



Dead White

M.K. Coker

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This isn't your mother's Little House on the Prairie...

Detective Marek Okerlund unknowingly passes by a dying man in a Dakota blizzard—and gets what he changed jobs to avoid: a homicide. Acting Sheriff Karen Mehaffey asks for a part-time detective to teach her the ropes and loses what she changed jobs to keep: peace in her family.

Together, estranged detective and sheriff stand uneasily over the frozen body of Dale Hansen, operations manager at the local meat-packing plant. The intriguing words "White Out" are carved into one bare arm, the raw wrist chained to a barbed-wire fence. What does the message mean? Is it racial—as Dale wasn't popular with his Hispanic workers—or merely a weather report, done in understated Dakota style?

Both Karen and Marek doubt their ability to give the victim justice. Karen is a former police dispatcher without a shred of investigative experience. Marek has enough experience for both of them, but he'd rather dust off his carpenter's license to save the last takeout restaurant in town from hooligans. Besides, saving his half-Hispanic, motherless daughter from starvation is a higher priority for him than arguing with a hard-headed sheriff.

They'll both be out in the cold, though, if they can't put aside their differences to find a killer.

Neither cozy nor hardboiled, DEAD WHITE is a character-driven police procedural of a rural bent. Word Count: 115,000. Occasional profanity. Minimal gore.

REVIEW

DEAD WHITE's characters seemed to walk right out of a familiar Dakota town, bickering with every step. I couldn't stop reading!

—Linda M. Hasselstrom, Author of No Place Like Home

Dead White Details

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From Reader Review Dead White for online ebook

Al Dowling says

Enjoyed This Read

I found a new series. Well plotted—kept me analyzing ‘til the end. Good characterization and sense of place. Solid, really enjoyable read. I like the author’s perspective and voice. I look forward to volume two.

Mary Stenvall says

This was a good mystery, filled with interesting characters and rendered excellent by the fine threads of family. Approached from a variety of angles, it held my attention to the very end, which was four in the morning. I really hope to see these characters return.

Karla Burke says

I really enjoyed this book. It's set in my home state of SD. The author refers to some locations and family names that truly exist and some locations or names that are fictional. That adds a fun, little twist. There's a nice mix of true-to-life details to convince me this story really could have happened in southeast South Dakota. The plot has lots of twists and turns. Just when you think you know "who done it" or what might happen next, Coker hits you with a curve ball. I loved this so much I bought the rest of her books!

Mary says

Recently, Linda Hasselstrom of Windbreak House featured a writer on her blog. M K Coker who writes a series set in South Dakota. Knowing Linda has good taste in many things but that she especially knows good writing, I decided to jump into this series. It did not disappoint. The location and the characters ring true. Like most of us Karen and Marek (who are uncle and niece) are damaged but who are living with their pasts as they deal with the present. They make mistakes, misread each other but the reader comes to care about them and their progress. Like Longmire, Marek is a widower with the daughter though Marek’s is much younger; like Pickett Karen struggles with the rules of her position which cause her to question what is truly right— strict adherence to the law or humane compassion.

Characters ,however, need an intriguing plot or no matter how they live on the page, the book will falter. DEAD WHITE has twists and turns which tease the reader to think I know what is next. But the reader finds a turn he has not expected and he turns pages to see how that developed. As the story winds down and answers are given, the satisfaction of a tale well spun fills the reader and leaves them looking for the next book.

Thank M K Coker for a good read, and thank you Linda for pointing me the direction of a series well worth the effort of reading all the books.

Margaret Millmore says

Note: this review will be posted for all five books in this series – I purchased each in order over the course of 10 days or so, I could not put them down!

Marek Okerlund and his young daughter need a fresh start. His wife and unborn son were recently killed by a drunk driver, his daughter is badly traumatized by their deaths and his job as a detective in Albuquerque is too much to handle. He decides to return to his home town, hoping its small rural community will be less violent than the big city and allow him and his daughter to heal. But this small town has its own problems, primarily, the stigma of Marek's past and the past of his family.

Each of the books start with murder, and the mysteries are complicated and well done, but it's the dynamics of this rural world, its people, its landscape and everything else that has me hooked on this series. As the series develops, Marek overcomes a great deal, but is still forced to overcome more. His half-brother hates him, his boss is his niece and his grandfather was a murderer, and no one has forgotten that. On top of everything else, Marek's childhood dyslexia left the residents of his hometown thinking he was a bumbling idiot, something he is far from, but can't seem to outlive.

Typically I receive books for free in exchange for an honest and unbiased review, however this is a verified purchase. See all our reviews at <http://www.bookexplosions.com/> or on Goodreads at <https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/...>

Rosemarie says

On the harsh plains of South Dakota, where snowfall is measured in yards and grudges in generations, Detective Marek Okerlund returns to his home town of Reunion with his five year old daughter in the midst of a swirling blizzard. He had been half of an elite and much-decorated pair of homicide detectives in Albuquerque; but gave up his career to care for Rebecca, traumatically mute since the death of her mother and unborn brother. He hopes that the lower stress job of part-time county detective that he has accepted will allow him time to rebuild Rebecca's shattered sense of security.

To his surprise and dismay, Acting Sheriff Karen Okerlund-Mehaffey turns out to be his niece, daughter of the much older half-brother whose implacable hatred of his father's second family had helped to drive Marek away immediately after his mother's funeral. Karen had also returned home from her position as city police dispatcher to nurse her father after a stroke. As he recovered, she cautiously agreed to finish out his term as Sheriff (an Okerlund had been sheriff as long as the county existed), and soon discovered that she liked it. Painfully aware of her inexperience, she had begged the county supervisors to hire a detective to help train her in police work. Which explains why this disparate and mutually mistrustful pair stood side by side the morning after the blizzard staring in disbelief at the frozen body of Dale Hansen, a local executive, chained to a fence by the highway with the straggling words "White Out" carved into his forearm.

The author offers remarkable character studies of the independent residents of this harsh insular farming community on the wide plains. Marek has no scene-of-crime team or police laboratory to help him; even the coroner isn't a doctor, but a mortician (yikes!) And his new boss is furious when he dares to interview her lifelong neighbors, many of whom are her relatives - and his. The conflicted relationships and harsh environment from which secrets emerge slowly like bodies from snowbanks make Dead White a very

unusual and literary procedural. The author plans to release a sequel, tentatively entitled Dead Dreams, later this year. I can't wait.

Louise Pass says

Family ties

Would you go back? Small town life, failing town, family farms, everyone related to everyone else. Change both good and bad comes to town.

Debs says

2.75 stars

In the interest of full disclosure, this is not my kind of novel at all. I don't read mysteries, mostly because I don't enjoy them. The only exceptions to this personal rule are John Connolly's Charlie Parker novels, an exception due almost entirely to their intricate characters and rich language. I read this one because a member of my bookclub chose it as our monthly read for May. It took me three months to get up the ambition to actually sit down and finish it.

I had some technical problems with the writing of DEAD WHITE, stemming from occasional and jarring tense shifting, as well as from the fact that I often felt I had missed scenes--that there were things the author expected me to know that I didn't know because they hadn't been presented. I often grew frustrated with this book as a result of this "missing" information. I feel that I would've done better if I had made a character map while reading so I could keep everyone straight; there were a number of characters that floated through and didn't make much of an impression so I couldn't recall them when they cropped up in conversation later in the novel. The three characters in which I took the most interest--Two Fingers, and The Seasons--appeared only briefly.

One thing I thought Coker did well was in the way she presented the landscape and the bleakness of the setting. I got a very clear picture of Reunion and the surrounding area, which is surprising as there isn't too much description in the novel. I didn't figure out the central mystery either, which I figure is the point of a "good" mystery novel, so in that aspect, this was successful.

Honestly, it's just not my bag. If you like mysteries, you'll probably like this fine.

Barbara says

Melodramatic and silly ("Their job was education. His was murder"). Plot and characters aren't bad--it just could have used extensive editing, and it looks self-published? Also I was never convinced that the drug boss would bother with small-time South Dakota (where I live), but what do I know?

Katherine Hanna says

I almost missed out on a great book. Generally, I'm not a fan of getting thrown into the deep end in Chapter 1. I like a bit more explanation, a bit more clarity as I begin a book. Personal preference, sure. If you are the same, I urge you not to be put off by the first chapter of Dead White. I kept going because it was clear that the writing itself was top-notch. I'm so glad I did.

This book is superbly written, plotted, and paced. The characters are distinct and real, with their backgrounds and secrets slowly emerging as the story moves forward. I read this in pieces only because my day job forced me to keep putting it down. This is one of those books I could have lost myself in and finished in one marathon read.

The author weaves a complicated plot filled with unique individuals who never run together in the reader's mind, and touches on more than a few social and political issues facing small-town America today in a reasoned and thoughtful way. The mystery keeps growing broader, pulling in character after character, until it seems no one is untouched by the troubles facing this town.

No one is a superhero, no one is a saint. They are all regular folks with their own troubles taking a back seat to the need to go on in life. Some of them travel down the wrong path. Yeah, it's gotta be hard to be the sheriff in a town where so many folks are related to you, but you have to put that aside and do your job. The author shows this conflict of emotions without ever going overboard, as well as giving us Marek Okerlund, a man with a tragic past whose only reason for not giving up is his young daughter.

Each time I thought I had the mystery figured out, some new twist would come along to keep me guessing. And even though I fingered one suspect before the cops did, turns out there was much more to the whole thing than that.

The wrap-up was satisfying without being pat or sugar-coated. Just what this town—and this book—needed.

Linda Pobanz says

White

It was definitely intriguing and interesting. This is the second time I've read this book, and it was just as exciting. I didn't remember everything, but remembered enough to know what was coming. Yet it was just as diversified as the first time I read it. I'm glad I reread it and can't wait for the next one.

Elizabeth says

just started the series and am loving it.

Patrizia says

Questo libro mi è piaciuto molto, non solo per la parte gialla, ma soprattutto per i rapporti fra i due protagonisti, che, nonostante siano praticamente coetanei, sono zio e nipote. Leggerò sicuramente gli altri della serie.

Mary says

So good! I felt like I was in a SD winter from the writing and the characters were really well developed. It was a book I couldn't put down. It definitely didn't end on a cheerful note, but I enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone who wants a book that is atmospheric with a good mystery.
