



# The Button Man

*Mark Pryor*

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## **The Button Man** Mark Pryor

In this prequel to *The Bookseller*, former FBI profiler Hugo Marston has just become head of security at the US Embassy in London. He's asked to protect a famous movie-star couple, Dayton Harper and Ginny Ferro, who, while filming a movie in rural England, killed a local man in a hit and run.

The task turns from routine to disastrous almost immediately. Before Hugo even meets them, he finds out that Ferro has disappeared, and her body has been found hanging from an oak tree in a London cemetery. Hours later a distraught Harper gives Hugo the slip, and Hugo has no idea where he's run off to.

Taking cues from a secretive young lady named Merlyn, and with a Member of Parliament along for the chase, Hugo's search leads to a quaint English village. There, instead of finding Harper, more bodies turn up. Teaming with local detectives and then venturing dangerously out on his own, Hugo struggles to find connections between the victims. Is this the work of a serial killer—or something else entirely? Knowing he's being tailed, the killer prepares for the final, public act of his murderous plan, and Hugo arrives just in time to play his part. . . .

## **The Button Man Details**

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Author : Mark Pryor

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## Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

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My take....

This is the fourth Mark Pryor - Hugo Marston book but the first chronologically as we find our US head of embassy security working in London and babysitting a glamorous, high-profile Hollywood couple. The two movie stars are under investigation after a local farmer's son was killed in a hit and run.

I've previously enjoyed *The Bookseller* and slightly less so *The Crypt Thief* and initially I was drawn into this one as it started promisingly. Sadly for this particular reader an occurrence-event-death kind of derailed this train just as it was picking up a head of steam. I kind of thought – really, you just did that.....oh ok, where are we going now then?

<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11...>

<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02...>

London, Hertfordshire, Paris, film stars, local community, hotels, pubs, private clubs, MPs, journalists, hangings, shootings, graveyards, trains, S&M, leather, secrets, death penalty, family history, executioners, Madame Tussauds...all figure.

After the occurrence that threw me, I was reading but not ever so invested in the plot, the characters or the ongoing investigation. We have further deaths, involvement with the local police force, our MP who like Hugo has managed to insert himself somewhat unconvincingly into the case, a local journalist and a burgeoning relationship with a hotel worker with a predilection for S&M.

Later in the book, when our keen bibliophile and security chief Marston catches the Eurostar to Paris and just so happens to find an abandoned magazine on his seat – the *Bookdealer* the trade journal for the book trade – I think you would probably have heard my groan in Paris. I was lost after that.

I read on, as I do. Overall it was fairly well-written, just a bit far-fetched and unconvincing. Our murders get

solved and resolved at the end. But did I enjoy it, like it, was I satisfied.....no. Did I loathe it.....nearly. It was okay, just disappointing for me. I kind of thought if it had gone in a different direction it would have been a totally different and for me more enjoyable book.

Still probably just about a 3 from 5 as it did have its moments and I wasn't tempted to gouge my eye out with a spoon at any point. (My wife has hidden the sharper cutlery!)

I'll read the fourth in the series – The Blood Promise and I'll be hoping for better things.

Mark Pryor's website is here.

<http://www.markpryorbooks.com/>

Thanks to the team at Seventh Street books for my copy of this one.

<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11...>

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## **Carol says**

**The Button Man** by Mark Pryor

3.5★'s

Hugo Marston series book #4

From The Book:

Former FBI profiler Hugo Marston has just become head of security at the US Embassy in London. He's asked to protect a famous movie-star couple, Dayton Harper and Ginny Ferro, who, while filming a movie in rural England, killed a local man in a hit and run. The task turns from routine to disastrous almost immediately. Before Hugo even meets them, he finds out that Ferro has disappeared, and her body has been found hanging from an oak tree in a London cemetery. Hours later a distraught Harper gives Hugo the slip, and Hugo has no idea where he's run off to. Taking cues from a secretive young lady named Merlyn, and with a Member of Parliament along for the chase, Hugo's search leads to a quaint English village. There, instead of finding Harper, more bodies turn up. Teaming with local detectives and then venturing dangerously out on his own, Hugo struggles to find connections between the victims. Is this the work of a serial killer—or something else entirely? Knowing he's being tailed, the killer prepares for the final, public act of his murderous plan, and Hugo arrives just in time to play his part.

My Thoughts

This was the first book by Mark Pryor and the first in this series that I had read. The writing style flowed very well and was very easy reading. The premise of the story was also very good...a body hanging in the graveyard and plenty of suspects. The main problem I had with the story was that the lead character...a former member of the FBI and the head of the American Embassy security...would lose the man he was supposed to be protecting in the first place...and then chase him all over London and the outlying villages with the aid of people that he knew absolutely nothing about other than what they had told him. That just didn't seem believable and it bothered me throughout the entire book. I do plan on reading others in this series as I found that Hugo is a very likable character on the whole.

Anyone looking for a murder mystery to enjoy without the blood and guts will find this series fits the bill perfectly.

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## **Kate says**

Wonderful mystery, that has some of the taste of place, characters and plot reminiscent of classic British mysteries...which make them a great read. An ex FBI agent, Mark Pryor, now working as security for the U.S. Embassy in London. After two American actors, a husband wife team filming in a small countryside village kill a local man in a hit and run. The Ambassador assigns Mark to keep them on Embassy grounds as soon as they are released on bail. He doesn't really get a chance, because the wife is released early in a paperwork snafu and is found dead. From there the body count starts mounting and there is nothing to tie any of the deaths together.

Mark teams up with a mysterious young woman, Merlyn, and a wonderful Scotland Yard Inspector and a British Lord to try and figure out what is going on. Well crafted and totally engaging.

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## **Julie Barrett says**

What was I thinking, picking this up at the library? I read *The Bookseller* a few years ago and found it ok. Maybe I thought a prequel to that book would help me understand the main character better and like him more? If so, that didn't happen. I like Hugo less after reading this book.

The mystery was lame and far fetched. The love interest drove me nuts. Just stop, for God's sake, stop. Her character was completely redundant and added nothing to the plot. Just a creepy middle aged man's fantasy. A beautiful half Asian 25 year old into kinky bondage & domination - but still a virgin!. Oooh, the best of both worlds lol.

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## **Karen says**

This is the first Hugo Marston mystery I've read and I thought it stood well on its own, even if it's marketed as a prequel.

I'm attempting to write a mystery/suspense novel and took a lot of things away from this book:

- I wasn't a fan of the opening of this book; it felt like another book was being set up and I wasn't sure that Marston's interest in a long-ago crime that may or may not have been related to Jack the Ripper paid off.
- I really enjoyed the ways Pryor kept the tension between the Americans and the Brits. It felt quite authentic that there would be moments of genuine cooperation and moments of breakdown, where styles would differ or where toes would be tread upon.
- I wanted Merlyn to have been used more as a red herring. What was her real purpose in the book? Was she there to just conveniently explain the people and place to Marston? Why did it never occur to Marston that she might be more than she seemed? She was everywhere the murders were happening, she was connected to so many of the victims and she had access and opportunity. I wish more had been made of this; the journalist just seemed so out of the blue.

The plot didn't entirely come together for me. Two American movie stars are arrested after committing a hit

and run against a farmer. We're meant to believe (in this celebrity obsessed culture) that Britons were baying for their blood because they sped off after killing the farmer. Marston gets involved, as he's got to ensure their safety until they're somehow they're spirited off to America. This confused me - why wouldn't they face the consequences right there, where the crime had been committed? Anyway, one is released and then found dead in a cemetery, swinging from a noose, no less. The husband, distraught, runs away from our intrepid gumshoe, hightails it to a kinky sex den and then winds up dead. Along the way, Marston picks up a parliamentarian with a military background and an interest in springing elderly convicts from prison. A journalist who covers celebrities joins the mix, ostensibly to get an exclusive with the movie stars. Somehow we end up with a situation where people are turning up dead, Marston's chasing the killer with an amateur dominatrix in tow, as well as the parliamentarian. The journalist turns out to be the deranged son of an executioner, who never received his pension. A mental breakdown (after a lottery win, natch) has him acting as an execution, picking off people who would otherwise drain the public purse. And the parliamentarian is in cahoots with him. The body count includes two celebrities, a parliamentarian, a priest and the twin of a recently released female killer. Somehow.

There was just a lot going on here that didn't feel like it was sufficiently holding together.

That said, the writing was brisk, there were moments of levity and Marston is a character I'd happily follow in the future.

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## **Zeb Kantrowitz says**

This is the first book of Mark Pryor that I've read, and I was impressed by the style and smooth characterization of the book. The main protagonist is a member of the US Embassy in London named Hugh Marston. He had been a member of the FBI but was brought to London to be the head of security at the embassy. He was personally tasked at keeping the Ambassador safe and out of trouble.

A famous American actor and his wife are involved in a drunk driving homicide. Marston is asked to protect them from a very angry English public. But while the husband is in jail, he wife is free on bail. In the morning the wife is found hanging from a tree limb in a local cemetery. It's ruled a suicide but Marston's instincts say that it's more than meets the eye.

While trying to track down the wife's killer, Marston gets involved with the local police, an English MP (whose former MI-5), and a unusual young woman. The young woman is called Merlyn who is knowledgeable about the seamy-sexual side of London. During their travels they end up visiting a private mansion for the leather and flogging types.

When the actor is released from jail, he gives Marston the slip and ends up going to visit the father of the man he killed. When Marston shows up at the father's house, he finds him dying from a bullet wound he says that the actor shot him. Now Marston has a bigger reason to find the errant actor. When other people who are involved with the case begin turning up dead, Marston is sure there is a serial killer on the loose.

But the one thing they can't figure out is how the different people are connected to each other. Also unlike most serial killers, this on doesn't have a single murder MO nor does he sexually abuse any of his victims. All this leads Marston (with the help of some of London's finest) on a merry chase until they finally figure out who the killer is and why he's committing the murders.

Nicely done with no red herrings or unusual turns that murky the waters.

### **Martina says**

I really love this series. Our Mystery Book Group read the first, *The Bookseller*, and enjoyed it thoroughly. I have followed the series as *The Crypt Thief* and *The Blood Promise* came out and am looking forward to reading this 'prequel' with Hugo in London. The book group members are awaiting publication in September with great eagerness.

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### **Paul says**

I bought this book on a whim to get free shipping from a national bookseller. I was surprised how much I enjoyed it. The action moved quickly and I finished the book relatively quickly. Of course part of that was due to the fact that the book is less than 300 pages. Still, the book did keep me engaged in reading it.

Hugh Marston is a former FBI profiler who has become a security chief at the American embassy in London. His first assignment is to babysit two Hollywood stars who have run over a farmer while driving in the English countryside. Events unfold too quickly for me to go much further than that with the plot.

Characters were portrayed realistically and for the most part were likable. Marston, an assistant, a British police investigator and a delightful young woman named Merlyn are the main protagonists. This book is a 'prequel', and I have ordered the first book in this series hoping it is as good as this one.

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### **Lorin Cary says**

I really like this series. Here Pryor has a "prequel." Mark Pryor is with the London embassy prior to going to Paris as security chief there. It's a combination thriller and police procedural. Mark is a former FBI profiler and his skills are once again hard at work. He's to babysit an American moviestar but when the man's wife is murdered, Mark sets off for the killer. Which gets complex and which gets more murders. Tension abounds and it's a skillfully plotted yarn.

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### **Sandra says**

Another great read by this new-to-me author. I've read four now, and they were all outstanding! Great edge of your seat plot, and interesting characters bring the story altogether in one heart-stopping book. Loved it and a huge fan now and forever.

From Amazon:

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### **Christine says**

This was an easy read, movingly dark and poignant at points. I might not have picked it up on my own but was given an ARC at one of the book conventions I attended and didn't regret it. I appreciated the blend of British and American culture and would not hesitate to read the others in this series as it is a good commute book. The one thing I noticed was that Hugo, the protagonist, really didn't actually do much other than run around. It seemed as if the case could have played itself out whether or not he followed up on it, which was rather odd. It was a good thing the case itself was interesting.

Also, this being an ARC I can't say whether or not the back cover blurb is the same on the regular copies, but it definitely gave away far too much. It caused me to more expect things to happen than to be surprised by them.

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### **Jon McClintock says**

#### **Not his best**

"The Button Man" is a prequel to the first two stories of the Hugo Marston novels. Without revealing any plot details that would be spoilers: Hugo has unbelievable, and I mean hard to believe, access to a lot of things in places where, in reality, it wouldn't happen that way.

As a fan of the genre, I know how to give a little license. But this turns into a kind of Keystone cops chase with the sub-theme that is believable... But eventually unrelated. I encourage you to read it, but if you have read his previous two works I think you'll agree with me.

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### **Deb says**

Hollywood movie star couple in London to film their next movie, kills a local man in a hit and run accident. Hugh is assigned to babysit the husband, Dayton, until charges are brought against him in court. Dayton's wife, Ginny, is released from jail and later that day found murdered. Dayton eludes Hugh and he, too, is found murdered. In Hugh's search for Dayton, he meets Merlyn who helps him in his quest to find the



murderer. A few more murders and some twists and turns and Hugh eventually gets the murderer. Fast paced and a definite page turner!

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### **Judith says**

An excellent prequel to his first book, The Bookseller. Lots of plot twists and turns, and some great supporting characters - welcome to Merlyn! One of my new favourite murder/mystery writers. I'm patiently waiting on the next book of Hugo...definitely worth reading!

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### **Sam says**

3.4 Stars : This was fourth in his series, so read it 4Th. However, it was flashback of sorts in that it "installed" itself as a prequel to the first book. It felt like a deep loss as the relationships developed in books 1-3 hadn't occurred yet. It was an unraveling of sorts and this made me sad. Also, the plot in this book wasn't to the quality of the other books and it just didn't do it for me. Aside from the further developing of the Character Merlyn, I'm not sure of the point. Was it really the first he wrote but had initially shelved it?

Anyway, still a quality book, but definitely wasn't my favorite.

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