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## THE BOOK REVIEW

David A. Kentner

He stood in the bookstore reading the review of the book he was considering buying:

*"...is an abbreviated Proustian self-examination of a boy's lonely childhood and the minutia surrounding his cipher self..."*

The radio came alive with the dispatcher advising the Fire Dept of the need for an ambulance at the golf course clubhouse. A man had stopped breathing.

He was just passing that building on his way to check on a house while the owners were away on vacation, so he pulled into the lot and ran inside the building. He checked the man's vital signs – no pulse, no breathing. He began CPR and instructed a woman offering to help on how to give the man breaths of air while he maintained the chest compressions keeping the blood circulating.

Focused on keeping the man alive, he didn't hear the ambulance's sirens. Only when an EMT tapped his shoulder and offered to 'take over' did he realize the Fire Dept had arrived with their cart and equipment. No longer needed, he returned to his squad car and continued on his way to check the house.

The next day he heard how the Fire Dept was congratulated for the quick response and use of CPR that had saved the man's life.

*"...It is, however, without the labyrinthine syntax..."*

The dispatcher unemotionally spit through the radio, "Red vehicle, white male driver, firing a rifle, no further information."

Since he was only two blocks away, he advised he would respond.

Turning his squad into the cul-de-sac he didn't see any vehicles moving. Turning off the car engine, he listened – no vehicle engines running, no one moving or visible.

Asking, he received the answer, "No complainant." Not even anyone to talk to as to what happened. There were four red cars parked on the

circular street. He decided he would approach the oldest and junkiest of the cars first... his own prejudices were at work. Or was it really his own bias surfacing? He didn't know. Odd to be thinking about that now. Fact was, it was the closest car to him. Nobody was visible in any of the cars and if he walked past it to satisfy himself that he really wasn't condescending and assuming that the suspect was poor, if an armed man was in it, the shooter would have his back available as a target.

He pulled on the trunk as he reached the old red car. At the Academy the instructors always stressed a gunman could be in the trunk waiting in ambush. The trunk lid was locked down tight.

He turned his attention to the driver's outside mirror and saw eyes staring back at him. The driver's door flew open and the driver jumped out. The driver's right arm was swinging across the man's chest. In his hand was a sawed-off rifle.

Ingrained training instincts shouted for him to draw his pistol and shoot this man. He never could explain why he opted not to listen and instead charged the suspect with the rifle now aimed at him.

Nor could he ever explain why he had no memory of anything that occurred until he came to his senses and became aware he had the man on the ground, was handcuffing him, and the rifle was six feet away.

Inspecting the rifle, he found it to be loaded and that a bullet was in the chamber. Examining the bullet, he observed an indentation on the primer. The driver had pulled the trigger, but the rifle had not fired. He should have been dead.

*"...Why did the police appear so complacent about it all, almost as if this occurrence was commonplace?..."*

The dispatcher was calling for an ambulance to a house for a gunshot victim.

He radioed he would be responding and floored the accelerator to his squad car. He was more than twelve blocks away and somehow knew he needed to get there fast.

A teenaged boy was standing out front of the house waving him down. He asked what had happened as the two of them ran into the house.

"She was looking at the gun and it went off."

On the living room floor was a fifteen-year-old girl bleeding from the center of her chest. There was no pulse. The breathing was faint, short, rapid, panting breaths. He asked the boy where the gun was.

The boy pointed to his left, so he told the boy to move to his right and stay there.

He began chest compressions while praying in his mind for God to let this girl live. Her breathing remained the steady panting, which he knew was not good, but at least some oxygen was getting into her system. He pulled out his portable radio with one hand while continuing the compressions with the other and yelled into it that help was needed—fast.

Was it five seconds, five minutes, or five hours? He didn't know. He just knew he was trying to give this girl a little more time to live until help arrived. EMTs and a flood of Police Officers filled the room. He kept up the compressions as the EMTs lifted her onto the cart. He continued the compressions in the back of the ambulance all the way to the hospital and into the examining room until the Emergency Room staff took over.

He sat in a chair at the far end of the Emergency Room out of the way, watching as the girl's family members arrived and the medical staff continued trying to save the girl's life. It wasn't long before a nurse whispered to him that the girl "didn't make it."

The nurse let him go into the nurse's office where he let loose the tears.

A few minutes later he was informed another officer was waiting outside to take him back to his squad car which was still at the house where the girl had been shot.

He held his head down as he passed the grieving family. He didn't know what he could say and he didn't want them to see his red swollen eyes. He didn't look up as one of the family members said, "Gonna go get a doughnut to go with that coffee break, cop?"

The officer drove him quickly back to his waiting squad car. Dispatch had calls waiting and they needed to get back to work.

*"...full of angst and confusion, each one asking 'Who am I? Who are you?'"*

Meeting with the family he listened while they related to him how their mother had been pronounced dead of a perceived heart attack earlier in the day. Their concern now was that they couldn't locate her car. It was late enough that most businesses were closed and they had called the owner of the shop where her car usually was repaired. The owner had said he didn't have the car. They didn't know what to think and had called the Police.

Walking through the house he noticed two things that stuck out in his mind. The lady's glasses were on the couch and absolutely filthy from sweat and dirty smudge marks. The house was immaculate. The dirty

glasses didn't fit her lifestyle. The other thing was that on the end table next to the couch all of the pictures were arranged so they faced the couch – all but one. That picture was nearest the couch and was a photograph of her deceased husband. The picture had been turned to face away from the couch. His guess was that it had been knocked off the table and set back on the table to disguise that fact.

One of the reasons this Department had hired him was his prior investigative and crime scene processing experience. He told his supervisor that he really believed a detective needed to be called in to the scene. He suspected something was wrong here. The supervisor made the call and was told there wasn't enough of a reason to call in someone this late. That was the end of it.

He told the family to call the detectives first thing in the morning and make the request themselves. He had done all he could do for now. He agreed that something was amiss and further investigation was warranted.

The next morning he was called to the scene from his home to assist the detectives with processing the scene.

A few days later a neighbor's son was arrested and charged with the lady's murder.

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*"... is a cri d'coeur... The writing is repeatedly brilliant..."*

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He placed the book back on the shelf. He figured that if he needed a dictionary to understand 'the review,' he probably wasn't going to understand the author's scholarly, institutionalized, self-absorbed, predetermined opinions anyway. Besides, he was just a 'dumb cop'—how could he possibly comprehend complicated issues like life and death?

He looked at his watch. It was nineteen years and eight months before the hour of retirement.

The review excerpts were taken from a book review written by Duff Brenna as posted on the web site of pifmagazine.com on May 31, 2008.

The police accounts are factual and happened to the author during his first four months working with the Freeport, Illinois, Police Department.

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