

Panic Room by Robert Goddard

3 stars

Didn't quite live up to its promise.....

Don Challenor is an out-of-work estate agent. In fact, he was fired from his last job so is kicking his heels when his ex-wife, Fran Revell, offers him a couple of grand to pop down to Cornwall to prepare the particulars of a house owned by Jack Harkness, a pharmaceutical king. (Actually, we never do find out who owns the house). It should be easy money. He meets the young housekeeper, Blake, and a few unsavoury characters who are looking for Jack, who apparently owes a very substantial sum of money to his partners.

Mr Goddard has a large following and has won quite a few literary prizes so my expectations on picking up my kindle were high. One way I judge whether I am enjoying the latest tome is how long it takes me to read through to the end. In this case it was about three weeks. I just had little enthusiasm for his latest novel. So, why was this?

I found the format very off-putting. Blake's chapters or paragraphs were written in the first person but the rest of the book was written in the third person. The change from one to the other was abrupt and confusing and I never became used to it.

The minor characters were very two-dimensional. In fact, some of the more major characters also suffered the same fate. I also very heavily questioned the motivation of Don. When he is fired from this project he continues to investigate despite there being no credible reason why he should do so.

Without giving away any spoilers I also have to comment on one character who is sought by Don and Blake. We never get to understand whether they actually find her or, if they did, why she took the particular path she did many years ago. I am aware that this comment sounds nonsensical but you will understand if you read the book – just bear it in mind.

It can be gathered by now that the plot and the writing style as well as the numerous loose ends did not endear themselves to me. Another irritation was the use of a countdown from 10 to zero as chapters. However, the nucleus of the story is a good one and the writing itself is crisp and accurate. Many will disagree with me but it has the feeling of a potboiler. It didn't grab my imagination although it's obvious why it will appeal to aficionados.

mr zorg

Breakaway Reviewers received copy of the book to review.