

FICTION BOOK REVIEW

Pain of Death

Adam Creed. London, UK: Faber and Faber, 2011.
ISBN-13: 978-0-57124-524-6. Price: £12.99.
Pages: 416 (paperback)

Lovers of crime fiction who mourn the death of Morse and the retirement of Rebus can breathe a sigh of relief as Adam Creed introduces DI Wagstaffe (Staffe).

It seems almost obligatory for the heroes of crime fiction to be tortured souls and Staffe is no exception. Orphaned as a teenager, a sister addicted to drugs and difficulties with his personal life are but a few of his problems it would appear.

Pain of Death is the third novel featuring Staffe. It starts with the discovery of a woman in the Victorian Underground tunnels in London. She has been missing for a few months and was pregnant

when she disappeared. When examined in hospital she is found to have just given birth. The child is soon found abandoned outside Leadenhall Police Station. The woman is a singer who already has children in care. She dies before recovering consciousness. Her estranged sister who has a more conventional life is married to a childhood friend of Staffe.

The plot develops and becomes extremely complicated. Included are a pro-life group called Breath of Life, whose aim is to "enforce the sacrosanct rights of the unborn"; they are responsible for the kidnapping of women seeking abortion; a Member of Parliament (MP) trying to raise his status in the House of Commons by means of a Private Members Bill seeking to reduce the time limit on abortion; and the police with personal involvement with those they are investigating.

The story strains credibility at the end but the novel is a good read and very contemporary. Some light relief is provided by the manoeuvrings of the Home Secretary as she manipulates an MP to achieve the changes to the Bill she desires. I would suggest that the first two novels are read before this one. *Suffer the Children* concerns the murder of a convicted paedophile and *Willing Flesh* involves prostitution. They differ from many detective novels in their setting and subject matter dealing with a side of life we would rather forget.

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