completing one she made for a famous singer. Lurking in the background is a killer for hire who moves closer to John as the investigation progresses. The story is fast paced and has enough twists and turns to keep you guessing. I liked John so much and got so involved in the book that I wanted to slap him on the back of the head when he did something stupid and held my breath when he was in danger. Can't recommend it enough. As soon as I read the last page I went online and bought Dani Amore's previous book *Death By Sarcasm*

The hook was good but it went downhill from there. The story line is less than plausible and handled with the dexterity of a longshoreman moving barrels. The first person narration didn't work because the author insisted on trying to be clever but it comes off lame as his quips are dated and hackneyed, like when someone tells you a hilarious joke that wasn't funny the first time you heard thirty years ago. The motive for the crime was silly, the killer a vague menace that appears occasionally but not even in the same state. The only interesting character is the detective's sister who rides in at the last second several times to rescue our hero. Her appearances and why she is there is a greater mystery than the plot.

This is a tough one to review because ultimately, I enjoyed the book, though some of the situations the main character got himself into were not plausible. If you are looking for a gritty, reality based crime drama, this is not for you. In a period of a day or so, the PI was knocked out, shot at, nearly blown up and oh yeah, he had in between his fingers sliced with a power saw. But as I mentioned before, I did enjoy the book and would consider reading another in the series.

The story is told in the first person by the main character, John Rockne. Although some of the irreverent quips and the sarcastic sense of humor in the first part of the book made me laugh out loud, it became overkill for me. Fortunately I kept on reading and thoroughly enjoyed the story. The character development was excellent and there was not a lot of unnecessary description. There was a twist at the end that I never saw coming.

I think another name for this novel could have been " The Hen-Pecked PI", though if that was the case I wouldn't have given it a glance. I was really glad I took a chance on this novel for my first read from this author. This was a great read that wasn't easy to put down. Poor John Rockne at times seemed like the sitcom dad that just can't win with those closest to him; both his wife and his sister spent a lot of time taking turns dumping on him. His persistence is admirable and pays off in the end. The players here were well developed and believable with the plot twists revealing their skeletons along the way. The prose had a nice flow and just pulled me along for the ride. This a great read set in the Detroit area, and shows a different side of the city than the one that Amos Walker haunts. Good stuff here.

This story drew me in with a clever plotline about the murder of a woman who makes high end guitars. Her greiving father hires Rockne to find out if there was more to her death than was first apparent. Rockne soon finds out that a number of people might have had reason to kill this lady. More people die as Rockne conducts his investigation and he finds that if he pursues his inquiry...he may be the next one. Tightly plotted with strong dialogue and narrative. Reminded me of the Sandford Lucas Davenport series, also set in the north, as well as the characterization and writing style. I mean this as a high compliment. Highly recommended.

This story about a brand new cop being ruined and becoming a PI who constantly walks straight into danger is a bit rougher than most I like. Part of it is the nasty treatment his Police Chief sister

gives him at every turn. However, his pursuit of the killer of a beautiful guitar making singer is exciting and endlessly convoluted. To be continued...

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