



Suicide Hill

James Ellroy

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Detective Sergeant Lloyd Hopkins is the most brilliant homicide detective in the Los Angeles Police Department and one of its most troubled. In his obsessive mission to protect the innocent, there is no line he won't cross. Estranged from his wife and daughters and on the verge of being drummed out of the department for his transgressions, Hopkins is assigned to investigate a series of bloody bank robberies. As the violence escalates and the case becomes ever more vicious, Hopkins will be forced to cross the line once again to stop a maniac on a murder binge.

Suicide Hill Details

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Author : James Ellroy

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From Reader Review Suicide Hill for online ebook

Raegan Butcher says

Another fast tough crime novel from James Ellroy. Unlike his more famous books, this one is set in the present day. But the updating of the scenery doesn't get in the way of his muscular prose. James Ellroy kicks mighty big butt!

Jeff says

The wrap-up to Ellroy's Lloyd Hopkins trilogy winds up with Ellroy figuring out the next-to-last of the tools he needs: structuring his book around multiple protagonists and how their desires weave together to form a larger tapestry of crime and redemption.

I've got a few more of Ellroy's early books to read but from what I can tell the last, and arguably greatest, decision Ellroy makes--to eschew contemporaneity and set all of his books forty years behind the times--is a decision made outside of his novels. But *Suicide Hill* only underscores the sense of the decision: *Suicide Hill*'s handling of punk rock and music videos is hilariously out of touch with reality, the work of someone falling violently out of touch with pop culture. Although, say, the crazed Mexican nightclub/whorehouse of *The Black Dahlia* is undoubtedly equally absurd and barely grounded in reality, the remove of history allows Ellroy to keep his cartoonishness without losing the edge he wants. Realizing he was a man out of time and capitalizing on it was one of the shrewdest moves Ellroy--arguably the shrewdest writer in American crime fiction--ever made.

The other shrewd move? Making his antagonists as tortured and desperate for redemption as his hero. Although none of the trio of bank robbers reaches anything like the depth of Ed Exley or Dave Klein or (fill in your favorite Ellroy character here), frankly, Lloyd Hopkins doesn't either. While no longer the tortured genius/embarrassing authorial stand of *Blood on the Moon*, Hopkins still isn't quite a fully developed character. Only near the end, when he sees in other policemen the arrogance and violence he's perpetuated, does he start to seem like the type of character would come to excel in--the haunted thug.

On the plus side, the amphetamine popping is back (after a noticeable absence in *Because The Night*), men scream almost as much as they did in *Blood On The Moon*, and every single car fishtails.

On the negative side of things, the depiction of women is terrible in this book, even by James Ellroy standards. I'd have to re-read it to be sure, but apart from a woman bank teller who maybe says one sentence before having her head blown off, every single woman in this book is motivated by both sex and money. The racism isn't nearly as bad as it usually is, but the homophobia is worse. Obviously, reading Ellroy is by definition the opposite of a politically correct experience, but again, staging the racist and xenophobic misandry against the scrim of the distant past does wonders for mitigating the bad aftertaste.

I tell myself I'll write up reviews for all the books I've read this year (and, hey, maybe I even will!) but if you're a fan of Ellroy's later work and are curious to see how it developed (and how badly it worked until it worked brilliantly), I recommend all three of the Lloyd Hopkins books.

Ron Collins says

I've had all I can handle of Lloyd.

Davide says

Wow, such hardboiled
Amazing poliziotti ribelli e criminali tosti
Very uomini duri
Best discorsi sul sesso
So violent

Iniziato e mollato a pagina 48.

Cat Eye55 says

I Was Glad When It Was Over

I like twist and turns but there was so much going on in this book that my eyes started to roll. It was way over done and stretched out forever. Maybe Ellroy planned it that way, but there wasn't a single character I cared about in this book. And the publisher/editor allowed so many proofreading errors to occur that it was distracting and disrespectful to the author's hard work. I paid Amazon's price for this so I felt cheated by not getting a quality book. I like James Ellroy's books so maybe this can be chalked up to this series being his first efforts but I would not recommend that anybody waste their time on this trilogy. Consider some of his later stuff instead, and hopefully the proofreading will be better quality then too

Matteo Pellegrini says

Lloyd Hopkins, investigatore della squadra omicidi della polizia di Los Angeles, è il migliore poliziotto di tutta la città, ma è stato accusato di abuso di potere dai suoi superiori. Viene quindi declassato alla sezioni rapine e furti. Nel frattempo Duane Rice, giovane delinquente e ladro di auto, esce di galera e prepara delle rapine in banca durante la quale, assieme ai suoi complici, due fratelli messicani, uccide due poliziotti, tra cui il figlio di un capo della polizia, Gaffaney. Quest'ultimo chiede ad Hopkins di trovare i rapinatori a tutti i costi, e gli promette di fare in modo di salvare la reputazione passata di Hopkins. Si scatena una immensa caccia all'uomo in tutta la città. Duane Rice intanto uccide uno dei due fratelli messicani. Hopkins non farà in tempo a trovare Duane Rice che verrà ucciso dai sottoposti del corrotto Gaffaney che mascherano l'omicidio in suicidio. Il presunto suicidio di Rice non convince assolutamente Hopkins ma ormai Gaffaney ha dato le dimissioni e non ricatterà più Hopkins.

Sarah says

This book was decent for most writers, but mediocre for Ellroy. It was, however, interesting to see him *becoming* - you can almost see the man that would eventually come to write LA Confidential in these pages, see some of the themes that would become the subjects of all of his work touched upon.

I do think this one got tied up in too neat a bow. Perhaps that was what his publisher wanted, perhaps it was what Ellroy thought his readers wanted. Either way, the tidy red bow on the bloody trilogy does a disservice. I'm glad he grew out of that.

Julio says

Mucho menos ambiciosa y compleja que las fabulosas L.A. Confidencial o La Dalia Negra, mantiene sin embargo el ambiente negro, descarnado y cruel, dibujado metódicamente con una prosa hecha de frases cortas y ajenas, y personajes fríos, patéticos y miserables, aún si notablemente inteligentes. Como en sus grandes novelas, da la impresión que Ellroy no inventa una historia sino que describe minuciosamente algo de lo que ha sido personalmente testigo. La historia es un enconronazo mortal entre un brillante detective corrupto y sociópata - y a pesar de ello, o debido a ello, un héroe entre sus pares - y un criminal agudo pero obsesionado por una prostituta en quien él se obstina en ver una futura estrella. Y la danza a ciegas entre estos penosos personajes, se desenvuelve entre muertes baratas y violentas, mientras la lucha entre el bien y el mal se diluye toda ella entre mucha, mucha sangre. Como diría Ellroy mismo, un libro para toda la familia, si su familia es la familia Manson... Muy entretenida!

Darwin8u says

The best book in the LA Noir series, and an obvious bridge to some of his best books.

Charles Gates says

This third book of the trilogy was enjoyable as I could see Ellroy's writing and plot improve so much over the first two books. Having read all his works except these three and being a big fan I was able to follow his development as a writer. Having grown up in Southern California in about the same time as he did I loved all the local references in all his writing. I could visualize every location. Still waiting for something new from him.

Brett says

This here is the clear bridge from Ellroy's earlier spottier works to the first L.A. Quartet and what was to come, and in many ways I like it more than "The Black Dahlia." This one excels in the Lloyd Hopkins series for focusing more on the criminals instead of the spent title character and that the crimes and criminals don't have that quasi super-villain, credibility stretching quality that the first two Hopkins volumes had.

Greg says

Suicide Hill is a crappy name for a book, and the third book in James Ellroy's Lloyd Hopkins series of books. The title of the books i just shitty, I don't know what I would name the book, but the title is blah. Sorry, demon dog.

I don't know anything about James Ellroy's motivation at the time of this book being written. The cover of the mass-market I read says a Lloyd Hopkins Novel, as if that were being used as a selling point. I get the feeling that Lloyd Hopkins was an attempt to create a reusable protagonist, a Philip Marlowe for the cocaine eighties. I don't know if Ellroy consciously ended the Lloyd Hopkins series of books with this one, or if, thankfully, he just moved on to the start of his *L.A. Quartet*.

D. Pow commented already on how it can be interesting to see a great writer develop, and that is what the reader can see in this book. Many of the Ellroy themes and styles are beginning to be played with in this book. They are used in earlier books of his too, but this one is in a sense his final 'young' novel before he seriously begins to put distance between himself and, well the rest of the world of crime fiction.

Readers of Ellroy can easily find this book unsatisfactorily. His language is loose here. What he could say in a clipped five word sentence in *American Tabloid* might be seem like verbal diarrhea when it takes him a few sentences or a paragraph. The words he uses also seem a little confused. The lingo seems off. The fifties are melding strangely with the eighties. The worlds aren't jiving with each other. I don't have any proof, this is only a theory; but I would say that Ellroy is not a historical writer. The past that he writes about isn't the real past, and the words and language; the men and women wandering around in his books are a darkly rarified version of the past with Ellroy's spin put on them. The language he uses to bring these characters up from the ether of imagination to haunt our own reality is a mixture of real slang with a rhythm and vocabulary running through Ellroy's head. For this all to work Ellroy needs to put a temporal distance between the present he is writing in and the never-ending present that he writes about (because when he really gets going in another two books from this one there is only the present in his books, a present hurtling through history and events at a speed that attempts to out-run the demons of his characters pasts).

But all of this is the future Ellroy from when this book was written. The Ellroy that would begin to show himself *The Big Nowhere* and *Black Dahlia* before finding his way and just demolishing everything that came before in *L.A. Confidential* and then streamlining himself into the dark creator/destroyer of American Myths beginning with *American Tabloid* and (presently) culminating in *Blood's a Rover*.

As I said, this isn't a good book. It's entertaining, but it's a typical police crime book with a hard-boiled cop and some tough characters. The thing that makes this book stand out from a typical novel is the darkness. Ellroy's view of LA and the police is about as loving as the portrayal of both in the TV show *Dragnet*, but a *Dragnet* where Joe Friday burglars a suspects pad to plant evidence, tampers with witnesses, coerces a homosexual for information and then looks in as some of his fellow brothers in blue force a suspect to fellate a glock while being threatened with having his tonsils pierced with a nine millimeter round if he doesn't suck hard enough. This Joe Friday wouldn't show up for another book, but this book is the penultimate step to the cliff's edge.

Josh says

In SUICIDE HILL, James Ellroy puts the emphasis on a wayward bank robber and his delusional dream of converting a junkie into a rock star prone to tricking to feed her habit, rather than the tainted series protagonist Lloyd Hopkins which gives the last installment in the Lloyd Hopkins trilogy a distinctly unique feel to its predecessors. Hopkins, is once again a man on a mission to deliver justice by any means. His sense of right and wrong, while slightly warped add an air of unpredictability to the book which is a stable in this highly readable noir trilogy. The story is sorrid, bloody, and complex in both a police procedural and psychological sense. What else would you expect from James Ellroy?

Lee says

Another earlier Ellroy novel lives up to the Devil Dog's reputation for fast-paced, suspenseful punch in the mouth action. There's a hill, it's called Suicide Hill, and a (alleged, by, well I won't spoil it for you. Stop at "alleged") suicide. Great Thomas Lux poem opens the book, like an apercu on Ellroy's literary work as a whole:

You're alone and you know a few things.

The stars are pinholes; slits in the hangman's mask

Them, rats, snakes;

the chased and chasers--

Guy says

Derde en laatste deel van de Lloyd Hopkins Trilogy, boeken die, net als Clandestine en Brown's Requiem, alleen voelen dat Ellroy geen doorsnee misdaadauteur is, maar nog niet opmerkelijk genoeg zijn om te kunnen spreken van uitzonderlijke werken. Na Suicide Hill zou nog een tussendoortje volgen (het eigenaardige Killer On The Road), waarna Ellroy uiteindelijk zou uithalen met zijn geweldige L.A. Quartet (The Black, Dahlia, The Big Nowhere, L.A. Confidential en White Jazz), stuk voor stuk uitstekende tot fantastische romans die tot de top van het genre horen. Alhoewel, je kan je eigenlijk de vraag stellen of Ellroy nog wel een misdaadauteur is, aangezien zijn boeken zo veel meer te bieden hebben dan die van zijn collega's. Doorheen het quartet zie je hem verder en verder wegdrifven van het klassiek-gestileerde misdaadmodel en stilistisch buiten de lijtjes kleuren, iets wat uiteindelijk de aanloop werd naar American Tabloid, waarin hij zijn obsessie voor politieke geschiedenis, complottheorieën en gewelddadige taalbommen kon tentoonspreiden. Vervolghet The Cold Six Thousand verscheen intussen al zeven jaar geleden. Zo lang wacht ik

al op Blood's A Rover (deel #3 van de American Underworld Trilogy), waarvan de publicatie opnieuw (voor het derde jaar op rij) werd uitgesteld naar de herfst van 2009. Maar Suicide Hill? Een recht-voor-de-raapse suspense novel, met een wat schamel uitgewerkte antiheld (in het voorwoord bij de omnibusversie geeft Ellroy zelf toe dat hij nog een lange weg te gaan had voor hij de kwaliteit van bvb. Thomas Harris' Red Dragon, de ophefmakendste misdaadroman van zijn tijd, zou kunnen bereiken) en opnieuw wat zwart/wit psychologie die in latere werken plaats zou ruimen voor beter uitgewerkte, perverse pathologieën. (***)
