



Shortcut Man

P.G. Sturges

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A smart and entertaining crime series debut set in the underbelly of Los Angeles, with a cast of characters that runs the gamut from saints to sinners.

In the City of Angels, not everyone plays by the rules. When people need a problem fixed fast, and discreetly, they call Dick Henry. Henry is known as a "shortcut man," someone who believes that the shortest answer to many problems may not always be legal. As he cuts through the red tape for his clients, who range from an elderly woman ripped off by shady contractors to a landlord with a tenant many months behind on the rent, Henry always gets the job done, no matter what the cost. In *Shortcut Man*, Henry spends his days hunting down slimy con men and his nights seducing Lynette, an intoxicating, long-legged vixen. But when Henry gets an assignment from porn producer Artie Benjamin, his life suddenly becomes much more complicated. Now Henry must complete the job, avoid being killed, and somehow figure out what to do with Lynette. Filled with dark comedy, whip-smart writing, and a memorable cast of characters, *Shortcut Man* evokes Chandler and Hammett--hard-boiled crime at its best--and is an exciting beginning to a crackling new series.

Shortcut Man Details

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Author : P.G. Sturges

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From Reader Review Shortcut Man for online ebook

Paul Pessolano says

Dick Henry is a "shortcut man". What's a shortcut man? I'm glad you asked because I didn't know either.

If you looking for a resolution to a sticky problem and don't want to get the authorities involved - call the "shortcut man". He will, for a price, try and get the situation, with or without bloodshed, taken care of for you. Sometimes it takes just a little persuasion, and other times he must apply a modicum of additional pressure.

Dick takes care of a few minor issues at the start of the book. A landlord needs someone evicted, and an elderly lady falls to the scam of a remodeling firm.

The real problem is when hs is asked by porn producer, Artie Benjamin, to confirm his suspicions that his wife, Judy, is cheating on him. Artie invites Dick to a party to introduce Judy to him. Much to Dick's surprise Judy turns out to be Lynette, a woman he has been "shacking up with".

Dick, invents a fictitious person to take his place as Judy's lover. The only problem with this is that Artie now asks Dick to murder this fictitious person, and to make matters worse, Artie wants to see the dead body.

Judy, in the meantime, is planning on murdering Artie so that she can inherit his fortune.

Watch out for the ending.

A very entertaining mystery but one filled with sexual content and language that may not be appropriate for everyone.

Nancy Stewart says

I was blessed with the opportunity to read an advance copy. It was a terrific book. It was one of those books I could not put down until it was finished. The characters were masterfully developed. I could picture them in my mind, and of course, being a lifelong Angelino, the scenery was ever so familiar. The ending was PERFECTION.

Johnny says

I have mixed feelings about this book. While I appreciate its acknowledgment of the genre and the pacing is quick and the read fast, it brushes so close to self-parody that it was hard for me to fully commit to the characters.

The decision to use all the cliches and conventions of the hardboiled private eye genre feels very conscious. Yet to pull something like that off takes a confident, yet delicate hand. The writing is confident for sure, but it often accepts the cliches without ever bringing anything new. This causes the character motivations to be driven by the story rather than the characters themselves.

Don't get me wrong, this is a fun read. And as I said, it's quick. Someone that has read fewer crime novels would probably have a different reaction, but I just know the conventions so well that it alters the read for this audience.

April says

This was an interesting book, but not really my style. p.g. sturges writes about Dick Henry, the Shortcut Man, who cuts through silly red tape like criminal rights to get results for his clients. I liked his dry, tough character, and his clever solutions to the Non-Paying Renter and the Evil Bad Supplies Contractor. Most of them involve his fists (he was a former boxer) and his even more physically active friend Rojas, who threatened to double-book a live person on the bottom part of a coffin and have it buried. Creative, yes, but a little too raw for my tastes. The main plot involves Dick Henry's detailed sexual exploits with the luscious Lynette. Boy, is he surprised when Lynette turns out to be Judy, who turns out to have a husband who wants to hire Dick Henry to see with whom his wife has been sleeping...and then to kill him. Funny, but not funny in a ha, ha kind of way.

Adam says

Private Eye novels are my genre. They have been ever since I asked my mom (a librarian) for the kind of mystery novels where they talked about "dames" or something like that.

My mom said immediately, "oh, they're called hard-boiled detective stores" and pointed me to Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler and the rest was history.

20-ish years later, I try to keep track of the private eye genre. One of the most straightforward ways of doing this, of course, is keeping track of the Shamus awards. I mean, that's the awards from the Private Eye Writers of America. Seems like it ought to be a good place to start.

Problem is, most of the Shamus award nominees suck. But still, I keep an eye on them, read the ones that seem interesting, and occasionally I find a sleeper hit.

This book is not that sleeper hit, but nor does it suck, so I'll let it slide.

The plot is straightforward: The main character is a shortcut man, someone who solves problems, not by doing any detecting per se, but more like by breaking noses and legs.

The good news is, he's funny. The plot moves swiftly, after an unrelated introduction to show how the character does his business, our hero the detective is asked to determine whether a porn producer's wife is cheating on him. The wife in question happens to already be the detective's girlfriend. (So, as mysteries go, this one's a dud. but as a crime novel it works ok.)

The author plays it close to the noirish tropes. The wife/girlfriend is a femme fatale of the first order, and ancillary characters are engaging enough. In the end though, there's not much *there* there. If there are grander adventures for the

character in place, i'd be interested in seeing it, but for the moment this is a light, fun, and substanceless noirish thriller, heavy on the noir, light on the thrill.

C. says

Shortcut Man by P.G. Sturgis is like a breath of fresh air. Sturgis takes his story of Dick Henry, a man who can cut through the red tape of his employers and make a quick study of bothersome people, and tells it without a useless word. The crisp prose and clean writing will make you smile. The writing reminded me of Dashiell Hammett or more recently Lawrence Sanders with maybe a splash of James Ellroy.

This is gritty noir with a lot of s*x and some violence but Dick Henry is a very likeable character. He is less than perfect but seems to try to do the right thing while being employed by some shady people. When P.G. Sturgis takes Dick Henry to his past, he does it with a flourish and the back stories are as interesting as the action that takes place. It takes a very talented author to be able to tell back stories without getting bogged down in the details and interrupting the action. I liked this quality in Shortcut Man.

For a first time novelist, I think Sturgis has hit a homerun with Shortcut Man. This is a very colorful portrayal of a man who makes a very good living in an unconventional way. The story takes place in Hollywood and the surrounding area and draws it into the action describing the places in a way that shows Dick Henry lives there.

This is a fast read but satisfying in a complete way that many novels can't compete with. The characters are built up, the action is compelling, the story is entertaining, and the setting is all wrapped up in the novel making it a complete and engaging novel with no downfalls. I recommend this novel, especially if you like gritty noir. I don't read much of it but this book it doesn't matter, the writing it really good. I can imagine someone like Quentin Tarantino turning it into a cool movie.

James Thane says

Dick Henry is the Shortcut Man. He's the guy to call if you've got a perplexing problem with no quick, easy legal solution. Say you're a landlord with an unruly tenant who refuses to pay the rent and who is relying on his "legal rights" to remain in your apartment unmolested indefinitely. You might be an elderly widow who's been ripped off by a slimy contractor. Or you could be a woman whose father is being bilked by a phony Filipino sweetheart. In each case you could hire a lawyer, go to court and wait interminably to see if you might get some small measure of justice.

Or, you could just call Dick, who is likely to solve the problem much more quickly and efficiently.

Life is going swimmingly for Dick who's also carrying on a torrid relationship with a sexy woman named Lynette. Then he gets a call from a porn producer named Artie Benjamin. Artie suspects that his wife, Judy, is cheating on him and he wants Dick to determine if his suspicions are well-founded. Dick agrees, and all of a sudden, his life is not going so swimmingly anymore.

This is a very entertaining book with some hilarious moments. It's a pretty quick read through a lot of very short chapters, and you can't take the whole thing very seriously. But it's a fun way to spend a couple of hours and I'll be looking forward to Dick's next outing.

Tosh says

I had high hopes for "Shortcut Man" but it didn't do it for me. There is nothing particularly wrong with the book, but I just found it too genre driven. In ways it reminds me of Pynchon's "Inherent Vice" which i think is a better book. Also the lead character didn't grab me that made me want to read on. But saying that the book is totally readable (almost in one sitting), and I have friends who love it. I just didn't feel that it was that hot of a book.

Avid Series Reader says

The Shortcut Man by P.G. Sturges is the first book of the Shortcut Man mystery series set in contemporary metropolitan Los Angeles. Dick Henry is a former policeman, now privately in business. Due process of law seems to rarely provide the satisfaction of true justice to victims. Dick Henry exacts that justice, however it needs to be done. For example, evicting a bad tenant is a nightmare for a property owner. All the rights seem to be with the tenant. But calling Dick Henry gets the tenant out: he threatens the tenant, destroy's the tenants property, breaks the tenant's arm; that's what it took to thoroughly intimidate the lowlife, to get him out of the apartment.

Dick Henry is driven by sex, then money. He thinks he wants love, but he's kidding. He destroyed his marriage with his alley-cat morals (casual sex with anyone in a skirt). Now he can see his kids on Mondays, when he pays alimony and child support. He tries to persuade his wife to get back together, but he is still having casual sex nightly with girlfriend Lynette.

Dick Henry's life gets considerably more complicated (and dangerous) when he takes on a job for a rich and powerful man. At first it seems trivially easy: investigate whether or not the client's wife Judy is cheating on him. Then Dick discovers Judy also happens to be Lynette. Dick assumes he can brazen it out, but the client demands more. While worrying that the client is really on to him, Dick prevails upon friends to provide the 'evidence', including a corpse and memorial service.

The case escalates in violence; plot twists reveal other characters driven by money, and one by love. I enjoyed the occasional wry humor early in the book, plus trivia such as Sepulveda Boulevard is the longest in LA County, at 43 miles.

Don Gorman says

I heard about this book in an interview with Michael Connelly in the NY Times book review section and I am glad I followed up on it. It is a hoot. It reminds me of Junior Bender, a wonderful character in about 4 books from Tim Hallinan. Dick Henry is a keeper. This is the guy you call when you want to get things done. Not a lawyer, not a cop, you call the shortcut man. The stories within the story are fast paced and lots of fun and there is enough going on in the big story that you don't want to put it down. Seeing as how it is barely 200 pages that doesn't take long. I really liked this and look forward to reading the follow up.

JoAnne Pulcino says

SHORTCUT MAN

By p. g. Sturges

This debut noir novel featuring Dick Henry as the shortcut man is full of clever suspense, dark humor and enough shady characters to make Raymond Chandler proud.

When the shortcut man is hired he is there with a smile, a fist and a speedy solution with absolutely no paperwork.

When he's hired to find out if porn producer's gorgeous wife is cheating it becomes very tricky as Dick Henry is the guilty party.

p.g. Sturges is the son of the famous director, Preston Sturges and includes his father in the book in a cameo.

A wry look at desire and deception in the California sun.

It's a hoot!

Roger says

I literally chose this book at random-I can only assume my subconscious knows what it is doing. Shortcut Man was a great read and a packed a major wallop. That is definitely my share of noir for the week, and then some. Actually this book sort of hits you in the face with a series of short sharp jabs from beginning to end. Dick Henry solves a lot of problems for a lot of people-under the table, typically violently. It is good lucrative work-till one case strikes too close to home. Great stuff and a quick read to boot.

Harvey says

Only 205 pages so a quick, fun read.

Dick Henry is a fixer, who'll do (almost) anything for a price. But he likes to think that he is on the side of the angels.

Good use of contemporary Los Angeles/Hollywood milieu.

While some other reviews take this as a serious homage to Chandler, etc. I just see it as a tale with lots of wit/wry humor which does not take itself too seriously.

This did have some stumbles/flaws of a debut novel but nothing to distract from overall enjoyment. I'm immediately looking for the next in series which has just been published.

Jeremy Good says

Well I enjoyed the book a lot - it brings back and evokes great hard-boiled detective fiction's heyday so I'm only giving it five stars.

The author interweaves trivial juvenile humor with the main story line. I'm subtracting a star for that.

The plot is so predictable it doesn't have any suspense and the protagonist comes off as stupid in his brashness, but the author already labeled him as "in over his head" from the beginning. Perhaps that was a mistake. Knowing that and seeing him walking right into an obvious trap becomes interesting in itself; the predictability is more notable than the unpredictability and maybe that's good but I'm subtracting a star for that.

The author uses a wonderful device where he suddenly changes voices and goes into the head of a few minor characters and this is truly illuminating and demonstrates real empathy. Good but it happens so suddenly (the suddenness is actually a great thing but the whole book should have been written this way jumping suddenly into the minds of many characters) and sporadically that I have to subtract a star for it. Wonderful what little there was of that.

A couple elements of implausibility:

*The food fight at the steakhouse - not believable at all. Just screwball comedy and not funny because it's out of place in this book. Subtracting a star for that.

*The idea that civil rights activists would be incensed that the African American child molester / serial killer was killed at the scene of the crime with Asian child's blood dripping from his hands - also completely non-believable. I urge the author to show similar cases of things that have actually happened if I thought he had genuine scruples and wasn't trying to rationalize the brand of vigilante justice he glamorizes throughout the book. Subtracting a star.

The plot twist at the end was quite nice I thought but in thinking it nice I wonder if I'm just being naive and I don't like wondering that so I don't like the ending even though it appears to be a good ending. I just don't trust my instincts on this.

This is how it ends:

The femme fatale tries to kill the hard-boiled detective but he gets the better of her and she ends up dangling over a cliff with him holding on.

She says, "Do you love me?" (The protagonist has already determined her to be a hopeless trainwreck monster incapable of love).

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" He lies.

She lets go of him and perishes.

See, wouldn't you feel like you were a dope for liking that ending? I know I did.

So I'm subtracting another star for making me feel like a dope in the end.

So I'd end up giving this book negative stars but since I can't do that, I'm giving it one star.

But I look forward to reading his next book and I've already got an idea for who I would cast were I to option this book and turn it into a movie (Michael Shannon of course) and that would be fun to make...

Michael Sova says

Dick Henry has the well deserved reputation of a guy who gets things done. He'll work within the law if he can, but doesn't mind going outside the lines if that's what it takes. Most people know enough not to cross him. Those who try usually end up regretting that decision. He has a quick temper and an even quicker right cross. When his fist begins to tingle, be advised to take a few steps back. Henry calls himself the Shortcut Man, and he's the hero of the P.G. Sturges novel by that same name.

The terms noir, hardboiled and femme fatale don't come up in literature anywhere near as often as was the case a few decades ago. They are, however, all front and center in the Shortcut Man. You can almost hear the soft piano jazz soundtrack and smell the stale cigarette smoke as you follow Henry from a dimly lit nightclub to a back alley to the scene of a gruesome murder. He's given lots of jobs. The main one, the most lucrative one is to find out if a particular extremely attractive woman has been cheating on her husband. Henry runs into a couple problems right off. He not only knows the woman in question but who she's been messing around with. As he attempts to collect a fee, cover his own tracks and distance himself from his irresistible yet increasingly dangerous lover, the stakes keep going up. .

Shortcut Man is gritty, sometimes raunchy, sometimes dirty, and always extremely entertaining. Henry has made some bad decisions. He has a checkered past and regularly breaks the rules in order to achieve his objective. In short, he's not the type of character you're likely to fall in love with. You'll be pulling for him just the same. I know I was, although I'm still not sure why. Henry's primary appeal might be that he's the least bruised in an admittedly bad barrel of apples. He also has a strong, somewhat unpredictable moral code that exhibits itself in unexpected ways. Sturges paints a vivid picture of the seamier as well as the more privileged sides of L.A. society. In doing so, he's created something unlike anything else I've read in recent memory. I'm very much looking forward to reading Tribulations of the Shortcut man, the next book in the Dick Henry series.
