



## Dirty White Boys

*Stephen Hunter*

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## **Dirty White Boys** Stephen Hunter

They busted out of McAlester State Penitentiary--three escaped convicts going to ground in a world unprepared for anything like them....

Lamar Pye is prince of the Dirty White Boys. With a lion in his soul, he roars--for he is the meanest, deadliest animal on the loose....

Odell is Lamar's cousin, a hulking manchild with unfeeling eyes. He lives for daddy Lamar. Surely he will die for him....

Richard's survival hangs on a sketch: a crude drawing of a lion and a half-naked woman. For this Lamar has let Richard live....

Armed to the teeth, Lamar and his boys have cut a path of terror across the Southwest, and pushed one good cop into a crisis of honor and conscience. Trooper Bud Pewtie should have died once at Lamar's hands. Now they're about to meet again. And this time, only one of them will walk away....

## **Dirty White Boys Details**

Date : Published November 5th 1995 by Dell (first published 1994)

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Author : Stephen Hunter

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# From Reader Review Dirty White Boys for online ebook

## Dave says

A crime thriller that is not too thrilling, really. The book begins with the prison shower room killing of an inmate by the antagonist, Lamar Pye. Lamar has to escape from prison because of the murder. According to Stephen Hunter, it's pretty easy to get out of a maximum security prison. Lamar, his retarded cousin, Odell (who Hunter has talking all 'retarded' throughout the novel--very irritating) and their wimpy cellmate Richard (Odell calls him "Wi--Chud") hop the joint. The prison scenes and the interaction between the three villains really seemed unrealistic. It was more like what a wealthy writer guy might think prisoners acted like. I'm no expert, surely, but the scenes ran hollow.

Yadda, yadda, yadda, Lamar and Odell almost kill State Trooper Bud Pewtie (they do kill his partner, Bill) which sets up the 'drama' and 'tension' of the rest of the novel. Bud's a hero, but not in his own life as a supposedly caring husband and father of two sons, because he has been having an affair with Bill's wife for months. This whole affair scenario dragged on way too long--it smelled of some kind of literary device Hunter was using to add some human failings to his protagonist. Obviously this "crisis of honor" is having an effect on Bud--there's a scene where Bud, who is all stitched up from his near death encounter with Lamar, does not bleed when having sex with the recently widowed Holly, his mistress, but starts bleeding when he cheers for his son at a ballgame immediately after. Okay, I get it. Vulnerable with the family. Pain. Bleeding. Okay. Gee, Mr. Hunter, is it hard to type with those Virginia Baked fists? You won't believe how Bud catches up with Lamar. No really, you won't be able to suspend your disbelief. This is a really bad book that is a paradoxical mix of trite and cliched with "no way" unbelievability. Oh and one more thing, everyone keeps talking about how this book shows that the good guys aren't always totally good and the bad guys aren't all bad and I'm thinking, "How is this homicidal maniac not all bad?" Is it because he cared for his retarded sociopathic (and also homicidal)cousin so much? Or is it because Lamar loved Ruta Beth (another insane homicidal character) so much? No, much like the novel as a whole, Lamar Pye was all bad.

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## Raegan Butcher says

Tough, nasty tale of some very bad-ass rednecks escaping from prison and causing tons of havoc. I passed this around the cell-block and it was quite a hit with the convicts.

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## Brandon says

Talk about a high-speed train ride through the minds of madness. I've never really gotten into crime novels or cop dramas, but I've been a big fan of Stephen Hunter for many years and finally got around to reading this one. Wow. Aside from some of the dialogue now and then, it was a strangely realistic view from every side; whether it was the hardass cop with his own personal drama spiraling out of control, Lamar's criminally intelligent rampaging, or Richard's pseudo-psychotic constant fear, the characters were real enough to suck you into every bit of the story.

On a final note: I love how Hunter tied the plot into a kind of side-sequel of the Earl Swagger series. Of course, Bud, our Swagger-esque old fashioned American hardass, fits right in with the legacy of Earl and Bob Lee.

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### **Karen B. says**

I wasn't sure if I was going to like this book when I found out that some people in our group were choosing not to read it because of some profanity. Boy am I glad I decided to go with it! This was an exciting story about the escape from prison of three men, the girl they met up with later and the man determined to bring them down. It was full of tension and excitement. Lamar is a very intelligent criminal who brings along on his escape his cousin, who is brawny, strong but has problems speaking which in turn reflects his lower IQ but he is loyal to his cousin Lamar. Richard doesn't even belong with these guys. He has three months left in his sentence and expects to be moved to a minimum security prison soon. Lamar is fascinated with Richard's drawing of a lion and is determined to have Richard design a tattoo for him, so Richard comes along on the escape. Bud Pewtie is the officer who finds himself after the "boys".

The action moves quickly and is suspenseful. The major characters are well developed, the plot an exciting ride. Yes, there is some foul language but it's very descriptive of what these men would be like. No escaped convict is going to say "gee whiz" when something goes wrong.

All in all it was a great read.

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### **Leon Aldrich says**

If you read much in this genre at all, then this novel deserves a place on your reading stack.

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### **Rosina Lippi says**

First, a bit of background about this series of novels. Stephen Hunter has two main characters: Earl Swagger, a veteran of WWII, a state trooper, tough, quiet, capable, tormented. Earl has a son, Bob Lee, who follows in his father's footsteps in most things. In Vietnam, Bob Lee (trained as a sniper) is known as Bob the Nailer. The first novel in the Bob Lee series starts twenty years later, when he is reluctantly drawn out of retirement.

Here's the challenge: Hunter jumps around in time, and back and forth between related storylines. My strong advice is to read the novels in the order you see here, although it will seem at first that *Dirty White Boys* doesn't belong where I've put it. It does. You won't see why until *Black Light*, and you won't appreciate *Black Light* unless you read *Dirty White Boys* first. Unfortunately there's almost no indication of this when you pick up on the books in a bookstore, and you might somehow miss what can only be called a near-classical tragedy if certain things don't happen in order. So I'm telling you. My suggestion would also be to read the Earl Swagger books before the Bob Lee books. But that's not strictly necessary.

Bob Lee Swagger

1. Point of Impact (1993)
2. Dirty White Boys (1994)

3. Black Light (1996)
4. Time to Hunt (1998)

Earl Swagger

1. Hot Springs (2000)
2. Pale Horse Coming (2001)
3. Havana (2003)

So you've got two interrelated series of books about a father and a son, jumping around in time. Why bother? Because when Hunter is on top of his game, these are fantastic stories. Bob Lee and Earl are both fascinating, frustrating, engaging, over the top and believable at the same time. Earl's difficult boyhood (which makes for some of the best reading in the series) shores up what might otherwise feel like Hunter's fraught characterization.

However. The novels are not all equal (and how could they be?) *Dirty White Boys* has one of the most provocative opening paragraphs I've ever run into. It's a great story, but seriously flawed by what I can only call a shallow characterization of a mentally disabled character and Hunter's (failed) attempt to portray his inner monologue.

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### **Patrick O'Neil says**

Ok, *Dirty White Boys* is a great title - not like, "whoa man, amazing way cool." But it is provocative. Got a catchy beat. I'd rate it a 75 cause I can dance to it - and if you weren't around to watch American Bandstand way back in the day that comment won't mean a damn thing. Lately I've been finding when I reference things from my past in front of my younger straight-outta-high-school students they just look at me with these blank expressions. Some shit just doesn't translate any longer. Stuff be changing so fast the past is gone and ain't nobody schooling the youngsters so they just don't know, and don't care. Which is sort of how I felt about Stephen Hunter's *Dirty White Boys*. It's got a foot in another era and no damn future. There's ideas and cultural portrayals that no longer translate, and the book only came out in 1995. This macho lawman stuff and its John Wayne-isms seems so old fashion - like he's channeling Gary Cooper, only no one knows who the hell Cooper was so it's sort moot. Yet there's some cool dialogue. There's some good ultra violence. Some sex, without the sex. And a lot of superficial relationships that skim along the surface and don't really go deep.

That said, I kinda liked it. Sort of like a grilled cheese sandwich. You know the ones made outta Wonder bread and American cheese that really ain't got no substance, are bad as hell for you, take 10 minutes to make right, and only two to eat. But as your arteries are hardening you're think about eating another one. Maybe throw another "slice" of that Velveeta on it - mmmmmmmm, good.

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### **Benjamin Thomas says**

Another amazing read from Stephen Hunter. This is my 4th book by this author and I'll definitely keep on going with them. I had read *Black Light* a couple of months ago and was a little miffed to learn that it was a follow-on to this one so I had to go back and read this one pretty quickly thereafter. While this isn't a "Swagger" book per se, it does involve overlapping characters with both the Earl Swagger series and the Bob

Lee Swagger series.

Action-packed and filled with drama, I always appreciate how this author avoids many common clichés of such books. But it's definitely not for everyone...full of violence. I can easily see Quinton Terantino hoping to get the film rights to it. Definitely ranks among the very highest of cops vs super-bad jail escapee bad guys I've ever read.

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### **Kathy says**

Lessons Learned: How to get the readers FULL attention in the first sentence!

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### **Chris Berko says**

Just as fun as the first time I read it. This guy does great characters, dialog, and story lines. If you like 1980's and 1990's action movies by guys like Walter Hill you'll love this guy's books.

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### **Kevin says**

Well, this review will be a little shorter than my last one for it seeing as Goodreads junked my review because I had the nerve to click outside the white popup window by accident.

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed the book when I was ready to put it down after the first chapter and the continual prison rape motif the author seems to be fixating on. No, we don't need pages of text about how big a penis Lamar has, it really doesn't add anything to the story - no I don't need to hear the continual ramblings of who he'd 'buttfuck'.

Once I got past that though, the story moved along at a good pace and I did enjoy the story - though there are some negatives.

The main character (suitably tarnished hero, Bud Pewtie) was completely and utterly unlikable for most of the book, and I really didn't like him that much by the end. (view spoiler)

Lamar is far too know-it-all'y for a career criminal (view spoiler)

But despite the negatives (and there are more, but I had those in my original review) - I would recommend the book to a friend, but with a disclosure that they need to persevere through the prison rape and continual 'buttfucker' references which add so very little to the story.

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### **M.J. Allaire says**

I usually like reading a longer book than this one, but I really liked the story. I'm an author as well as an

artist and this story really struck a chord in me. I listened to it on audio book and will definitely be listening to it again...

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## **TK421 says**

This book is in my top five of cop versus bad dude. Pure pulp. Super violence. Warning: NOT FOR THE SENSITIVE.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

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## **Mike says**

Dirty White Boys by Stephen Hunter is a dark, gritty, and at times very intense piece of modern day pulp. It's not for the easily offended or squeamish! It contains violence, crude and rude dialogue, racial slurs, an abundance of cursing, and a lot of devious and abhorrent behavior that will not endear it to polite society. You'll know from the very first sentence whether this is something you will want to read or not...and from that very first sentence the story is off and running.

For what it is, this is a good book. The author not only manages to craft a nice example of modern day pulp (and, please, do not think for an instant that I use the term "pulp" as an insult or to be derogatory in any way), he also sprinkles in a few "deeper" themes. Trying to show the grey area between good and bad, right and wrong, etc.

The hero, Oklahoma State Trooper Bud Pewtie, is constructed as a flawed figure who adheres to a strict code even if it means bending the law a little from time to time. His counterpart, escaped convict Lamar Pye, is especially well presented as a fully dimensional character. In my opinion the character of Pye is much better realized than that of Pewtie who comes across as more than a little stereotypical despite the author's best efforts. The end result is that the whole presentation of the good guy who isn't all good and the bad guy who isn't completely bad (though Pye is, without question, a world class deviant and one nasty-mean son-of-bitch), tends to get a bit heavy handed from time to time.

The book is 480-pages long (paperback version) but, for the most part, the story sails along at a steady pace. Sometimes it gets frenzied then backs off to something more akin to a simmering pot that is just short of hitting the boiling point...then it takes off again. The only part that really had me counting pages to see how much farther I had until I was done was around page 300 or so when the author seemed to briefly focus more on developing Buds personal issues and less on the ongoing conflict with the escaped convicts. It fit well in the story, it's just that after maintaining such a steady pace it seemed anti-climactic to bring everything to such a near crawl. It didn't last more than 20-pages or so but it broke the rhythm of my reading and, frankly, bored me a little.

Stephen Hunter is a very good writer. He doesn't have the lyrical prose of a Raymond Chandler (very few do) nor the dialogue skills of someone like Elmore Leonard and, as I believe another reviewer pointed out, his female characters tend to be a little less "real" than the men. Still he succeeds in creating a first rate story that has a certain authentic feel to it. I liked it, a lot, I just wasn't blown away. I don't think anyone who is a fan of dark, hard hitting crime stories will be disappointed.

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## Trevor Pearson says

*"There is a paradox at the core of penology, and from it derives the thousand ills and afflictions of the prison system. It is that not only the worst of the young are sent to prison, but the best—that is, the proudest, the bravest, the most daring, the most enterprising and the most undefeated of the poor. There starts the horror. —Norman Mailer's introduction to In the Belly of the Beast by Jack Henry Abbott No one knows what it's like to be the bad man."*

Lamar Pye carries a big stick around with him in Oklahoma's toughest prison McAlester State Pen and also carries around a heavy reputation amongst it's inhabitants. You don't have to have a working knowledge of his toughness, you just had to look at him to fully understand the trouble he's gone through and the trouble he can cause. At 38 y/o Lamar is the prince of the Dirty White Boys, he has put in his time and paid his dues which has earned him the honour of being known as scum of the earth by his victims but also feared by the southern states most hardened criminals. Lamar is infatuated with the king of the jungle, the lion is his spirit animal and it suits him fine as he works his way through the penal system anticipating the day he can escape from his life sentence in captivity and get back to his prowling ways. He has spent the passing years perfecting his craft, going from an apprentice to a journeyman and finally a master tradesman in the art of criminality. He was initiated into the world of transgression at the age of ten but was pretty much born into it when his father was killed by state police while he was in his mother's stomach. Rather than mom singing lullabies and listening to Cat's in the Cradle, Lamar was being put to sleep with broken beer bottles being smashed and police sirens reverberating through the walls. That was his life, that was all he had ever known. He bounced around reform schools, committing crimes that gradually became more and more serious, almost like he was trying to knock off a criminal bucket list as fast as possible before he died because he was not going back to the pen, he was going to go down guns blazing.

Richard Peed is a curious case with regards to criminality, a first time offender at 31 y/o, he is an always scared, weak looking, mild-mannered young white male with a talent for drawing. He finds himself doing a stint in McAlester for a crime unexpected for a person given the opportunity he had in his life. He's well aware of his own fear of violence and lack of cunning but the question remains: why would he put himself in a situation that would see him locked away for an extended stay with people that would gobble him up as if he were a turkey leaving no leftovers? Odell is Lamar's adopted cousin and devoted follower. A mammoth of a man with the mental capacity of a child he is as predictable as Mother Nature, with the only expectation being extreme pain if Mar Mar sic's 'em on you. Odell is unemotional, ultra violent and will put his life on the line for you, three great qualities you must have if you are associated with Lamar.

*"Odell sat with the AR-15 in his lap and a red wig on his head. He had tits. He was wearing lipstick and a blue fur-trimmed coat from the year 1958, the year that Ruta Beth's daddy had bought it for Ruta Beth's mother at Dillon's Department Store in Oklahoma City. He didn't look much like a woman. He looked like a gigantic transvestite with an assault rifle, if you looked close. But who would look close?"*



Veteran Sgt. Russell 'Bud' Pewtie of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol is the first to respond to the call of the prison break, just another call where there are no expectations of violence, just a matter of time before they make their next mistake and were brought in. When word comes that a prison guard was killed and the bad old boys took a hostage with them in a Hostess Cake Truck he knew the price of poker had gone up. While alone with his thoughts Bud battles regrets of putting his job first, not being there for his children and being a better husband to his wife. He is having an affair with a younger woman and he knows he's doing wrong but he can't suppress his urges. Bud is losing his grip on every aspect his life and being: his marriage is a sham, his household has now become a foreign entity, the legacy he has built over the years is on shaky grounds, and now his character has come into question. The only thing that can save him from himself is putting his life on the line and to catch these three sociopaths before they get away for good. The problem is that these aren't your garden variety 'lifers', these guys mean business which makes for a multifaceted killing machine.

*"He tried not to think of Holly, but at night that came over him, too: the flash of the gun, the softness of her skin, the ugly powder burn melted into Ted's skull, the tautness of her nipples, the grin on Lamar's face as he pivoted with the shotgun, the smoothness inside her thighs. One became the other: flash and explode, orangeness, pain, ecstasy, all of it crammed together. He yearned to call her, but he couldn't."*

Lamar enjoyed the pain he inflicted and the palpable fear of his victims, killing was a means to survival, it came with the territory. He felt like a king of the jungle, for the most part there were no hard feelings, never any struggle, he was a god amongst men following the path of his destiny leaving no witnesses in his wake. There are no rehabilitated people coming out of an American prison, reform is another buzzword for refine. Prison has become an institution where criminals sharpen their skills and add a few more weapons to their arsenal. Bud is well aware of the hopelessness after decades and decades of experience, and if he had it his way he would extinguish all of them rather than give them a second chance. As the three escaped convicts travel state lines in the Southwest of America they find refuge on a farm of a young woman who happens to be a fanatic about a certain type of criminal, it seems that she would fit right in with the rest of them and make for a complement to their ensemble. They were slowly transforming into a messed up manifestation of a 'family'. With brave and protective father Lamar, loving and doting wife Ruta Beth, meek man-boy Richard, and devoted boy-man Odell; everything was falling into place, and everyone knew their role.

Dirty White Boys has common elements of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*. Two confidantes travelling the south looking for a big score where one has inhuman strength and a mind of a child while the only person that could harness him was by his side at all times. Lamar and Odell weren't blood related but that didn't mean anything when it came to their devotion to one another. *Dirty White Boys* is a transgressive crime novel with a high body count, lots of violence, sex, and would be a gun lover's wet dream with all the ammunition and weaponry. The book may have been a little long for my liking but it had enough to keep a good flow from beginning to end. I mean the beginning of the story will be a make or break for anyone interested in reading it, so if you're interested the first passage will give you a good idea of what to expect. For me I don't mind and I recommend this book.

*"The worst moment was always taps. It didn't matter if the bugler played it well or poorly, in tune or out; there was something in the mournful ache of the music, and how it spoke of men dying before their time for something they only vaguely understood and being only vaguely appreciated by the people on whose behalf they died, that made it hurt so much."*

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## Lily Vagabond says

However you define this book or Stephen Hunter's writing, all anyone needs to know is *Dirty White Boys* is storytelling at its' best. Stephen Hunter has been in the game for a number of years, but I hadn't heard of the author until he was recently recommended to me by a friend. And I fell in love.

I adore face-paced thrillers where every loose end is nicely tied by the end, and that's exactly what I got. On the surface, *Dirty White Boys* sounds like a macho read, full of testosterone. And it is, but at the same time, Hunter offers so much depth with the characters, actions, mystery, suspense, that I personally didn't notice anything overly macho that wasn't well within context. I simply enjoyed the ride.

Gushing praise aside, the novel reads like a big open door with a flashing neon sign. Come in! Look around and I'll show you a world you never knew. From the descriptions of the prison's social structure to the personal lives of police officers, the novel rides a rollercoaster and don't expect to take a breath until the final sentence.

I'm especially impressed with the exploration of criminal psychology, written in a relatable way and through the expressions of the characters' every day lives. I found myself caring so much about the psychopathic criminals that I almost cried right along with Lamar.

Though not Hunter's first book, I chose to read this one first and now I'm devouring every book he wrote. I chose this one because, well, come on, the title, I *had* to. Five stars from me, and two thumbs up.

I recommend disregarding the packaging and just enjoy the ride. Hunter is a testament that there are still amazing authors who know how to tell a good story.

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## Checkman says

I would have to agree with other posters. *Dirty White Boys*, is a pulp fiction crime novel. A throwback to the tough, two fisted "mens" action novels of the 50's and 60's. Well almost. It's better written than many of those old novels and not so formulaic.

It has several nicely staged gunfights in it and the dialogue is right out of a short story in *Argosy magazine* circa 1955. The criminals are bad and the cop is flawed, but heroic. Despite his flaws he pushes on and does his job.

I suspect that some reviewers failed to understand that Mr. Hunter wrote this novel like a pulp fiction novel on purpose. He grew up reading pulp novels and I believe that he wanted to write a more modern version of that classic genre with "Dirty White Boys".

I for one think he accomplished this goal. I like the novel. It's exciting and free of so much of the politically correct baggage that one find in many current novels.

If you're looking for a great piece of award winning literature then keep on walking. But if you want well

written gunfights, nasty bad-guys, a Gary Cooper type hero and even a few thrills then look no further.

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## Johnny says

Pure pulp. Ultra-violent. One hell of a crime novel. Hunter is that rare breed of writer that is both highly literate and a fan of the genre.

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## Peter says

*Dirty White Boys* (1994) is a stand-alone novel by Stephen Hunter, who has fifteen novels about the lives, tribulations, and triumphs of Arkansas' Swagger family: the first in the excellent (though variable) Swagger series was *Point of Impact* (1993). Even including the Swagger books, this is one of Hunter's strongest novels. It is powerful and well-paced, its characters are despicable but very interesting, and each page grabs your attention.

This is a very gritty tale about prison life, escape and flight, and very bad guys doing bad things. Ultimately its about man's moral depth and what makes some folks natural born killers. We learn that the father of Lamar Pye, a central figure, had been killed in 1955 after robbing a store. The killer was State Trooper Earl Swagger, a WWII Medal of Honor winner and the father of Bob Lee Swagger. This is Hunter's first mention of the Swagger family; in effect, *Dirty White Boys* marks the book in which Hunter discovered his future.

### Background

One has to check their sensitivity at the door if they open *Dirty White Boys*: in the first sentence we learn that Lamar Pye has the largest white penis in Oklahoma's McAlester State Penitentiary, the fourth largest penitentiary penis overall. "The Macs" prisoners have lots of traditional activities—penis-measuring contests, the usual shower room practices, shivving each other, and lessons in prison sociology—the black, Hispanic, and white gangs are driven by untamed racial hostility that gives each a target for their anger, violent urges, and boredom.

Lamar Pye is the head of the dominant white gang among the inmates, the Dirty White Boys. He is very large, very vicious, and very feared by all groups; to put you on notice his knuckles have F-U-C-K-Y-O-U-! tattooed on them, and he means it. Lamar's cousin, Odell Pye, also an inmate, is illiterate and dumber than a rutabaga—he really knows only two words—"Mar" and "hurt." Odell is fearless and instantly does whatever Mar wants; in turn, Lamar genuinely loves Odell and protects him from other inmates.

Lamar's cellmate, Richard Peed, is a weakling with a background in art who hasn't a criminal gene in his body. Oh, except that he blinded his mother while trying to kill her with a bread knife. Richard is under Lamar's protection because Richard's specialty, art, is valued by Lamar. Lamar is not into Renaissance Art; his taste runs in tattoo artistry—Lamar likes tattoos, especially those that show him as the lioneque center of power. Richard is designing a glorious chest tattoo for Lamar. Other than that, Lamar finds Richard useless, as do we.

One of Hunter's strong suits is his ability to draw out the complexities of his characters. During this tale a strange thing occurs—you begin to get a trace of empathy for Lamar: he can exhibit mercy, if your idea of

mercy is that he doesn't kill you; he kills not out of anger or for the joy of it, but because it serves his purpose ("a man's got to do what a man's got to do"); he is self-aware—he knows that he is a piece of shit but he just can't do anything about it; and he is extremely smart in the cunning way that serves criminals well. Even Odell is a sympathetic character.

But Richard, the meekest of lambs, is different. When someone comments that the lead investigator, Sergeant "Bud" Pewtie, doesn't seem to like Richard, Pewtie's response nicely captures the differences between Lamar, Odell and Richard:

No, not really. He had choices. Lamar and Odell, they never had no choices. They were born to be trash. They learned at the toe of somebody's boot. Richard could have done anything. What happened to him didn't have to happen. He was smart enough for it not to have happened. That's what I despise about him.

As an aside, you'll notice that the protagonist and antagonists all have surnames beginning with P—Pye, Peed, Pewtie and Pepper. If you figure that out, let me know.

### The Plot

At The Mac a 400-pound black inmate named Junior Jefferson attacks Lamar in the showers. Junior's special skill is asphyxiating people with his body fat—he will sit on his victim's face or hold the victim close to him until death do them part. But Lamar turns the tables and kills Junior. Realizing that he is dead if he stays in McAlester—whoever paid Junior will eventually get the job done—Lamar engineers an escape with Odell and Richard. The three get out in a van leaving two dead bodies behind—Junior and the guard who helped them. The van driver is kept as a hostage but soon finds himself very disposable. The escape van is noticeable—it is marked in big letters HOSTESS BAKING PRODUCTS. Odell is in Heaven with all those Twinkies.

The phone rings at the house of Russell "Bud" Pewtie, a sergeant in the Oklahoma Highway Patrol. Bud is being called to join the task force set up to recapture Lamar, Odell and Richard. He and his partner, a rookie named Ted Pepper, head off to the rendezvous and a statewide manhunt begins. You will discover that Bud is very into Ted's wife; things will get complicated as Pewtie balances his unraveling family situation with his search for big-time killers.

The chase is vigorous and vicious. In an area-wide search Bud and Ted come upon the Pyes and Peed at the remote farmhouse of an old and feisty couple. After a gunfight during which Bud's life is saved by Odell's stupidity (but Ted's isn't), the criminals continue their flight. The next meeting is after the three rob the one place where Texas money gathers—a Denny's restaurant. A Texas State Trooper happens to be eating lunch and all hell breaks out. Once again, Lamar, Odell and Richard escape leaving six bodies behind. Several more sightings occur, each to someone's disadvantage, as Bud Pewtie closes in on the killers, who have been joined by a young woman named Ruta Beth Tull. Ruta Beth's claim to fame is the shotgunning of her parents.

Will the bad guys get caught or killed? Well, the real question is how many will die before that happens, and how does their capture arrive. Read on. This is a good one. (Hint: Tattoos are involved.)

Five Stars.

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## **Tim Warner says**

May be the best crime book I ever read from certainly the best writer of this genre. My palms were literally sweating and my heart racing at certain points. I haven't found anyone better, nor as good and am willing to settle for someone almost as good as Stephen Hunter. I wouldn't read this one first if you decide to delve into the master, Hunter. Probably best to go back to the earlier Earl Swagger books, not necessarily published in chronological order. You won't believe what a pleasure you will have in reading A Pale Horse. That's a good place to start, maybe. Then go to Hot Springs for good character development of Earl.

Hold off on Black Light until the end of the Earl Swagger series.

I'll say it again, this guy, Hunter, is the best. he writes "novels" in the classic sense of the word; not in the airport reading sense.

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