



## The Carrion Birds

*Urban Waite*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# The Carrion Birds

*Urban Waite*

## **The Carrion Birds** Urban Waite

Set in a small town in the Southwest, a soulful work of literary noir rife with violence, vengeance, and contrition from a fresh voice in fiction—the author of the highly acclaimed *The Terror of Living*

Life hasn't worked out the way Ray Lamar planned. A widower and father who has made some tragic mistakes, he's got one good thing going for him: he's calm, cool, and efficient under pressure, usually with a gun in his hand. A useful skill to have when you're paid to hurt people who stand in your boss's way.

But Ray isn't sure he wants to be that man anymore. He wants to go home to Coronado, New Mexico, to see the twelve-year-old son he hopes will recognize him. He wants to make a new life far from the violence of the last ten years. One last job will take him there. All he has to do is steal a rival's stash. Simple, easy, clean.

Ray knows there's no such thing as easy, and sure enough, the first day ends in a catastrophic mess. Now, the runners who have always moved quietly through this idyllic desert town on the Mexican border want answers. And revenge. Short on time, with no one to trust but himself, Ray must come up with a clever plan or Coronado's newly appointed lady sheriff will have a vicious bloodbath on her hands.

Relentlessly paced and beautifully orchestrated, with refreshingly real, vulnerable, and very human characters and a vivid sense of place, *The Carrion Birds* is an unsettling and indelible work of literary noir in the tradition of Cormac McCarthy, Elmore Leonard, and Dennis Lehane.

## **The Carrion Birds Details**

Date : Published April 16th 2013 by William Morrow (first published March 12th 2013)

ISBN : 9780062216885

Author : Urban Waite

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Mystery, Crime, Horror, Suspense

 [Download The Carrion Birds ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Carrion Birds ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Carrion Birds Urban Waite**

---

## From Reader Review The Carrion Birds for online ebook

### Jim Mcfarlane says

This literary thriller and modern western, *The Carrion Birds* by Urban Waite, works because the literary part is mostly short descriptive phrases and a penchant for partial sentences. Whereas many thrillers are nonsensical chases in outlandish circumstances, *The Carrion Birds* presents real characters with human motivations and vulnerabilities in the realistic setting of New Mexican desert and scrubland where one last job will allow Ray Lamar to abandon his life of violence. The simple job goes awry because the rules of the game have changed.

I recommend this book to anyone who doesn't mind violence and doesn't have a plane to catch—I almost missed my connection while reading this book.

---

### Larry H says

I'd rate this 4.5 stars.

There are thrillers where you haven't a clue what is going to happen, ones that keep you guessing until far into the story, if not until the end. And then there are those in which you can pretty much figure out most of what will happen, sometimes early on into the book. While the latter type of book might not seem too exciting to read, in the hands of a talented author, it can be just as compelling (if not more so) than the former. Urban Waite's *The Carrion Birds* definitely follows that example, but his storytelling ability and the richness of his characters keep you flipping the pages (literally or metaphorically) so you can see how the story will resolve itself.

Ray Lamar used to be an oilman in the small New Mexico town of Coronado, until his father's wells ran dry. With no real prospect of income, and a wife and young son, he turned to a less savory way of life as a hired gun for a local crime lord, which brought him into the sights of a dangerous Mexican drug cartel and visited unspeakable tragedy upon his family, also causing his cousin Tom to lose his job as the town's sheriff.

After 10 years of hiding out, Ray is ready to move on with his life and finally see his now 12-year-old son again. He agrees to take one more job, because it will bring him back to Coronado, a town now in severe economic decline. But from the very beginning, nothing about this job goes the way it is supposed to, and Ray finds himself being sucked further and further into a maelstrom that he desperately wants to escape. His return to Coronado opens up a number of old wounds, and brings his cousin face-to-face with those who took his job away 10 years before, and those who resolutely tried to defend him.

As you might guess from the title alone, *The Carrion Birds* is a bleak book, but it is never morose or heavy-handed. In less than 300 pages, Urban Waite does a terrific job drawing his characters and providing their back stories, as well as pulling you along on the trajectories they might follow. While you may know how the whole story will resolve itself, it is a testament to Waite's talent as a writer that you don't care if there are few surprises, because the narrative is well-written, the drama is palpable, and the action flows tremendously well. I've seen some reviews of the book which liken it to *No Country for Old Men*, and while it does share that book's bleak tone, this is a book with a style all its own, although Waite's ability to evoke the settings of his novel reminded me a little of the excellent James Lee Burke.

This is a thriller which might not shock or dazzle you, but it certainly will thrill you, as much for the way it is written as for its plot. And definitely check out Waite's first novel, the equally bleak *The Terror of Living*, as well.

---

### **switterbug (Betsey) says**

As in Waite's debut novel, *THE TERROR OF LIVING*, the law and the outlaw square off, complicated by a past that links two adversaries together. In both books, there are common themes and figures that propel the action. The lawman has dents in his goodness, and the outlaw has goodness in his dents. However, the first book has more of an infrastructure, and the entangled subterfuge between the two sides of the law give the reader more to chew on. *CARRION BIRDS* had more style than substance.

Most of novel takes place in or near Coronado, a quiet, economically depressed New Mexico town at the border of Mexico, where some people know your name, your address, and your skeletons. It's dry, dusty, desert.

Ray Lamar is a legend in the Southwest underworld, a stringy, melancholy widower with the proverbial one last job to do before he pulls out for good, wipes his hands clean, and reunites with his young son. He'll steal some stash for his boss, return to Coronado, and start a new life.

Redemption. Hope. Desire. Be a good dad, forge a new future, and bury the tragedies of the past. But...It don't come easy. You know it don't come easy. That last job gets botched. Blood stands out on the dingy landscape. Bodies pile up; morals waver; hope is a four-letter word. "The thought of death still circling him, as it always did, high up like a vulture on the wind."

The tragic death of Ray's wife left a lot of living victims in its wake. His son, Billy, deaf and mute since the day his mother died in front of him. And Ray's cousin, Tom Herrera, the ex-sheriff, who is equal parts hollow and shame since turning in his badge ten years ago. Ray's father is now father to Ray's boy. Things were quiet, until Ray decided to try and come home with ten years of blood on his hands.

Urban Waite can set a mood and tone as shadowy and ethereal as Cormac McCarthy. However, where he didn't succeed is in giving the reader fertile characters. Ray is especially uninteresting, unlike the main outlaw in *TERROR OF LIVING*. What you see is what you get—a pathetic scumbag with nothing to mitigate his loser qualities as a human being. He wants. He wants. And Tom, who you root for, doesn't root for himself enough, and after a while you just want to pity him.

If you like a blood bath—or two or three, you will get a tub's worth. And a lot of other rank characters, as well as a brave and honest lady sheriff, a few geezers, some drunks, and other local color. To me, it seemed like Waite was experimenting in style, but the story was flaccid. No mercurial characters like in the first book, which I really missed. I trust that he will animate his next novel with some buoyant flesh to go with all that blood.

---

### **Lou says**

In this second book of his he has successfully penned a tale in the tradition of *No Country for Old Men* a western noir, a desert plain blood drenched by a hired killer.

I enjoyed this story more than his debut *The Terror of Living*, his prose and characters have you hooked right

until the curtain drops.

Think *No Country for Old Men* with a bit more humanity and likeability in the main protagonist.

The setting for this blood soaked western tale is a town Coronado, This was home once for Ray our main character and as he returns, the past life of his, the before, the time when he tried to be a family man all came flooding back in painful memories and realization on the things he left behind, before he took up being a lethal hired killer working mostly for a drug cartel cleaning up shop in towns, around plains, and Coronado is the next stop under the big mans instructions.

His killing business and his past is a lethal mix and with family in the balance I am sure this is one job that Ray would have set back time and left his family turf alone. Alas this very capable author puts us in the mix as the tale unwinds you will be witness to a grand finale a showdown that has many lives at stake.

He has a cousin Tom, was a sheriff but now retired, they shared many adventures together in their youth, once as sheriff he put his neck on the line to save Rays ass.

One was upholding the law the other breaking it. Tom finds himself deputized to help out with all the dead bodies turning up and soon finds himself in a dilemma with great decisions to make.

Ray before he took up the gun and left Coronado for the first time, he had fled away from his kin, his responsibility, after the tragic death of his wife he no longer could cope with his autistic son so left him behind, his son his father and his cousin.

In some way Ray hopes in his deepest self that some wounds could be mended on his return but his conduct of business is the killer of any repairs or bridges in repairing the past.

I am happy to certify that Stephen King was right that this one was even better than his first in his saying, "A hell of a good novel, relentlessly paced and beautifully narrated. This is good. I bet the next one will be even better," and the praises he mentioned for the debut novel are just as much right for this great western noir tale with slice of humanity penned by Urban Waite.

"He knew, too, that in this new life, there was an emptiness to his actions, a hopelessness that had come with his time away, carried along beside him like a parasite in the skin. Never to be satisfied in this world or the next, and that would keep him going until he might fill that hole, bored through from one side to the other. For which he felt, sitting there on the porch looking back at Coronado, he would never find fulfillment. It had made the killing of that old man in the hills outside town all the easier."

"When his breath came back to him. it came all at once—like someone surfacing from the depths into air. His lungs hungry for the world above and his pupils dilated black and wide, as if coming into light from a great darkness. He fell back with a hand held out for support on the fireplace behind. The flash of memory shifting across his vision like a slide reel, image after image from a life completely lost to him. His wife standing on the courthouse steps, the birth of their child, their first night in the new house outside of Coronado, the call of sirens before the knock came on his door, the wreckage of his wife's car and the black scrape of tires across asphalt that would never make sense to Him. Where was Billy? A desperate need to know now rose all the way through him. Where was his son?"

"He didn't know what he hoped for. Ray had shot a deputy, he'd murdered more than ten men, and he was out there still. All of it went against anything Tom could ever accept as a peace officer. But Ray was his cousin, a month older than him, and they'd been like twins once, growing up together and thinking for the longest time that they would always consider Coronado home. Now, Tom didn't know how he felt, and he rode north."

Review also @ <http://more2read.com/review/the-carrion-birds-by-urban-waite/>

---

## Deon Stonehouse says

The Carrion Birds by Urban Waite 9780062216885

Urban Waite has a talent for writing taut, violent novels with intelligent, nuanced plots and flawed but intriguing characters. What would you do for your brother? Tom took a tragic action that cost him his career and his peace of mind for his brother Ray. What would you do to avenge your dead wife? Ray gave up his way of life, his child, and his home to become a hired gun in the aftermath of his wife's death. It has been a long time; Ray is coming back to Coronado, New Mexico. He doesn't want to be a hired gun working for thugs anymore; he wants to find out if he can have a relationship with the son he abandoned. It will take one more big score to set him up with enough cash to live comfortably. His return sets in motion cataclysmic events that leave no one untouched. Gorgeous writing, the serene desert landscape, and characters that grab life by the neck keep the pages flying by to the very end.

---

## Monica says

3.5 stars. Good story. Its well written and set in NM!

---

## Chris says

A nicely paced "thriller" that reminded me of Wiley Cash's writing. Instead of the South we have the West with troubled souls: two cousins whose decisions are interlinked and have set them on paths of self destruction. This book is one train wreck from start to finish and the body count keeps going up but Waite keeps you guessing. It also reminded me of Cormac McCarthy's "No Country for Old Men" with its tragedy and pervasive sense of futility of the main characters.

---

## Robb Bridson says

disclosure: I received this book for free as part of the Goodreads first reads program.

An extremely dark and atmospheric story, a crime drama with the feel of gothic horror. The setting is a town dying. The characters live their doomed lives in regret. The anticipation for an explosive, inevitable end keeps growing.

Whatever people expect, whatever hope they cling to; things just never turn out as planned.

---

## Will Byrnes says

### No Country for Old Middle-Aged Men

**Ray Lamar** was a drug enforcer, a killer, but ten years ago it went bad, with the Juarez cartel, a rival to his boss, killing his wife and severely damaging his son in a hit-and-run. Ray had left, feeling unable to care for his son, but now he is back, and dreaming of living a legitimate life he has taken on one last job from his old

gangster employer, Memo.

Ray had wanted this for so long and never known how to do it, something so simple, a visit to see his son, a new life away from the violence of the last ten years.

He wants the payoff from this to tide him over until he can get established, and go legit. The job is supposed to be simple, a heist, yank some H from a truck, at least that was what he was told, but Ray smells a rat. There is more to this assignment than he was told. Blood is spilled and everything goes to hell from there.

[While reading the book, I kept seeing the face of Brooklyn-born Esai Morales as Ray]

Ray's cousin, **Tomas Herrera**, had been the sheriff of Coronado, NM. But before Ray left, while he was still trying to find and punish the cartel people who had taken out his family, he asked Tomas to look into a local cartel employee, a woman. She wound up dead. Tomas wound up an ex-sheriff. That's a lot to take, even if Tomas always did love and admire his older cousin. How Tom and Ray deal with each other is one of the many fine elements in this excellent novel.

[I see the face of Demian Bichir for Tom]

When Tomas was kicked out of office, he was replaced with a young deputy, a woman he had trained, and liked, **Edna Kelly**. The mayor wants her to keep Tom away from any sort of police-related activities, but the guy knows his stuff, and she could use the help. That they might have at one point been more than friends adds a level of tension, even though they have moved on.

The baddie in town is Dario Campo. He's the guy who owns a bar in town that does not seem to do a lot of business, but is, somehow, always open. Dario arranges for the transportation of *imported product*. It is his transport that Ray was sent to heist. Dario is no simple black hat. There is another deep-background baddie, but we will not address him here.

There are enough supporting players to matter but the unheralded co-star is the town of Coronado, New Mexico. In the same way that Jennifer Haigh writes stories that tell the tale of Bakerton, PA (See Baker Towers and News from Heaven: The Bakerton Stories), Waite writes about the slow death of a town. The oil that lit up the local economy years back has been pumped. We see yet another local well lay off its entire crew. The mayor struggles to keep the town from disintegrating entirely, desperate to keep bad news quiet, much as Mayor Vaughn urged Chief Brody to keep things on the down-low on Amity Island back in the 70s. How many oil towns in the southwest have seen their flames go out as the petro was drained and replaced with a whole lotta nuthin'. It is not just the lives of the main characters that are at stake.

I am at a decided disadvantage here as TCB is my introduction to Waite. Those with exposure to his earlier works will be better able to comment on his actual oeuvre. I gather this one has a lot in common with his last one, but you will have to check other reviewers for consideration of the changes, or consistencies from one book to the next. But we do know that Waite admires some writers and works in particular. He said in a 2011 interview with Powells', *I really like Cormac McCarthy though I think it might show too much in my writing*. He mentions *Blood Meridien* as one of his favorite five books. So we can look for the town to get painted red, and it ain't Christmas. Another item that popped to mind was the film *There Will Be Blood*. It has the obvious relevance of considerable violence in the West, although TWWB had much more to do with oil. In *There will be Blood*, Daniel Plainview's need for family is foiled when his adopted son, deaf, cannot hear and learn from him. In *The Carrion Birds*, Ray, who desperately wants to have a normal life after having wandered in the desert for many years, is faced with a son who was damaged as a child and can neither speak nor hear. There will be no happy family ending for him. Unlike Plainview, our guy does not see himself as

god-like, but his need for vengeance resonates with Plainview's.

There is a lot in here about greed, revenge and hoping for that which lies beyond reach. In addition to Ray's dream, Tom would like to be sheriff again. And they are not alone in their unlikely desires. We can count on the baddies for greed, and Ray will provides all the revenge we will ever need, both ten years in the past and in the today of the story. Will justice ever be enforced? Can it be? What constitutes justice anyway?

On finishing this book, I had a feeling that it was somehow **Shakespearean**, more than a western, more than a noir, but had substance that I was feeling, but was unable to articulate. I claim no special knowledge of Shakespeare. Like most of us, I have seen many plays and films, and have read many books that either were Willy's original plays or updated interpretations, but my familiarity is non-academic, of the garden-variety sort. So, I did what anyone in 2013 facing a shortage of knowledge might do, I headed for my internet machine to see what I could see. What I came up with was an ancient (100 yrs old more or less) text by an Oxford don that goes into the details of what it is that constitutes Shakespearean tragedy. I began listing elements, criteria and hoped to be able to come to a firm conclusion based on those. The result? Ah, there's the rub. While many of the elements do fit nicely into this novel, there are others that have to be squeezed in like a stepsister foot into a glass slipper. I am including that list here, but have tucked it under the cover of a spoiler notice, recognizing that it is a sidetrip not everyone will want to take. In order to consider whether the story does or does not conform, one must look at elements that will give far too much away. I have provided spoiler protection within the spoiler to spare those readers who opt to indulge. The book in question is *Shakespearean Tragedy - Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth* by one A.C. Bradley, an erstwhile professor of poetry at Oxford. The book is available for free thanks to the Gutenberg project. Clicking on the above title will take you there.  
(view spoiler)

Suffice it to say that, with some reluctance, I am persuaded that Ray's journey qualifies as of the Shakespearean tragic sort. I encourage you to check Bradley's very interesting free book, if the subject pulls you.

The title, *The Carrion Birds*, seems quite well suited to the story. It is the town that is dying and sundry characters have been picking at the likely corpse for some time. Drug dealers are prime among these, but they are not the only ones. Another view might be that carrion birds are harbingers of death

The thought of death still circling him, as it always did, as it always did, high up like a vulture on the wind.

While it is tempting to settle on this, it is worth bearing in mind that this book was published in the UK under the title *Dead if I Don't*. I do not know why this change was made, and whether it was the author's idea or not, but I think the newer title is definitely a better fit.

Bottom line, this is a powerful read, with engaging characters, in all shades of gray, complicated matters under consideration, and a forward momentum that will keep you turning the pages. Dig in.

=====URBAN SPEAKS

After the review was posted, Urban sent a note of thanks. I followed up with some questions, and the author very graciously offered thoughtful responses. He has OK'd the use of his words here. I inquired into why the title was changed from the UK version.

The title change was a decision I made after it was pointed out to me that all of the Sookie Stackhouse books by Charlaine Harris start off with "Dead." So, since my book was quite a bit different from those I wanted something different for a title. *The Carrion Birds* title was the pick that I went with here in the US.

I asked if I was barking up the wrong tree re the whole Shakespeare thing:

To be truthful I hadn't thought about the Shakespeare connection until you brought it up. But that's not to say it isn't a large part of *The Carrion Birds*. The origins for much of what I write are usually a bit chaotic and hard to place. My writing just kind of "pops to mind" for lack of a better term. And it's only after reflecting a bit on it that I start to get a feel for the origins.

I remembered re-reading Macbeth in the course of a night during a break I was taking from the novel. I was a little out of it and I was trying to find a way back into *The Carrion Birds* and something in there must have clicked for me. I had also been reading James Dickey's *To the White Sea* and there is a definite sense of tragedy (or tragic karma depending on how you look at it) in that book. Plus a very early draft of TCB dealt with a sort of *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid* kind of feel. All that paying for your sins stuff. Which plays pretty well in TCB.

I should also say that a lot of my education in college came down to how many Shakespeare lit classes I could take, as well as all the electives I could fit in with film classes on Hitchcock. I like to say that Graham Greene has always been the biggest influence on how I put a novel together, but thinking on it now I'm starting to realize when I first came to the daunting task of putting a large work together, I fell back on my knowledge of plays and films.

With this in mind I'm arguing for Ray as a sort of "exceptional being." He's the son of one of the richest, former oilmen in the valley and in that way he is a sort of royal in the small scale of this community. So perhaps I was channeling some Shakespeare after all.

I asked if had any thoughts on casting:

As for casting, that's one loaded question for me. I like your choices. Definitely two actors I would get behind in a heartbeat. But personally I try not to think on it too much. I worry I might start seeing those faces when I jump in on some bit of writing. And it might change how I lay out my characters or what decisions or actions I want them to accomplish. It's just better for me if I don't get too close with them. Who knows when I'll have to kill them off...

Had he considered leaving Memo to his dark devices instead of the fate he wrote for him?

He's such a bastard of a character. I feel like left to his own devices he would have ended up the way he does no matter what happens. So I guess I could have let him be, but what fun would that have been?

Finally, what's coming up?

I try to get in at least five pages a day on the next project. And that project being a sequel to my first novel, *The Terror of Living*, makes the stress just that much higher. I loved my first novel and to be working on a sequel to it is exciting but also horrifying. I want what I'm writing now to outdistance what I've written before. I want each new project to be better than the last and so coming back to these characters I guess I just want to do them justice in the most badass way I can.

Thanks so much to Urban for offering real quantities of his time, and I guess I really should get cracking on his prior novel.

=====LINKS

2011 interview with the author - from Powell's

Author's site

Author's Facebook site

The Shakespearean lectures book noted in the review

---

### **Laura says**

This book is a strange and surprising combination of starkly lovely writing and fast-paced action. Reading through I couldn't help but compare it to *Breaking Bad*: the showcase of human drama against the beautiful background of the Southwest, the relationship between reluctant mentor and cocky kid, the escalating toll of violence, the contrasting ties between loyalty and law. Waite's protagonist is, however, much more sympathetic than Walter White, while still managing to be pretty badass.

---

### **Diane says**

This was my first win on First Reads. This is really out of my normal zone and not a book that I would normally gravitate toward. I completed this book in two sessions. If I didn't have to work, I would have

completed in one session. This is a true noir western. I had to keep looking at the picture of the author because it's hard to believe how young he is to have written such a graphic, frightening western type book that is impossible to put down! The genre reminded me of "No Country For Old Men" and it was hard, sometimes to read, I had to keep catching my breath before I could go on. I have to recommend this book as a must read. I will be ordering Mr. Waite's first book, The Terror of Living because I think he will be one of my new favorite authors.

---

### **Cheryl says**

Fast -paced page turner full of the beauty of the hills of New Mexico, the drug cartel and a man who couldn't seem to find his way out of life of "wrongs". A story of vengeance, violence and contrition that I thoroughly enjoyed from the first page.

---

### **Beth Olson says**

"The Carrion Birds" by Urban Waite chronicles four days in the life of reluctant 'gun-for-hire' Ray Lamar. Ten years after a suspicious car accident kills his wife and leaves his young son disabled, Ray agrees to one final assignment to be carried out in his hometown of Coronado, New Mexico. His hope is to put an end to the life he has been leading and reconnect with his family and to make amends to his son, Billy, who he has not seen since the loss of his wife.

Unfortunately, his appearance and the resulting mayhem have the complete opposite effect. Ray ends up dragging his father and uncle, once oil tycoons, now working for area ranchers since the oil wells ran dry, into his sinister world. Most affected is his cousin, Tom, once Sheriff of Coronado. Tom was removed as Sheriff due to events Ray had put in motion ten years earlier.

This is not the type of book I would normally pick up at the library or bookstore, but I found it powerful and fast-paced. It was so good I delayed reading the last chapter because I just didn't want it to end. Very good read and I will seek out more from Mr. Waite in the future.

---

### **Slappy says**

I'm old enough to remember when sentences were complete. They had Subjects & Objects, Nouns and Verbs. . . .all that stuff.

There may be a story in here somewhere, but this was a hearty DNF for me.

---

### **Gatorman says**

Somewhat disappointing follow up to The Terror Of Living. I liked what was there for the most part but there just wasn't much there. The theme of failed redemption was constantly shoved in the readers face by repetitive narrative and dialogue, and the dialogue at times was a bit stilted. The book had a nice, hard edge to it but it just seemed to be lacking in character development and plot. Would probably have given it 2.5

stars if I could. Not bad but not noteworthy, either. Hoping for a stronger effort next time from Waite.

---