

Shadows of Good Friday

5 stars

The best start to a book that I have read for a long, long time.

The start of this crime thriller pitches the reader into the action from the very beginning. I was initially disoriented, but quickly found my feet, as a member of a criminal gang tries unsuccessfully to avoid capture after a heist which has gone wrong and leaves a security guard bleeding and dying.

Years later and after serving his time Simon Grant is released from prison to find that his wife has taken up with another man and friends of the dead guard are after blood – his. Life doesn't look too rosy but gets increasingly worse as his old criminal chum tries to persuade him to take up where he left off with the offer of a huge amount of money. There is a saying that if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. Will this be the case for Simon?

As the title suggests the book is set in the days just before the signing of the Peace Agreement. It is essential that the signing goes ahead and splinter groups of the IRA do not cause problems. It is therefore of great concern to both MI5 and MI6 that the IRA appears to be joining forces with the criminal classes on the mainland -but to what end?

The plot has everything and the reader is regaled with numerous twists and turns right up until the final pages. I loved it as there is a surprise on every page. Even the minor characters are very well drawn but it's more than that. The reader actually empathises with the underdogs which for me is the key to a good story. Without reader involvement, no story will work properly. The pace, although varied, romps along to a final grisly conclusion. It has plenty of light and shade and occasionally, thank goodness, leaves the reader room to draw breath.

If I have any criticism at all it is that the plot is at times a little jerky and moves without warning to a different scene and there is slightly too much detail about the cars used. Research and detail are crucial but this jarred with me and it felt at times a step too far. Having said that it was a minor irritation and did not detract from what is a truly excellent read.

mr zorg

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.