



Streets of Darkness

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From Reader Review Streets of Darkness for online ebook

Christine says

As a Bradfordian who left a long time ago, I had very mixed feeling about reading Streets of Darkness. Bradford was my birthplace and where I spent my childhood. Streets of Darkness is a dark, gritty drama capturing some of the reasons why I find Bradford a tough place to be. This is Bradford crime noir!

Dhand cleverly shares the real Bradford with his readers. This is a Bradford that I am familiar with and also unfamiliar with. I never lived in any of the areas of mentioned, but I was aware of them. I glimpsed its darker side, from the prostitution at Thornton Road and the infamous Lumb Lane to the no go areas. Bradford is incredibly segregated racially and religiously with areas totally Asian and areas totally White. To anyone living outside of Bradford, it may seem strange that there are areas you do not venture into. It has a rich cultural history of industrialisation with the mills. It was the hunting ground of the Yorkshire Ripper. Bradford has been in decline for as long as I can remember. In spite of some investment into the city, I see little evidence of real change since I left in the 1990s. As someone who grew up in Clayton (Bradford 14) and saw the potential of Bradford, it is rather sad. This all makes Bradford the ideal setting for a crime novel! A Gotham City, in need of a hero to fix it.

Into the rather bleak landscape of Bradford, we get to know Sikh DI Harry Virdee. Virdee is a law unto himself. He has found himself in trouble and is now suspended from the police. He breaks the rules. He has a temper. He is a real joy to get to know. He stands out married to a Muslim, the very pregnant Saima. That is unusual and very frowned upon. It has separated him from his family and his community. We see Virdee on the tail of a man blamed for the death of a Muslim MP from Bradford West. The MP has been found at Bradford Grammar School with a Swastika on his body. It seems that racial tensions in the city are rising again, with the real threat of violence and riots. Virdee is asked by his boss to find the suspect in the killing of the Bradford MP quickly. As he is suspended, this means he can operate outside the law. This suspect is Lucas Dwight, released from prison a few days ago with far right extremist BNP views.

Dhand does an excellent job establishing Harry Virdee, as a kind of lone ranger copper. He sets the scene beautifully, giving readers a chance to get to know the tough, dirty and complex city, with its drugs, cultural conflicts, manipulative individuals behind the scenes and politics. Nothing is what it seems.

Streets of Darkness is highly recommended and totally and utterly original. More please, Mr. Dhand. You will all want to discover Virdee for yourself!

Richard says

I read this novel over the past two consecutive days. It is quite remarkable and centres on just one day in the life of suspended police officer DI Harry Virdee. Fast paced, action driven it shows Harry desperate to control his rage, support his pregnant wife and get his job back.

Secrets and Lies, Revenge and Redemption and even Crime and Passion. This book has it all and is an incredible debut novel from an author writing about what they know while demonstrating a skill to explore the darker side between the police and the criminal gangs, racial tension and political unrest.

Bradford is the undoubted star of this book; fallen upon hard times but with a proud history. The city is seen as a recovering success until a recent by-election result changes the power basis and in the fallout political

and criminal factions will not stop at any action to overcome their rivals and enemies.

I loved the sense of isolation Harry feels both from his family and his work colleagues due to his marriage across cultural and religious divides and his latest outburst that leaves him suspended and his career irreparably damaged even if he avoids being sacked.

Strong plot full of interesting and diverse characters. Nothing is as it seems and the thought that Bradford is in need of a comic book hero, seemingly more like Gotham City runs as a theme in the book. That isn't Virdee, he is a flawed human being and apart from his job dedication and love for his wife has little going for him.

Full of twists and turns the narrative will run through the wringer and leave you what is right and what is wrong; are they two sides of the same coin? You spin it and take your chances.

There are shining examples of loyalty, faith and innocence sadly it doesn't always save them from falling foul of the consequences of crime or the riots waiting to happen on the streets of the city.

A book that raises more questions than it answers in back story and outcomes and sets up the series if the author has the energy to continue in this frenetic way. Storytelling at its very best.

Sarah says

Having heard lots of great things about this book I had to get myself a copy and I'm very glad I did.

Harry is an extremely complex character. He is a good guy but then he will stop at nothing when it comes to those he loves. As much as I really liked his character, there was a certain darkness to him that made me slightly wary of him.

The fact that Harry is suspended from work doesn't stop him from getting involved in a case that he really shouldn't do. Harry seems to know a lot of what is going on in and around Bradford where he lives and works and has his ear very firmly to the ground.

The man that everyone seems to be after, Lucas Dwight, was someone that I really took to straight away from meeting him. Even though he is a criminal, he is a really likeable one. I think he even surprises Harry and Harry reluctantly starts to like the guy.

Another character who I really liked was Harry's somewhat long suffering wife. I love the closeness between both characters and the love that they both feel for each other is quite a strong and intense one. Saima is such a wonderfully strong character and I think to a certain extent she is Harry's saviour and keeps him on the straight and narrow.

The author brings to life the darkness that sadly surrounds most cities and the issues within them. He also shows the issues that can be caused when two people from different faiths and beliefs come together and how those people can be annihilated by the ones that are the closest to them.

Streets of Darkness is a brilliantly dark and gripping new crime novel. You can feel the tension as the pace picks up throughout the story. Very excited about Harry and what the future has in store for him. A stunning debut and can't wait to read more by the author.

Nigel says

What a good read! Many thanks to my Goodreads friends for introducing me to this author.

I picked up this one in a charity shop as a paperback to see whether it worked for me - it did!

I really liked Harry as the lead character however all the other characters were worthwhile too. Bradford as a dark dysfunctional backdrop was well used and effective. The pace and tension was well crafted and could have easily made this unputdownable.

The use of ethnic and racial tensions impressed me - hard to do in anything like a balanced way.

All in all an excellent read and I will be reading the next one when I get the chance.

Noelle says

I was given a proof copy of this book from Ben Willis of Transworld Books/ Penguin Random House. Huge, huge thanks for that Ben as this has got to be my favourite debut novels of 2016!!

I am not sure that any amount of “EEEEEEKs” or “Oh My Friggin’ Gods” will get across the sheer excitement I felt when I finished reading this book. I only hope I can do it justice by my review, as #bookjunkies....this book is pure genius!

The story is set in Bradford and there were a lot of comparisons to Gotham (Batman) which I absolutely adored and set the mood in such a way that as a reader....well I was just entranced. It was eery, dark and very gritty and the comparison made you feel every bit a part of this morbid atmosphere as the story unfolded.

And WHAT A STORY it was! The opening pages had that #KillerHook which immediately draws the reader in and for me, is a MUST if I am going to keep reading a book. The actions of the story-line were delivered masterfully with a perfect pace and build up to the twists that will leave the reader breathless from excitement!

There are various themes riddled throughout the pages — some controversial, some expected — but all very much integral to the story. Racism, retribution, a haunting past or two, drugs, justice, fear, chaos and just what lengths will a person go to in order to save someone they love — oh my giddy aunt peeps— I could go on! Each of these strengthened the story and delivered that gut-wrenching blow that distinguishes greatness from mediocrity in a crime fiction novel.

If you have ever read any of my reviews, you will know that if a book does not have characters with substance and depth – I usually struggle to maintain an interest in the story. There was absolutely no fear of that with Streets of Darkness as the main character, DI Harry Virdee, was exceptional! A rogue of sorts, haunted by his past, the #Blood, a seeker of truth and justice whilst being dedicated to his wife/unborn child and his job.... yes! Yes! YES! — all the boxes were ticked!

I also adored his wife, Saima and the courage, determination and strength she showed when she needed to. Various characters –even the baddies — were so well written, that as a reader, they become a part of you and added a balance to the story. Another of my faves was Lucas Dwight, a recently released Neo-Nazi who will absolutely enthral and surprise you — I dare you not to LOVE this guy! Dare you!!

Would I recommend any lovers of gritty, intense, crime thrillers who need “OMG” moments that will blow you away to read this book? Hell-Bloody-Yeah I would!! The book will be published on June 17th, but don’t worry #bookjunkies — if you are in need of a fix, just pre-order!

Sharon Bolton says

This is a debut crime novel, set in Bradford. I'm from the north of England, not this part of Yorkshire, but not far away, so I know what its like to grow up and live in these grim northern towns, that always seem to be passed over by whatever economic boom is sweeping across the country.

In the town where I grew up, it was always a recession. I don't think I knew anyone who was comfortably off until I went to university. And the Bradford of this book, frequently and amusing referred to as Gotham City, is like this. It's also an uneasy mix of different ethnicities. AA Dhand's Bradford presents the dark side of multi-cultural Britain, with all its prejudices and tensions, the side that isn't really working. The police of the town still remember the race riots of 2001, and are conscious that with an unstable mix of cultures, the tinder-box could alight at any time.

When this story opens, this is exactly what is about to happen. A body has been found. Rather horribly killed. The dead man happens to be an important Bradford businessman, an Asian, rich and powerful, who was about to be elected as a local MP. The immediate worry of the police is that blame will fall on the local BNP, sparking another round of riots.

Our main character is DI Harry Virdee, a British Sikh, suspended from active service for getting involved in a fight. We hear that its not the first time, he has something of a volatile temper. Harry is married to Saima, another Asian, but a Muslim, and the two have been cast out by both their families. Now that Harry is suspended, there is a sense that these two are entirely alone, with only their love to sustain them, and it gets tested in this book.

A fast paced, original crime debut and one that I'm sure will do well.

Paromjit says

There are a few books in crime fiction that transcend their genre, this is one of them. The Streets of Darkness brings us a distinct contribution that reflects issues and characters that bring us a vivid picture of contemporary Britain. More specifically, it's about Bradford. The city is the large canvas within which the story takes place and the characters exist. They are authentically and peculiarly Bradford people, through whom Dhand exercises his storytelling gifts.

Bradford, its history of the mills and once the richest of cities, is now empty of prospects. It has high unemployment, is teetering on the knife edge of racial and religious meltdown, is drug fuelled and lacking hope. In 2001, it erupted into despairing race riots and Bradford burned. It is within this background that the story begins with Sikh DI Harry Virdee discovering the crucified body of a just elected local Asian MP with a swastika carved on his body at Bradford Grammar School. The initial evidence suggests that the perpetrator is Lucas Dwight, an extreme member of the BNP. The city is a tinderbox in which it would take very little for history to repeat itself.

Harry is suspended from the police whilst awaiting to answer charges at a hearing. To improve his chances at the hearing, Superintendent George Simpson asks Harry to go undercover and authorises him to work without rules and do whatever is necessary to locate Lucas and prevent the city going up in flames. Harry has a dark hole in his soul, is married to Saima, a muslim, who is heavily pregnant. This is a no-no for the Sikhs and the Muslims, and the star crossed lovers are ostracised by both their families and their respective

communities. He hunts Lucas down and it soon becomes clear that nothing is as it seems, Lucas is not the killer and there are ruthless forces that are determined that Lucas ends up dead. Improbably, Harry finds himself partnering Lucas in an attempt to discover what is going on.

It becomes clear that there is a group who is manipulating Bradford's communities with a view towards inciting and benefiting from riots. Into this toxic mix is the BNP, a hidden drug war, the menacing Bashir, Zain, the son of the murdered MP, shadowy figures, the biggest Asian Mela celebrations in Europe, and a Superintendent Simpson facing horrendous personal problems and the unenviable task of ensuring Bradford remains safe. With his pregnant wife in danger, and a violent blood drenched trail, Harry is a man who will do whatever needs to be done, but will he survive? There is a gut wrenching final twist that leads to the novel ending with a moral quandary.

This is an assured novel with outstanding plotlines. Dhand has constructed a ferociously compelling story with subtle and nuanced characters that develop, face redemption, discover the power of forgiveness, atonement, and humanity. The book hinges on themes of how the past infiltrates the present, conflict, greed, betrayal, love, loss, and family. Harry and Saima, and their new born son, offer a spark of hope for unity in a religiously divided city which could sorely use it. Many thanks to Random House Transworld for an ARC.

Louise Wilson says

Set in Bradford this crime story mixed with religion is gripping from the start.

DI Harry Virdee is suspended from work when he discovers the crucified body of Shakeel Ahmed newly elected MP for Bradford West.

Blood found at the scene has been identified as Lucas Dwights a member of the BNP recently released after 14 years in prison.

Harry is Sikh and married to a heavily pregnant Muslim woman who are both estranged from their families because they chose to marry outside their religion.

This is a brilliant debut novel. Fast paced, action packed with twists you won't see coming.

I would like to thank Net Galley, Random House UK Transworld Publishing for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Tattooed_mummy says

Wowser. This is not the sort of book I would usually choose to read but I was sent a proof copy in exchange for a review.

I was surprised to find myself gripped by the story! I loved the fact that the policeman in this tale is a Sikh, and that the various aspects of religion and race are dealt with throughout the story in both interesting and matter of fact ways. The story is British but just like Britain there are many multicultural issues too.

The characters are never monochrome but deeply shaded and nuanced. While like many police dramas the main character is that detective trope, the 'maverick with a dark secret', it is believable, after all, who wants a

story of a 9-5 policeman with no surprises!

There is a great deal of blood. There are very gory scenes that could upset gentler readers (not me of course I'm made of sterner stuff). The story covers issues such as racism, loyalty, religion, friendship, family, sacrifice and how the dark past can affect one's future. An excellent read. Brilliantly written. Lot's of surprises and the plot often didn't go where I thought it would! So don't get all comfortable with who you assume will live or die - this is a messy story - much like life.

Grab a copy. You won't regret it.

Rachel Hall says

A.A. Dhand has borrowed from the recent history of Bradford in terms of race relations and economic deprivation, added a shot in the arm of drugs, prostitution, corruption and sleaze and overlaid with a general malaise. The result is a little heavy on the melodrama and leaves Streets of Darkness feeling like a story which lives or dies on the turn of race relations in the city. Bradford is not unique in having seen the decline of the traditional industries which established their former prosperity but the city's tempestuous history of racial tension, climaxing with the riots of 2001 have left a lasting legacy on Bradford. Suspended cop, Detective Hardeep "Harry" Virdee jogs through the empty streets of Bradford contemplating his upcoming IPCC investigation which to all intents and purposes seems a foregone conclusion. His superior and boss, Detective Superintendent George Simpson has even conceded that he cannot save an officer with an admittedly prolific clear-up rate for his cases but an equally mottled conduct record. As Virdee ponders his many frustrations in life he still has to tackle breaking the news of his suspension to wife, Saima and with their first child a week overdue the last thing they need is to be facing fears about their future livelihood.

When Harry's run brings him face to face with the mutilated corpse of Bradford's most notable Asian son and the new Bradford West election winner, Shakeel Ahmed, he quickly senses the furore that will arise across the community. As a hugely influential businessman and the man who had tried to reverse Bradford's decline, his crudely crucified body with a swastika brutally carved into the middle of his chest clearly threatens an uprising and on the eve of the city's celebration of Asian culture - the Mela - and the festival of Eid, a backlash could see a repeat of 2001 riots. Encountering his boss at the crime scene just five days off of retirement, his superior proposes a way to assuage the opinions of the IPCC investigation board and given that Harry has nothing to lose and a chance to resurrect his career he is soon on board. When Simpson reveals that the DNA of former BNP leader and the newly released Lucas Dwight has been identified at the home where Shakeel Ahmed was kidnapped from, he tasks Harry with a twelve-hour deadline to bring Dwight in and end his tenure as Detective Superintendent with a peaceful legacy. However, things are never as simple as they appear and any crime fiction fan will testify, if Lucas Dwight had committed the murder it would make for a pretty dull plot.. As Harry comes to doubt Dwight's involvement in the murder and it soon becomes clear that the manipulation of Bradford and the its ensuing tensions in fact go far higher up the food chain. The expression "as straight as a die" goes out the window as Dhand introduces a motley assortment of characters, from the son of Shakeel Ahmed attempting to flex his muscle and continue his father's work, to Bashir, a sinister cabbie with a thirst for blood, smooth-talking BNP leader Martin David right through to brutal Colin Reed, who heads up a sister party to the BNP. As Harry operates with plenty of brute force of his own he quickly discovers that a drugs turf war and not in fact a racial motivation murder is behind events, but whether he alone can save Bradford from a racial meltdown in the remaining hours is another matter entirely.

Streets of Darkness is an enjoyable and entertaining novel, which flies past rapidly but represented little more than that for me. Rife with stereotypes and featuring a variety of tropes, I was disappointed that this

lacked originality from the maverick lone-wolf Harry Virdee throwing caution to the wind, consistently behaving recklessly and with a history of questionable friendships. Virdee almost feels like a hard boiled gumshoe straight out of a American pulp thriller! I was under the impression that this was a police procedural novel but from the opening moments in reads like an edgy thriller, where artistic license is heavily employed. Jam packed with action and with a brutal tension pervading throughout, Streets of Darkness will certainly be popular amongst readers. Although I agree that reading tastes are a very subjective matter, I cannot help thinking that the skin colours and racial backdrop which has been heavily lauded has played a part in the rave reviews of the literary press when this novel is really a simple gangland turf war and nothing too imaginative.

I will be very interested in seeing where the future of DI Harry Virdee lies when he returns in a second encounter and whether he plays by the rules of legitimate policing or continues to dispense the justice that he sees fit. Harry is hot-headed, combustible and a character on the edge, almost waiting to spill over and go one step too far. However, i want more than an action packed far-fetched lead character who tackles crime both singlehandedly and rather ambiguously. Harry is a rash and cocky protagonist and his careless attitude does not equate with his status as a Detective Inspector in the police force. His arrogance made him a character who I could not warm to. Virdee hails from an orthodox Sikh family and wife, Saima, from a strict Muslim household and aside from the continuous mentions of both Harry and Saimi being cast out by their families and what this will mean for their forthcoming child, none of the cast are explored in any real depth and I felt no closer to what had driven much of their behaviour. I presume the religious divide between Harry and Saima is supposed to be viewed against the wider skin colour tensions, reflecting that differences of opinions are not restricted to skin tone alone. For a reader who is unenlightened on many of the aspects of differing faiths in the Asian culture I was grateful that Dhand spelled these differences out, but the necessity to do so can at times feel like an information overload as it holds the plot development back, specifically with regard to traditions and rituals surroundings specific cultural aspects and activities.

Sadly, the nearer to the finale this book ventured it became clear that this was really a matter of gangland violence and a power struggle to control the criminal network of Bradford. The violence is gratuitous and much of this was far too "Boy's Own" with thuggery attempting to pass itself off as warranted. Streets of Darkness used the ploy of blaming the political bigwigs and BNP in order to escalate a violent street warfare and as A.A. Dhand opted for fisticuffs and wide boys playing hard nut gangsters. Readers who prefer some substance and depth in their crime fiction plots will probably be disappointed. I most certainly was and with a mindless violence overload and a straightforward motive for framing Lucas Dwight clearly evident from the early pages, I will not be reading anymore of the egotistical Harry Virdee. The interesting and unexpected conclusion leaves Harry's fate irrevocably linked to his family, and in a final showdown he sits on the horns of a dilemma which seems set to once again collide directly with his wider family.

Gisela Hafezparast says

Probably more a 3.5 because I don't quite believe the ending is plausible.

At the beginning this promises to be one of these bad boy copy detective series, who fights the criminal world not quite according to the law. The twist is that it plays in Bradford, which adds frisson because of its cultural heritage and it's multi-ethnicity without being cosmopolitan. There is also a very interesting twist because it picks up on problems not only between "white" Bradfordians and its Asian population, but between its Asian Muslim and Sikh population. Throw in the BNP and the story more or less must have written itself, it is wasn't for the ending.

However, great well written story and I have already ordered the second book in the series. We'll see how it

develops.

Winter Sophia Rose says

Action Packed, Compelling, Shocking, Gritty, Intense & Breathtaking! An Excellent Read! I Loved It!

Maureen says

Thank you to Netgalley and Random House UK, Transworld publishers for my ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review

Bradford is a city in the north of England, a city that played a huge part in the industrial revolution of the late 18th century. It was renowned throughout the world for its massive textile production, which in turn brought huge wealth to this city. The Bradford of today however is a completely different place, and it's here that we're introduced to the fictional character of Detective Harry Virdee.

Harry is currently suspended from his job for being somewhat 'heavy handed', and is facing a hearing that could see him losing his job, after all, this isn't the first time he's gone against the rules and done things his own way.

As the story begins, Harry is out on his early morning run, when he comes across the crucified body of the newly elected Asian MP for Bradford, Shakeel Ahmed. Ahmed is a local leading light, with many business, as well as political interests. DNA implicates Lucas Dwight, former leader of the BNP, and newly released from prison. Dwight was the instigator of the infamous 2001 Bradford riots. Although Harry is suspended, his boss Superintendent George Simpson asks him to work undercover to bring Dwight to justice and hopefully avoid a repeat of the 2001 riots.

Harry has always played by his own rules, and if that means that somebody has to get hurt in order for him to achieve his end goal, then so be it. Harry is a Sikh who's married to Muslim Saima, and right now he should be home with her preparing for the impending birth of their first born child, but unfortunately they're both going to go through hell before that happens.

Wow! this is a fantastic debut novel. Author A.A.Dhand explores the cultural and religious differences of a Sikh/Muslim marriage, with Harry and Saima no longer being able to rely on the love or support of their respective families, each having been disowned for committing the ultimate sin of marrying out of their religion. He also gives us a ringside seat into inner city tensions that are always simmering and seething, just waiting to spill over into violence, at the slightest provocation. Then of course there are the drugs - the gangs fighting for supremacy, for which the losers may pay the ultimate price. Oh my goodness! It was so exciting at times, I found it hard to catch my breath. This is a grim offering, and although it's a work of fiction, it's one that should be read - it includes horrendous violence, but this is the reality of life when important issues are left unresolved, and begin to fester. An excellent read, and one of which the author should be justifiably proud!

Andy Weston says

This is a well-written and completely plausible piece of Yorkshire noir that paints a bleak picture of Bradford as drug crime lords and the BNP battle on its streets bringing memories of the riots of 2001.

It's no surprise that the TV rights sold even before the book was published in 2016.

Though it has as hero DI Hardeep Virdee (or Harry) divisions of right and wrong are not as clear cut as in a typical crime thrillers. With its graphic images of violence this is an unsettling end at times, and doesn't flinch away from the gritty reality of a working class community that has been affected by the savagery it has suffered over many years.

Dhand's mix of characters are the icing on the cake and make this a very different and compelling reading experience.

Raven says

Streets of Darkness is to my knowledge the first crime book set in Bradford that I have encountered, and with only having visited the city a couple of times, my curiosity was instantly aroused with the mouthwatering prospect of unexplored crime territory. Unlike other British police procedural writers, Dhand paints an entirely bleak and unflinching portrait of this city, without the little moments of affection that normally punctuate other writers' portrayals of their home towns. The image that Dhand portrays of his city is unrelentingly grim and depressing, and there is a downtrodden air amongst its inhabitants that hammers home the true picture of inner city deprivation and neglect that this city has suffered. Even allowing for the rare moments of happiness that Virdee experiences on the cusp of the birth of his first child, his character, with all his personal torments and professional frustrations, is a perfect mirror of Bradford itself. Dhand also highlights the long standing religious intolerance experienced by those marrying outside of their religion- Virdee is a Sikh, but is married to Saima, a Muslim- and I very much enjoyed Dhand's exploration of the role of religion in their marriage and personal beliefs. Indeed, the attendant problems of faith loom large for Virdee throughout, both personally and professionally, as he becomes embroiled in a violent and dangerous investigation, that soon threatens all he holds dear, against a backdrop of a city thrown into a state of social unrest. Virdee is a traditional maverick, and goes out on a limb in the course of the book, despite operating whilst suspended as a police officer. Despite his downtrodden and naturally pessimistic air I did quite take to him as a character, but was a little unconvinced by the slightly schmaltzy feel when Dhand turned his attentions to Virdee's home life. There was also an annoyingly predictable plot device linked to this that did make me punch the air in frustration as it wasn't needed, and rather undid the fact that this was a very well-plotted and compelling depiction of inner city strife and burgeoning violence up to that point. However, that niggle aside I would still strongly recommend this debut. Grim, violent and a welcome addition to the British crime writing scene.
