



## Scavenger Reef

*Laurence Shames*

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When Augie Silver disappeared at sea during a sudden storm, it was a loss felt initially by his young wife and by his crew of drinking cronies. When word of his apparent drowning extended beyond the Key West world Augie had made his home, however, his loss was felt by a greater number of people. For Augie Silver was a painter, or more precisely an artist, waiting for recognition. And his death proved to be the event necessary to turn a lifetime of eccentricity into a career of genius. Suddenly Augie was hot. While his wife, Nina, continued to mourn, his friends began to awaken to the realization that all those paintings Augie had given them over the years might have been worth holding on to. In fact, according to the New York art dealer who was also Augie's agent, they might be worth a whole lot. So when Augie returns from the "dead," having been shipwrecked on an island off Cuba, it is with somewhat mixed emotions that he is welcomed home. His wife is jubilant, but all those who had read dollar signs in Augie's obituary aren't too sure how happy they are to have him back, especially since each of them seems to need an influx of cash in the worst way. And when mysterious things start happening to Augie, little "accidents" that seem less than accidental, he's not too sure how happy he is to be back either. With the help, however, of his wife and their fiercely loyal houseboy, Reuben the Cuban, Augie fights for his life a second time around while seeking out the would-be killer. From the author of Florida Straits, a critically acclaimed story of suspense also set in Key West, Scavenger Reef is a funny, dark, and vastly entertaining novel all about life, death, and the stages in between, written with wit and charm, and filled with unforgettable characters.

## Scavenger Reef Details

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Author : Laurence Shames

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## From Reader Review Scavenger Reef for online ebook

### John says

okay, not great.

Hope #3 in series is better.

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### Monica says

Cleaning out an old book case, came across this and reread it. It's fast paced, funny, Florida comic crime fiction - the Key West scene is brought to life, Augie, Nina and Reuben are good characters.

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### Dobby0390 says

Where *Florida Straits* was fast and fun, *Scavenger Reef* is a leisurely character study. Augie Silver is a famous artist, known past Mile Marker 20 for his paintings and known in Key West for his generosity and easy friendship. The book begins at Augie's memorial service. He was lost at sea, presumed dead, and the people in his life deal with the void his absence leaves. His wife, his agent, his friends — each feels his loss in different ways. It quickly becomes apparent that, as laid-back and unassuming as Augie was, he was the linchpin that held everything together. There is humor here, dark humor for sure, and the pace picks up as some of the characters start getting desperate. Then the Mob gets involved ...

The pacing is slower in this book, especially at the beginning. There are a number of characters, and their flaws and strengths slowly weave an intriguing story. It's hard for me to categorize this book; it's not humor, although it has some great dark-humor moments. It's not a thriller, though there's definitely a whodunit element. We run into some familiar characters that we met in *Florida Straits*, but this book isn't tied to that one. Overall, a satisfying read, more for savoring than rushing through.

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### Jeff Yoak says

The basic story of *Scavenger Reef* is that a painter is lost at sea and is presumed dead. Friends and associates who have some of his paintings start to realize they have a windfall in the value of paintings he's given them. When the painter turns up alive, it turns out that someone is trying to kill him to protect and realize the windfall.

This is all written by an expert in South Florida-style comedy and the action is replete with all that should make you expect such as mafia goons holding characters over aquarium tanks containing hammerhead sharks because they haven't paid their loan sharks. All-in-all, I should love this story. I remember loving it when I read it.

The thing is, I almost abandoned it during the re-read. The pacing is terrible. Almost a half of the book fritters away thinking the painter is dead. That's by far the less interesting part of the story. A good argument

can be made that you should start with the return of the painter and fill in the backstory. Instead, it felt like it dragged on forever. It picked up and I'm glad that I finished it, especially since I plan to continue with the series, but it is weaker from initial slowness.

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### **Lenny says**

Well written, but not as exciting as the first book in the series, I will read Book 3 though because I enjoy the authors style.

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### **Roberta says**

Florida humor in the group with Dave Barry. Not environmental like Carl Hiaasen and lighter than Tim Dorsey.

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### **Megargee says**

The tale turned dark when the parrot died. Until then, the narrative had been a mildly amusing riff on how an artist's works may suddenly appreciate after they die. When Key West artist Augie Silver was apparently lost at sea, the New York prices for his works increased dramatically, providing an apparent windfall for his agent and the various impecunious drinking buddies whom Augie had gifted with his paintings over the years. The castaway's apparent return from the dead on the eve of the big auction of his works causes consternation. When Fred, Augie's faithful parrot, keels over after eating a poisoned Key lime tart intended for his owner, it becomes apparent that one or more of his oddball pals is seeking to return Augie to the ranks of the deceased. At that point the novel becomes less humorous.

Author Shamus communicates the heat and ambiance of Key West. However, his over the top descriptive passages sometimes get in the way of the story. In the middle of a police interrogation of Augie on page 253, we are suddenly treated to this passage:

Fat summer clouds towered here and there. Their bottoms were lavender, they were voluptuous with swelling curves, and they roamed the sky like sniffing dogs, deliberating as to where they'd drop their rain.

Mulvaney sipped his beer...

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### **Kathleen Phinney says**

Just OK

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### **Susan says**

Shames' characters are the story and he's got it down to a fine art. Actually art is in the center of this, his first

novel. Augie Silver is an unpretentious, popular artist with a love of life. He had a habit of giving his art to his barfly chums in addition to selling enough to make a nice life for he and his wife. He's lost at sea and the value of his work looks like it will skyrocket. Now his down and out friends are smelling a better life themselves if they sell Augie's paintings. But, is Augie dead or not? If not, and they can find him, it would pay them handsomely to make him dead.

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### **Carolyn Rose says**

Enjoyed the setting and characterization

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### **David Lotz says**

Good, light, fun read

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### **Berit??? says**

This is tough, I wasn't crazy about this book at all, but I am also definitely not the target audience for this book....

I pick this book up for a challenge, otherwise I would have never picked it up, and I probably will never read another book in the series.... not that it was bad, it just was not for me.... there was a lot of character development, and generally I like that in a book but these were very unrelatable characters for me.... The only character I could kind of relate to was the wife, but other than that, not so much.... I did find it kind of interesting that Augies work as an artist was worth more if he was dead rather than alive, doesn't say much for becoming an artist.... The book also made me realize how far audiobooks have come, this was recorded in 1998, the sound quality today is just so much better and the performance expectation as well....

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### **Iris says**

While I expected a kitschy, light read similar to "Sunburn," what I got was a jumbled cast of characters that I could barely keep straight and a mystery that I didn't care all that much about solving. Nina and Augie's story was somewhat engaging, but the supporting cast and the rest of the details were mostly cliched and silly. Everything wrapped up very quickly at the end, and the "twist" if you could even call it that really fell flat. I will probably try another book by this author at some point, with the hope that this was just a weak installment.

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### **Richard Thompson says**

Augie Silver is a successful painter living in Key West. When he disappears in a freak summer storm while sailing it looks like the price of his painting will be taking a major bump, and there are a lot of people including his agent and her bankrupt husband and lot of friends to who Augie has given paintings over the

year who could make a lot of money.

When Augie shows up alive the picture changes, and it looks like someone wants to make him dead again.

The one review I read on amazon.ca said that there were no likeable characters in the book; I disagree — Augie, his wife Nina, Reuben, the Cuban "houseboy" and the police detective, Mulvane are all sympathetic and well-drawn characters.

The plot works. The Key West locale is appealing.

I almost skipped over this book in series because of the two negative reviews; I'm glad I didn't.

This is book #2 on our 2017 Read-alouds List.

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### **Silas says**

I'm a sucker for books set in Florida, part of the reason I started reading this series. That and Amazon suggested it on the same page as a Dorsey book, so I figured hey, let's try this guy out and see how it goes.

The first book in the series wasn't quite as sarcastically funny as Hiaasen, and not as spastic as Dorsey, but it was good in its own right. *Scavenger Reef* doesn't disappoint and my only real gripe is it seemed to resolve really quickly. I'm not sure if he was in a hurry to finish, but I could have used a little more build up leading to the big reveal.

With that said, I fell for one of the herrings at the end, but really enjoyed finding out who did it. Or tried to do it.

Characters from the first book have cameos, and I like it when books in a series pull characters in from other books. It helps build the world the series is set in better, so props for that. While some of his characters border cookie cutter land (Reuben the Gay Cuban), it isn't enough to detract from a decent story.

I'll keep reading the series at this point unless Shames just totally blows it. All in all a fun read, if you need something Hiaasen/Dorsey-esque but not quite as heavy, you will probably derive some amusement and enjoyment out of this one.

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