



Shoot the Dog

Brad Smith

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In upstate New York, Virgil Cain's draft horses are pulling hay in the fields when two film scouts offer him \$500 a day for their use in a film. He pockets the money, but the chaotic set of *Frontier Woman* turns out to be more trouble than it's worth. Producer Sam Jonson clearly has her heart in the wrong place with her husband-cum-director Robb, who costs her a major financier, not to mention the Native American casino owner Ronnie Red Hawk, who has a vested interest in an alternate leading lady. After one—and then a second—young woman is found dead, Virgil discovers that more is at stake than the interests of a casino magnate...and he'd better step in before the charming ten-year-old actress Georgia ends up the next victim of this deadly production.

“Smith has a marvelous control of his material, effortlessly mixing laugh-out-loud comedy with streaks of country noir” (*Booklist*), and he is “a writer to watch, a comet on the horizon” (Dennis Lehane).

Shoot the Dog Details

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Author : Brad Smith
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From Reader Review Shoot the Dog for online ebook

Tanis Fowler says

The ending reads as though the author was told he had six months to live and he realized he wanted to do anything but write the end of a book, but thought he should probably wrap it up. Disappointing after the last two Virgil Cain mysteries.

Alex McGilvery says

Virgil Cain's concerns are the weather and getting a pair of Percheron horses to earn their keep on his farm. He's not interested in the movie company that come to the area to shoot a movie about a frontiers women. The only reason he decides to take his horses to work in the movie is the tax bill that is coming due on his farm. He learns quickly that the movie business attracts more than its fair share of odd characters and inflated egos. He doesn't care as long as they pay him and his horses for their work.

When the leading lady of the movie is found dead, Virgil would be just as glad to be out of the whole scene, but the movie grinds forward with a replacement actress. He manages to annoy the producer and director as he watches over Georgia, the girl who plays the frontier woman's daughter. Somehow he gets caught up in the murder investigation in spite of being told by the investigating officer to stay out of it. Even the fact that she is his girlfriend can't make him obey her. ?

Brad creates a broad pallet of characters from a thug who has reinvented himself as the very successful Indian who has made a pile of money with his casino and would love to make an Oscar speech to Virgil who has a gift for annoying the people who think he is just a dumb hick farmer.

This book is a very fun read. The characters and plot work extremely well and the mystery comes to a satisfactory conclusion. There is a fair bit of humour, but it is understated and never gets in the way of the story. I would highly recommend the book for anyone who likes mysteries.

Suspense Magazine says

The third mystery novel in Brad Smith's Virgil Cain Series, "Shoot the Dog" aims the spotlight at the seedy underbelly of the motion-picture industry and corruption inside an Indian-owned casino in upstate New York.

Former baseball player and hardworking farmer Virgil Cain is a ruggedly handsome no-nonsense man with a low tolerance for condescending posers like the movie producers who want to hire him and his two Percheron draft horses for scenes in their circa 1800s western filming on location nearby. Virgil reluctantly agrees because he needs the money for his property taxes.

Production has barely begun when the movie's lead actress is found murdered. Ronnie Red Hawk, a shady casino executive and one of the movie's producers, loses no time replacing her with a young starlet who is the object of his lust. Virgil's girlfriend, police detective Claire Marchand, investigates the murder. Soon, another young woman is found dead under suspicious circumstances. Virgil keeps a close eye on the set, worried a sweet ten-year-old actress will be the next victim.

Not willing to risk his relationship with Claire, Virgil fends off the brazen advances of a young starlet with a dark past. He does some investigating on his own and suspects there may be more than one killer lurking in the shadows. The tension escalates as Virgil struggles to save Claire from a suspected sociopath and protect a

defenseless child from a ruthless killer.

Brad Smith creates such vivid characters, including the endearing draft horses Bob and Nelly, that their images will linger in readers' minds long after they close the book on this engaging tale of murder and betrayal in a simple farming community.

Reviewed by S.L. Menear, author of "Deadstick Dawn" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine

Carol says

First time reading anything by Brad Smith but after reading Shoot The Dog, I ordered the first two in the series. A good tale from upstate New York. Did not know they had cowboys there. Virgil Cain fits the bill. Hollywood comes to town. They are shooting a movie, Frontier Woman, and hire Virgil and his two Percheron draft horses as extras. Virgil in need of money works out a deal but soon finds himself in the middle of a murder that was not part of the script...Brad Smith is one smooth writer with stellar characters and a nice plot.

Terri says

I received this book as part of a Goodreads giveaway. I struggled with my rating of this one. I feel that I could have rated it higher if I had read the previous installment of the Virgil Cain story line. I felt that this novel lacked the character development to root for the main characters. I did however get the sense that this had already occurred in the previous book. That being said I was able to read this as a stand alone novel and there were plenty of characters to dislike enough to keep me interested. All in all a good read.

karen says

this book is kind of like a the male version of a cozy mystery. and i don't mean that in a bad way at all, i only mean that all the death (and bedroom scenes) happen offscreen, and the book doesn't roll around in descriptive bloodshed. for some reason, i had thought he would be a grittier writer; one of those new-breed ultraviolent writers i like like frank bill or daniel ray pollock. i bought one of smith's earlier books, *red means run*, on the strength of the title alone - to me it sounds like it should be full of gore and terror, but considering it is actually the first book in this series, i'm going to venture that it is not.

so you fainter-of-heart-than-me can rest assured that there is nothing here to gross you out - it is just a novel in which murders take place almost politely, barely rippling the surface of the reader's pond.

the story is focused on a man, whose name, by the way, is VIRGIL CAIN, who has seemingly stepped out of a western novel, even though this here takes place in rural new york. few of words, scorn for fashion and fame, who has no time to pay into the celebrity adulation of hollywood types or the gushing of gossip that arises when a crew comes to film a movie in his sleepy little town. but he could use some money, so he lets his horses become movie stars, and he becomes more involved than he ever wanted to be in the world of film and its hangers-on.

once on the set, he manages to piss off bunches of people who are accustomed to strangers falling all over

themselves to do them favors but he also meets a sweet ten-year-old girl, whom he befriends, because little girls love horses, and she is not yet an insufferable hollywood actress. but then those darn murders get in the way, and both virgil and his girlfriend slash police officer find themselves involved in a world of lies and money and ego, and virgil becomes invested in protecting his young friend.

the book is actually pretty funny - it is not quite satire, but it does manage to poke fun at the film industry and the notion of celebrity, but more importantly, near-celebrity; those on the periphery who glow by proximity.

and even if you don't usually go in for the strong silent male type who always gets the last, brief, word and gets all the lady-attention without even making eye contact, and even if you cannot understand what the deal is with sam and why she has such an infantile husband in robb and why on earth she would tolerate such a relationship when she is a successful woman in her own right, it's still a pretty good story.

not quite what i was expecting, but still a good read. and now i have to go back and read the earlier ones, so i can see what i missed in virgil's story...

Bill says

Brad Smith's Virgil Cain series is just terrific. Shoot the dog in Hollywood parlance means that a film's plot line isn't engaging the audience so you shoot the dog to get the audience to hate the bad guy. Virgil is hired by a film that is on a nearby upstate New York location to bring his field working horses for use in the 1940s western film. Needing money to pay his property taxes he does so and is amused by the dysfunctional producers, director, and the entire Hollywood scene--until the lead actress is murdered. The book's characters are well drawn, including a caucasian claiming to be Native American that runs a casino, smarmy Hollywood types, and cute little girl actress that Virgil is protective of. Start the series from the beginning to see how Virgil has gotten to where he is in Shoot the Dog.

Peter says

This is the third in the Virgil Cain mysteries and I like them Brad Smith has a great sense of dialogue and he fashions intriguing odd-ball characters mixed up in a decent story line. In this outing, Cain...the rural living baseball playing decent guy turned farmer ends up working a movie set. Smith's sense of the movie set is so good, so fine tuned, so well done that you'd swear he had spent a lot of time hanging out while they shot movies. There are some nice touches in terms of reality and fake and there are a couple or regular characters showing up who add a sense of welcome to the story.

Larry says

Virgil Cain's third adventure sees him involved with a film company because the film-makers need horses for their frontier movie and Virgil needs money, as usual. The film company is riddled with borderline types and Virgil's curiosity leads him to track down a murderer, even when his cop girlfriend, Claire, advises against it. The crime is not complex, there is no doubt about the killer (except for the cops), and virgil is more lucky than an ace investigator. Having said that, I like Virgil, found the film makers to be quite a crew, and thought that a scene involving Virgil and a muzzle-loading musket was almost priceless,

Paul Pessolano says

“Shoot the Dog” by Brad Smith, published by Scribner.

Category – Mystery/Thriller Publication Date – July 16, 2013

This is one of those mysteries that you can just about recommend to anyone. It provides a very good storyline and has very little objectionable material that would make it unsuitable to some readers.

Virgil Cain is a rancher/farmer who has been dating Claire Marchand, a police detective, who finds himself working on a movie set and looking for a murderer. Both situations he would have preferred not to be involved in.

A movie company, of questionable repute, is making a film of the blockbuster book, “Frontier Woman”. The director is inept and only has the job due to his wife’s being the Producer. The film is having problems obtaining enough front money to stay in production. Ronnie Red Hawk, a Native American Casino owner, puts up the money to keep the film in production but feels that he has almost total control of the operation.

The leading lady, Olivia Burns, is found dead and it is presumed a homicide. The next day Ronnie Red Hawk brings in her replacement, a young lady that he is in love with but has dubious talent and has a prior police record, but then so does Ronnie Red Hawk.

The movie is in need of horses and Virgil Cain provides them and also becomes an unwilling member of the cast. Claire becomes involved with the case and it becomes more complicated when another woman is found dead.

An unusual read in that the story provides a well thought out mystery but does not contain the gore, language, or sexual content of most novels today.

Luanne Ollivier says

Brad Smith returns with the third entry in his Virgil Cain series - Shoot the Dog.

Virgil is again just minding his own business, plowing the back forty with a pair of Percherons when some movie folks scouting for locations pull up and offer to rent the horses for their 'Frontier Woman' movie. Well, the taxes are coming due and the soybean crop failed last year, so yeah, Virgil could use the money. But those movie folks are quick to talk and slow to listen. They assume Virgil is the 'half-wit dullard hired hand' that works for Mr. Cain - and he lets them think it. Virgil on the other hand is slow to talk and quick to listen.

There's lots of set up before we even get to the crime, but oh can Smith spin a tale. His tongue in cheek take on the movie industry and celebrity is hilarious. The dialogue, conniving and back stabbing amongst the group is priceless. But when the leading lady ends up dead, Virgil can't help himself. He decides to be on set

a little more - he's taken a shine to ten year old actor Georgia - and besides, she likes his horses.

"So do you follow it, or does it follow you?' Buddy asked.

What?

Trouble.

Virgil smiled and finished the beer."

Virgil is such a great character, from his droll dialogue, the way he thinks, his unerring sense of right and wrong and his decision to act on his principles. A white knight with manure on his workboots.

I love the laid back interactions between Virgil and his lover Detective Claire Marchand. (And I have to admit I'm a little jealous of Claire - Virgil is that laid back, quiet type that is oh appealing.) Claire on her own is just as great a character as Virgil - she's got a great mind and a sharp tongue - her dialogue with suspects cuts like a knife. These characters will appeal to readers of both sexes.

The goal of course it to solve who killed that leading lady, but the whodunnit in Shoot the Dog takes a backseat to the characters. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

Shoot the Dog is another entertaining romp of a read from Brad Smith. Smith has a sly, wry sense of humour that I truly enjoy. Do yourself a favour, pull up a chair on the porch, grab a beer and start from the first book - Red Means Run. You'll be hooked - on Brad Smith, not the beer.

Readers who enjoy Carl Hiaasen and Tim Dorsey's tongue in cheek mysteries will enjoy Brad Smith.

Jenna says

Good.

Never knew that term shoot the dog. Was interesting to learn about some of the behind the scenes movie things.

DelAnne Frazee says

Title: Shoot The Dog - Virgil Cain Mysteries Book 3

Author: Brad Smith

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Genre: Mystery

Tags: Romance, Suspense

Sensual Level: Mild

Overall Rating: Very Good

Virgil Cain, a former baseball player now working hard on his farm, is approached by producers who want to

hire him and his Percheron draft horses, Bob and Nelly, for the western *Frontier Woman*. Although the handsome farmer has no use for the pretentious film people the \$500.00 per day salary being offered is too good to pass up with the property taxes being due and the low funds Virgil has available. It is not long after production begins that the lead actress is killed. As Claire Marchland, Virgil's police detective girlfriend, investigates, Virgil stays out of the way and keeps a close eye on all the possible suspects. When another actress is found dead, Virgil begins to suspect that sweet 10 year old Georgia Thompson is next on the murderer's list.

When Georgia is kidnapped, Virgil steps in to locate and save her, but in order to do that he must wade through the seedier side of the movie industry and vermin that live there. With a sleazy director, a producer who likes to flaunt her assets, an actress with more than questionable morals, a financial backer with designs on any young attractive female in his line of sight and a dozen other prospective suspects Virgil begins to wonder if there might be more than one killer about.

Although the story seems a bit slow at times it is well worth the time you spend reading it. Virgil is a strong character that will keep you glued to the story as he works through the clues to find the answers to locate the killer before it is too late for Georgia. Will Virgil be able to resist the allures of the sexy actress who is constantly throwing herself at him or will his love for Claire keep him strong? Will Bob become the true star with his love of the camera? Is anyone what they seem? Smith will keep you guessing until the last page with his plot twist and glimpses into the lesser talked about side of the filming industry. You may not be so enamored with the movie scene after reading the book, but you will love Brad Smith's style of writing and eagerly look for his books to add to your personal library.

Robert says

I like the rugged Southwest—New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona. Heck, even the Midwest doesn't sound all that bad. And I like movies even more than I should. But I didn't like this novel. Getting a behind the scenes peek at directors and producers and actors and actresses and funding shortfalls and casting decisions should have been one of the greatest days of my life. Instead, I felt like I'd been jarred off my horse and did a face plant in the dirt.

Even though *SHOOT THE DOG* is set in upstate New York, it had a western feel to it. Maybe because the movie *Frontier Woman* is a period piece, set in the 1840s, with bonnets and barns and horses and schoolgirls in pigtailed and muskets and men who take about five minutes to say about six words of interest. And that was my first major problem with this novel: the dialogue. There were times and lines that clicked faster than a ballpoint pen and were as smooth as a cowboy hat. But other times the dialogue felt more like a monologue and resembled a transcript of two people talking in an Arizona diner, where additional words and phrases weighed down the potential for a punch and crisp exchange.

I understand this is supposed to be a slow-moving mystery (the equivalent of a man's cozy), but whenever I start checking page numbers, or in the case of my Kindle, checking my location or completion percentage, because there's been no dead body, or even a strong conflict, then I start to get a little concerned, and the first question is inevitably: Is this really a mystery? Not what I'd like to be thinking about, thank you very much. So when did the dead body show up? At 32% (or around page 102 for those who prefer the more traditional reading method), and I'd started to get a little nervous. Not the palm sweating kind, but enough that I actually made a notation for the purposes of reviewing later.

I must say the movie industry has lost a little of its allure after reading this novel. Not to the point that I'm turned off, mind you, but I have a heightened awareness that wasn't really there before. I equate it to my Cedar Point experience. Once I peeled back the silver curtain, I've never really looked at an amusement park the same way again. Sometimes it's better to be completely oblivious and just focus on rainbows and trees and sunshine and candy bars.

The movie industry is chock full of sleazy and nefarious individuals (reminds me of Congress in that regard). There's a spineless asshole director who goes by the name Robb Fetterman; a producer who accentuates her assets to secure a movie's future, who goes by the name Sam Sawchuck; producers with loud mouths and curious infatuations and sketchy pasts and have extremely high opinions of themselves, who go by the names Ronnie Red Hawk and Levi Brown; and a tabloid actress named Kari Karson who may, or may not, be a nymphomaniac. So, in other words, there's something for everyone.

On a positive note, though, my favorite characters were a horse named Bob, who hammed it up for the cameras whenever the opportunity presented itself; Virgil Cain, one of those strong, silent types; Georgia Lee Thompson, a ten year-old precocious actress; and Nikki, the movie caterer who was completely oblivious to her beauty.

I have two words for Brad Smith: more Bob.

I received this book for free through NetGalley.

Mike Balsom says

Brad Smith weaves a tale of a bumbling film crew, a phony native and a somewhat-off-the-grid farmer/horse wrangler that kept me on the edge of my seat from start to finish. Virgil Cain, though at times a bit cliched, is a character that the reader can stand behind as he seems to be the only one in this story that has any kind of good head on his shoulders. One wonders if Cain represents Smith in some ways, and whether or not his experience seeing earlier novel "All Hat" being turned into a film provided grist for the mill on this one.
