



Rolling Thunder

Chris Grabenstein

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There's more fireworks down the Jersey shore in Chris Grabenstein's sixth fast-paced John Ceepak mystery *Rolling Thunder*. A prominent citizen suffers a heart attack on opening day of a brand new boardwalk roller coaster in the seedy seaside resort town Sea Haven, New Jersey. Initially ruled a tragic accident, it isn't long before there are suspicious hints of foul play - especially after another dead body is discovered: a stunning young beach beauty.

Fortunately for mystery lovers, the straight-arrow cop John Ceepak and his wise-cracking young partner Danny Boyle are on the case, a detective/sidekick duo critics have compared to Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin.

Rolling Thunder Details

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From Reader Review Rolling Thunder for online ebook

Angela Verdenius says

I actually finished this back in September but haven't done the updates! Oops!

Just love how this mystery unravelled. I kind of guessed the killer, but then I wasn't sure, then it looped around and - what can I say? Enthralling!

Nikki says

After a summer of audiobooks and a busy fall, I'm beginning to catch up on my reading and to get up to date on some of my favorite fictional characters. These would definitely include Danny Boyle and John Ceepak, local cops in "sunny, funderful" Sea Haven, NJ. Danny, who narrates the books, is a local boy who more or less drifted into police work. Under Ceepak's expert tutelage, Danny is becoming a better detective and a better man with every book in the series.

One thing that sets this series apart from most of the police procedurals I read is Danny's status as a hometown cop. Quite often, the victims, suspects, and perpetrators, as well as many of the witnesses, are people Danny went to high school with or their parents or siblings. This makes for a completely different police-citizen relationship than one might find in, say, a Michael Connelly book. Danny's hometown status also means that he has something to contribute when he and outsider Ceepak are investigating a crime, which keeps their relationship from being just another "great detective and bumbling sidekick."

In ROLLING THUNDER, a sudden death mars the opening day of a new rollercoaster and gives Danny an opportunity for heroism. But suspicions soon arise: was the death really a heart attack? When a local good-time girl is found dead, Ceepak and Danny must unravel a tangled web of relationships == family and sexual -- among Sea Haven's wealthy and politically connected developers. Maybe it's because I'm personally terrified of carnival rides, but Chris Grabenstein writes some of the most heart-stopping climactic scenes I've ever read, and the situation that occurs at the end of ROLLING THUNDER is one of his best.

If you're new to Chris Grabenstein's work, ROLLING THUNDER can certainly stand on its own, but once you've read it I guarantee you'll be seeking out the earlier volumes in the series! Highly recommended.

Michelle says

This installment kind of got off to a rough start for me, and never really got my attention. The wife of a wealthy local businessman dies when she has a heart attack while on the maiden trip around the track of the roller coaster her husband had built, and Officer Danny Boyle and his partner Officer John Ceepak immediately begin discussing foul play. The fact that the woman was an overweight smoker with a bad heart and was absolutely terrified of riding the roller coaster to begin with is never factored in, which was a stretch for me. There's a reason why every roller coaster in the world has health warnings and disclaimers posted everywhere for those considering riding them!!!

The story then ventures off to include the death of a local hottie waitress involved in a Playboy mansion-

esque Gentlemen's Sex Club that seemed to involve way too many local dignitaries not to attract the attention of any local scandal-sniffing media hounds. Overall, this plot was a little too scattered to actually be convincing, and is my least favorite in the series so far.

Brian O'Leary says

very good mystery of two cops one good one crooked.

Letia says

4.5 stars

John says

One of the better books in the series. Ceepak seemed to be secondary to Danny here, with the focus on Danny's feelings and observations, even though Danny's been Watson to his Holmes all along. I will say that after this one Sea Haven seems like a real danger magnet!

For those who listen to the audio versions, one thing struck me as rather odd, if not a bit grating. It seems the woman from the state cops whom they had been working with retired, so now there's a new guy instead. I skipped Hell Hole, so perhaps the guy's *very* heavy Boston accent (which is well done) was explained there, but here it came out of the blue, so I kept thinking Jeff Woodman was messing up a New Jersey accent (such that there are), but he's done others fairly well before.

Elizabeth A. says

"I used to round up shopping carts in the parking lot at Wal-Mart. Then I met Ceepak and life's been one big roller coaster ride ever since." – Danny Boyle

Officer Danny Boyle isn't the only one going for a roller coaster ride in Rolling Thunder, the sixth entry in author Chris Grabenstein's John Ceepak/Jersey Shore mystery series. Memorial Day weekend in Sea Haven, New Jersey finds Danny and his partner, John Ceepak, working crowd control at the grand opening of the Rolling Thunder roller coaster. "Big Paddy" O'Malley, owner of the Rolling Thunder, his family, and assorted town dignitaries are also on hand to be the first to experience the seaside town's newest attraction.

They get more than they bargained for when Mrs. O'Malley has a heart attack and dies during the coaster's initial run. Though the death appears on the surface to be nothing more than an unfortunate tragedy, Ceepak and Boyle are bothered by the lack of distress exhibited by several members of the family and begin looking into the workings of the O'Malley clan. As they are doing so another death, this one unquestionably a murder, confirms their suspicion that something is fishy in Sea Haven.

As with all previous entries in this outstanding series, Grabenstein serves up a wonderfully complex mystery for Ceepak and Danny to tackle. Along the way they must deal with a jealous, potentially criminally complicit colleague, prominent members of the community engaging in organized activities of questionable legality, a mayor who wants nothing more than to not upset the tourists, and a family with Shakespearean levels of dysfunction.

Engaging mysteries notwithstanding, it has always been the characters of Ceepak and Danny themselves that truly set the Jersey Shore series apart from run of the mill crime fiction. Though they're easy to describe in broad brush terms for a book jacket – Ceepak the straight-laced, by the book former Military Police Officer, Danny the young, wisecracking local who got into part-time law enforcement on a whim – there is so much more going on.

Over the course of the series we've learned about the chaos in Ceepak's early life that drove him into the military and shaped him into a man who craves extreme order as a means to feel in control of his life. We've also seen glimpses into the darkness that lurks beneath Ceepak's ordered surface, reminding readers that he's much more than the "Dudley Do-Right" his foes often describe him as.

Likewise, Danny has shown himself to be more than a wisecracking side-kick. Initially only caring about his part-time job with the Sea Haven PD because "chicks dig the cop cap," Danny has grown to appreciate and take pride in his individual role as a police officer, as well as his status as Ceepak's partner. He's also grown into a formidable investigator in his own right, and the events that unfold in *Rolling Thunder* set the stage for Danny to take a tremendous step forward in his maturation as both a police officer and a man.

Yes, in Ceepak and Danny Grabenstein has, with a sure hand, brought to life over the course of the series two of the most interesting, multi-faceted protagonists in modern crime fiction. Those who've been reading the series since its *Tilt-A-Whirl* debut will love the continuing evolution of Ceepak and Danny, while those new to Sea Haven will find ready-made friends they'll feel as though they've known forever. No doubt about it, everyone should be in line for a ride on *Rolling Thunder*.

Sandy says

I've been listening to all the John Ceepak books on audible. They are consistently good, fun listens. Nothing earth shattering, just pure entertainment.

Jan says

This series is always an enjoyable pastime. Highly recommend the audios of them!

Hobart says

This is an outtake from a blog post discussing John Ceepak Mysteries 6-8 over at The Irresponsible Reader. It probably works better in the context of the whole, but, you never know.

It infuriates me that I haven't written anything on this book -- Ceepak and Boyle (and, probably, Grabenstein) deserve better. But...here's something, at least.

The points I've had all along are still here -- I like Grabenstein's voice and tone. I like the subtle character growth. Ceepak is a super-hero. Danny, on the other hand, is the real star of this series (no matter what it's called) -- we're watching him grow in to a real cop, into a man. Yes, he's trying to model himself off Ceepak, but he's the focus, he's our entry into this world and Ceepak's mission.

The biggest problem with this series is that I just can't bring myself to listen to enough Bruce Springsteen to appreciate all the references. I've tried. Really I have.

Not much worse than a prominent citizen dying on the initial run of the new Roller Coaster that was supposed to guarantee one of the best tourist seasons in recent years for Sea Haven. The resulting investigation is as filled with the typical twists and turns, heroics from Ceepak and good tries from Danny.

Not that Danny doesn't get his chance to shine -- and brightly, I should add.

I liked this one, not as much as I wanted to, but spending time with good friends in NJ is always a treat.

I'll take a moment to say that I'm not crazy about the whole arc about Ceepak's father. Initially, I liked it -- but now? I don't know -- maybe they're just spending too much time with it without resolving anything, but I'm done with it. There's another arc kicked off here that works much better (particularly as its a subtle kick-off here, that grows into prominence).

Lesley says

Thanks Chris Grabenstein... this was such a roller coaster of a read, lol! I really am glad the boys were back on the job at the Jersey Shore, Danny is funnier than ever and Ceepak is getting so lovable... married life has brought out the best in him! I listened to the audio version and I love the narrator, expecially doing the hip-hop slang of Sean, maybe my favorite side character in this book. This one is a winner!!!

Spuddie says

#6 John Ceepak/Danny Boyle mystery set in fictional Sea Haven on the Jersey Shore. Ceepak and Danny are working at the opening of the new boardwalk amusement, the Rolling Thunder, a gigantic wooden roller coaster. Excitement ensues when the wife of the owner has a heart attack during the inaugural ride, and even Ceepak performing CPR after climbing up the roller coaster tracks can't save her. Although some members of the dysfunctional O'Malley family don't seem to be too grief-stricken, there's no evidence that it was anything other than a natural death--although, admittedly, not exactly good advertisement for the ride.

Later, when a local woman, a waitress at a local dive that Ceepak and Danny stop for speeding and issue a warning to ends up hacked to death and packaged in two suitcases just hours later, it seems there may be a link back to the heart attack death as the young woman was apparently the mistress of Paddy O'Malley. Suddenly evidence pointing at O'Malley starts turning up left and right, and it's rather obvious even to the

still-green Danny that someone really wants him implicated not only in the young woman's death but his wife's as well. Ceepak of course sees through this ruse from the beginning and digs to the heart of the matter by the end of the case, which ends with more heart-stopping moments up on the Rolling Thunder.

Another great visit to Sea Haven, with Danny, Ceepak, Rita and the rest of the regular crew--although some of the peripheral characters change regularly, including Danny's girlfriend-of-the-month. Poor guy--he'll find the right one someday, I have no doubt! Easy reading style, great story and wonderful characters--a perfect light summer beach read if you're into that sort of thing--me, I couldn't hold out that long. Reading this catches me up to the current end of the series--now I'm stuck waiting a whole year til the next one comes out. Boo hoo!

As an aside, I had to laugh when I noticed one of the minor crime scene techs from some state agency had a last name Reynolds "but you can call me Spuddie." I almost wondered if I'd won the 'get your name in the book' contest, but I didn't enter so it couldn't have been. Besides, the character was male. LOL

Zachary says

ROLLING THUNDER!

I really enjoyed this book. The guys were back on the Jersey Shore where they belonged battling out their crimes, no matter how crazy they might be! Ceepak is his natural "robotic, I cannot tell a lie" self," while Danny is still learning and looking up to his mentor. As usual I have a habit of not really telling what the book is about for fear of spoilers. I feel you can find that info on reviews on Amazon, etc. I just give my opinion if I liked it. It was a fun read that had me laughing in certain areas. I feel if you're going to read books like these, you can't take them seriously. Enjoy! I'm on his 7th book in this series. I intend to finish all 8. I really enjoy the characters, and it's a refreshing change from the serious novels I usually read! ????

M says

Mystery With Too Leisurely a Start

I'm giving this story only 3 stars, unlike most readers who love this book. Of the John Ceepak mysteries I've read so far, this entry is the least interesting. It took me several tries to get into this book, mostly because the storyline meanders in after the initial, obviously natural death of a woman, who should never have been on "The Rolling Thunder" roller coaster. The story does take off at a good clip at about the 70% mark, making for a satisfying end. I will probably check out other books in the Ceepak series.

Christine Gentile-harvey says

Really enjoyable weekend read! Fast, funny and easy. Like popcorn at the movies.

