



A Study in Revenge

Kieran Shields

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In 1893, a trail of ashen footprints leads Deputy Archie Lean to the body of a murdered thief. The man's exposed flesh has been horribly burned and occult symbols mark the nearby walls. Most troubling of all is what Lean witnessed two days earlier: this same man being lowered into his grave without a burn mark on him. Once again, the Portland, Maine, police deputy must turn to the brilliant criminalist Perceval Grey for help.

Grey, a half-Abenaki Indian detective, faces problems of his own after agreeing to an elderly tycoon's death-bed plea to find his long-lost granddaughter. The dying man's family is less interested in the missing heiress than with the recent theft of an obscure heirloom carved with curious symbols. As the family's shadowy history is revealed, the three mysteries intersect to draw Lean and Grey into a maze of murder, deceit, and revenge. Each deadly new clue points toward an even greater puzzle—one that will pit Grey against a devious murderer in a race to unlock an ancient and mysterious power.

A Study in Revenge Details

Date : Published January 8th 2013 by Crown

ISBN : 9780307985767

Author : Kieran Shields

Format : Hardcover 384 pages

Genre : Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Historical Mystery

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From Reader Review A Study in Revenge for online ebook

Pistol Pete says

There are times a book simply catches your fancy. Whether it's the time of year, your mood, other things going on in your life, whatever, a book just clicks and you enjoy it. Such was the case for Kieran Shields' second work, "A Study In Revenge."

It's not a perfect book. There were times I had trouble keeping characters straight and the locations seemed a little to Maine-centric to someone who has spent less than a week in the Northeast his entire life.

That said, Shields' writing allows you to immerse yourself in the period. It never takes itself so seriously that there isn't time for humor. And the characters have some flesh to them. Perceval Gray is Sherlock and Archie Lean is Watson, but they have their own unique characteristics. Grey isn't quite as omniscient as Holmes and Lean isn't as hapless or clueless as Dr. Watson. But their relationship is real and it's easy to see why they would gravitate to one another.

I suppose calling this a "comfort read" is the best way to describe it. Easy to pick up. Easy to put down. Just a nice, steady read that left you full, but eager for the next meal. The ending sets up (presumably) the next book, and I'll look forward to it. I doubt it will be the same experience as this one -- I can't imagine it clicking as well a second time since I'll have expectations this time around -- but I'm intrigued enough by Grey and Lean to see where their stories go.

Karyn says

This book is fabulous for people who are interested in history, alchemy, and mystery. There is a strong sense of place and history both within the story's time period (Victorian) and their past going back to the Revolution. Deputy Lean and Grey's relationship was an obvious homage to Holmes and Watson but also characters in their own right.

There are series that you can read out of order, and series where the story builds and it is difficult to appreciate without the whole story. This book is definitely the latter - Shields refers back to previous events enough for the plot to make sense, but I had the constant feeling that I was missing the foundations of the characters and relationships.

Despite my lost circumstances I still enjoyed the book. The pacing seemed uneven at times, since there were so many mysteries and minor points to be investigated. A few of the side trips Grey took out of the city could have been done differently - both to keep him in the middle of the action and to leave more time to more fully flesh out the Webster family.

In the end, I'm unsure of whether I'll be picking up and other books in this series, but I will recommend them to others.

Lisa B. says

My Thoughts:

Smart! Smart! Smart!

Why do I say this? This read like an 1893 version of CSI. I liked the way Perceval Grey used evidence, the obvious and the not so obvious, to put together clues to help Deputy Archie Lean solve a murder. The plot had a little of everything - mystery, intrigue, a tad amount of sex and even unrequited love. I particularly enjoyed the interaction between Grey and Lean - witty, intelligent and occasionally snarky (I like snarky as long as it's not directed at me)

I have not read book #1 of the Archie Lean series (?) but do not feel that it deterred me from enjoying book #2. I'm hoping this is an ongoing series as I thoroughly enjoyed the author's writing.

I would like to thank Crown Publishing Group and Netgalley for allowing me to read this in exchange for an unbiased review.

Publish date: January 8, 2013.

Paul Pessolano says

“A Study in Revenge” by Kieran Shields, published by Crown Publishers.

Category – Mystery/Thriller

This mystery is a period piece that takes place in 1893 in Portland, Maine. Archie Lean, a police detective, is called to the scene of a gruesome murder. A body is found that has been partially burned. Archie knows who has been burned but is puzzled because it is the same person he buried several days ago, a man that was shot to death. To make matters worse Archie finds occult symbols on the walls of the house.

Archie, knowing he needs help, enlists his friend Perceval Grey, a half Abenaki Indian, who is an astute criminologist, aka Sherlock Holmes. The trail leads to the Webster's, a prominent Portland family. It seems that going back over the years this family came into possession of a “thunderstone” that has ancient drawings on it. This stone may be the key to unlock the occult symbols and lead to a mystery that has been chasing through the centuries. As Grey and Lean get closer to solving the mystery, more deaths occur, and the emergence of a prior foe that has a vested interest in obtaining the stone.

This is a nice mystery that is slow paced and tends more to the erudite than to one who likes a lot of action and blood and guts in their books. It is also a book that can be read by just about anybody as there is nothing that could be considered objectionable in the book.

This is a series and to get the most out of this book the reader should read “The Truth of All Things” first, and the author leaves “A Study in Revenge” open to his third book.

Madeleine (Top Shelf Text) says

So far Shields has a way of taking me completely by surprise when all is revealed at the end of his books. That's what makes me drawn to his mysteries. (And also I like that Grey seems to be a take on Sherlock Holmes.) This one only gets three stars because it took so long for the story to really heat up- I was already halfway through the book when it became worth it to stay up late reading. Despite that, I see a lot of potential for a third book (or more) in this series, and I will certainly be following up with it when it comes out!

Allen Adams says

<http://www.themainedge.com/buzz/a-di...>

Shields continues his good work in repurposing the idea of the literary superdetective. Perceval Grey is one of the most engaging characters in recent memory, and he continues to grow. His half-Abenaki heritage comes a bit more to the forefront; the sense of a man without a place is heightened. Shields also contrasts Grey – an Indian raised among white men – with the character of Chief Jefferson, a white man who grew up among native tribes. This contrast serves to clarify Grey's outsider status.

Archie Lean makes a wonderful counterpoint to the reason-bound Grey, his combination of stolidity and sarcasm juxtaposing nicely. He is a man driven by his heart; that characterization serves to offset Grey's life of the mind. The comparison of the Grey-Lean dynamic to that of a Holmes-Watson is inevitable, but rather than be bound by that template, the author instead creates a relationship that, while undeniably evocative of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's creation, is entirely unique in and of itself.

"A Study in Revenge" shows that Kieran Shields is hitting his stride. He has created a character whose adventures warrant our attention and a world that we can't help but wish to revisit. A reader can truly lose himself in this past Portland; we can only hope that we won't have to wait too long for the next installment in the adventures of Perceval Grey.

Carolyn says

Although I enjoy historical mysteries, I have a high standard for character development and dialogue and this book did not meet that standard. I could not tell one character from another, not the leads Archie Lean and Perceval Gray, not the villains, not even the women.

Also, this book was clearly a continuation of the first book which I had not read, and I was annoyed by the constant references to past events that I had not "experienced." But the author's worst failing, in my opinion, was in unbelievable actions by characters which were clearly only plot devices and not derived from their actual nature. Shields' grasp of language is also slight. A passage in the novel says that a man's "grin" was "ham-handed." Really? Really? I'd say that Shields' use of language was ham-handed.

Aisling says

I chose this book for my bookgroup to read for this month because it had some excellent reviews. I specifically did not choose the first in the series thinking it sounded a bit too graphic for the group. The majority of us seemed to think it was a hard slog (very dense, long wind up), and referred far too often to the first book. But the last third of this book was in my opinion fantastic. The symbols, puzzles, and solutions were flying in true Sherlockian fashion. I found myself racing to solve it. A good read.

BCMUnlimited says

Grey and Lean team up again to solve another murder in Portland, Maine. AS the plot twists and turns, they find themselves in greater danger than ever before.

I don't want to give anymore summary that what is given in the blurb; this story is too intricate and detailed. I don't want to give away any of the fascinating twists of the story. Kieran Shields delivers an amazing story, however. It is intense, spellbinding, and fascinating. A Study in Revenge is not your typical "fun" read. It will make you think, reread, and wonder.

I was presently surprised by some of the twists and connections to The Truth of All Things. This book could be read alone, but the reader will have so much more insight after reading The Truth of All Things first. If you are looking for a book that will keep you enthralled, you need to read these books!!

Michelle Lancaster says

By Kieran Shields

Crown Publishers (Random House), 372 pgs

978-0-307-98576-7

Submitted by Random House

Rating: 4, Read This Book!

Deputy Marshal Archie Lean of the Portland Police and private detective Perceval Grey are back in the sophomore effort from Kieran Shields, author of The Truth of All Things, which I reviewed on this site last week. A Study in Revenge may be Mr. Shields's sophomore effort, but it is most assuredly not sophomoric: more confident storytelling, relentless plotting, expert timing, wit, rich historical detail and complex characters.

The year is 1893, one year after the witches and Puritans of The Truth of All Things. This time around we are dealing with Vikings, Phoenicians, runes, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, Baphomet, the philosopher's stone, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., practical jokers and a surfeit of handlebar mustaches. The story opens with the robbery and murder of Frank Cosgrave, a petty thief and picker of locks in Portland, Maine. Curiously, the unfortunate Mr. Cosgrave refuses to stay buried and Archie Lean calls in Perceval Grey to investigate the macabre scene.

Across town, an old and very ill man is dying. Horace Webster calls Grey to his bedside and hires him to find his granddaughter, missing for a year now. At the reading of Mr. Webster's will, we discover that the

granddaughter is not the only thing missing. Gone from the estate lawyer's offices is an object called the thunderstone, an artifact passed down in the Webster family for generations, according to the eccentric instructions in the original bequest. There are some seriously weird carvings on this stone, alchemical symbols believed by more than a few unhinged personalities to hold the key to eternal life, the literal kind.

These three investigations continue on parallel lines until they intersect with a bang. Greed, arrogance, superstition, Jotham Marsh, and Grey's love life come together in an explosive plot twist, revealing a maniacal lust for revenge that threatens to take down everyone and everything in its path.

I feel the need to share a few examples of dialogue:

A common misconception. No, that's not Satan. It's Baphomet.

I beg your pardon? Lean said.

Baphomet. Don't be surprised never to have heard of him. He's essentially a fabricated pagan deity.

As opposed to what? Grey asked. A genuine pagan deity?

And this:

...But anyone familiar with Eliphas Levi's work would know of the man's fascination with alchemy.

Understandable, Lean muttered. Who wouldn't want to be able to spin straw into gold?

Lead into gold, not straw, Grey corrected him. You're thinking of Rumpelstiltskin.

One more:

Just a moment. Let me see if I'm understanding you correctly. My fears for your safety are unfounded...because somebody already tried to kill you before these threats were posted?

In a manner of speaking. That is, I'm in no more danger now than I was this time yesterday, before these ridiculous paintings appeared.

You have the oddest way of looking at life, Lean said.

You'd have little use for me otherwise, Grey said.

I do enjoy these books so: sharp dialogue; the belief that ideas matter, that they shape the personal and the political; a sophisticated story; women who are players, integral to the plot, not mere window-dressing or objects to be acted upon. The author trusts his audience. Mr. Shields believes that we are equal to the task and never condescends to us. I can't impress upon you enough how rare that is, and how appreciated. The only false note was struck in the last lines of the epilogue (which I don't think was necessary), rather ham-handedly assuring us that there is a sequel in the offing. But no matter. We know there is a third book on the way. Write faster Mr. Shields!

OK, I lied - one more, from a conversation between Jotham Marsh and Perceval Grey:

Marsh: ...Would you blame the shopkeeper for murder because he sold a man a fishing rod? Only because later that fisherman, in his misguided fervor, comes to fatal blows with another over a favored fishing spot?

Grey: Of course not. But what of the shopkeeper who fills a young man's head with tales of a magical fish who swims in a mystical pond and will grant wishes to any angler who catches it. 'Oh, and by the way,' whispers the shopkeeper, 'the only bait that works is human flesh.'

Diane S ? says

Late 1800's and although the atmosphere of this series is somewhat Victorian, the actual setting is in Portland Maine. Deputy Archie Lean is called to the investigate the double death of a man and the situation is so peculiar he must call in criminalist Percival Grey. This duo is a bit reminiscent of Sherlock and Watson, but Grey is not quite as arrogant as Sherlock. This is a very interesting series, this book being the second, love the well developed characters and the story itself which ties together three different threads. These atmospheric novels are always slower paced with detailed scenery and in depth analysis of the evidence. Another wonderful new series.

Robin Lamont says

Couldn't get past page 25 - Author so busy filling me in on the previous book, it felt more like a promotional vehicle than anything else. Also, if Shields is trying to replicate Sherlock Holmes, he better grab me with the character right off - and didn't do that.

Mysterious Bookshop says

Shields follows up on his strong debut, *The Truth of All Things*, with another novel featuring the intrepid Detective Archie Lean and private investigator Perceval Grey. Although the murders again bear a strong resemblance to the occult, Shields has managed to parlay this into a whole new plot twist. The badly burned body of a career thief turns up in an abandoned building days after it was buried in Portland's Evergreen Cemetery. How and why was it disinterred? And what does this have to do with an artifact stolen from a Boston scholar? The truth will elude you til the very end! Featuring impossible crime elements and obvious references to Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Revenge* will appeal to many different types of mystery fans. - Ian

Annielew says

I was disappointed. I loved the first one, although it was a bit grisly for my taste. As a Portlander, I was thrilled to have characters on streets and in buildings I recognize, and thought the story was exciting and well told. This second book let me down. I definitely doesn't stand alone without the foundation of the first, and the characters didn't really grow at all. I'd like to know a bit more of their personalities. The plot seemed convoluted and contrived, and at times, it felt like I was at a lecture at the historical society. I hope he'll spend way more effort on character development and less on history the next time.

Ann says

This was a good historical mystery. I did not read the first book 'The Truth of all Things' and couldn't understand some parts of this novel but I will definitely go back and read it soon. The story takes place in Portland, Maine in 1893. Private investigator and police consultant Perceval Grey and Police Deputy Archie

Lean come together trying to unravel a mystery that involves the mystery that began in the first book.

The body of a man is discovered under unusual circumstances. The problem is, the "victim" was killed days earlier and was already buried. A woman is missing but no one in her family seems interested in finding her. A mysterious stone is found with markings that create more mystery. A series of holes appear under the cellar in several places.

The book was very good. The mysteries (several) were puzzling. The characters all well developed and the author did an excellent job intertwining the two detectives and their separate puzzles.

This is a must read but read the books in order to get the most benefit.
