



Brighton

Michael Harvey

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An extraordinary thriller—gripping, haunting, and marvelously told—about two friends growing up in a rapidly changing Boston, who must face the sins of their past in the midst of a series of brutal murders

"You came back here to bury your past... Thing is, you gotta kill it first."

Kevin Pearce—baseball star, honor student, the pride of Brighton—was fifteen when he left town in the back of his uncle's cab. He and his buddy, Bobby Scales, just committed a heinous act of violence for what they thought were the best of reasons. Kevin didn't want a pass, but he was getting it anyway. Bobby would stay and face the music; Kevin's future would remain as bright as ever. At least that was the way things were supposed to work. Except in Brighton, things never work the way they're supposed to.

Twenty-seven years later, Kevin is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for the Boston Globe. He's never been back to his old block, having avoided his family and, especially, Bobby Scales. Then he learns his old friend is the prime suspect in a string of local murders. All of the sudden Kevin's headed home—to protect a friend and the secret they share. To report this story to the end and protect those he loves, he must navigate not only an elusive, slippery killer, but his own corrupted conscience.

A powerhouse of a thriller, *Brighton* is a riveting and elegiac exploration of promises broken, debts owed, and old wrongs made right . . . no matter what the cost.

Brighton Details

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From Reader Review Brighton for online ebook

Sandy says

4.5 stars

“At the centre of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin & by illusion, a point of pure truth....”

By the time Bobby Scales quotes Thomas Merton, you already know he’s not your garden variety thug. But then he never really had a chance to be anything else.

The book opens in 1970’s Brighton, a tough suburb of Boston where dreams of a better life tend to die young. Bobby was on his own by the time he hit high school. The closest thing he has to family is Mary Burke, a strong no-nonsense woman who runs a cab company. She looks out for him while keeping an eye on her grandson Kevin Pearce. Mary senses he’s special & vows he’ll make it out of Brighton. But first he’ll have to survive growing up in a house ruled by his drunk, abusive father.

By 1975, Bobby & Kevin are inseparable. Times are tough but they have Mary, baseball & each other. Then the unthinkable happens. One night Kevin arrives at his grandmother’s in time to see a young black man run from the building. After racing inside, the first thing he finds is one of his sisters bleeding from stab wounds. The second is Mary’s body. He can’t know it yet but the fallout from this senseless act will define his life for years to come.

Fast forward to 2002. Kevin left Brighton in 1975 & never looked back. He’s now an investigative reporter for The Globe & just won a Pulitzer for his series of articles about a black man wrongly accused of murder who was killed in prison. Add to that his relationship with Suffolk County prosecutor Lisa Mignot & life is good. Hold that thought, Kev.

Lisa’s office is called in after 2 women are killed in Brighton & she thinks they’re tied to the unsolved murder of a young black man in 1975. When Kevin sneaks a look at the files, his blood runs cold & he knows it’s time.....time to go home & pay his debt to Bobby.

Put the kettle on, curl up in your favourite reading spot & turn off the phone because once you crack the cover on this one, you’ll be ticked if you have to put it down. What follows is a complex & heart wrenching story of friendship, loyalty, betrayal & redemption. The author uses the first section to build the history of Kevin & Bobby’s friendship, ensuring that readers become invested. Brighton itself is a major character, so well rendered through descriptions of seedy streets, crowded apartments & hopeless lives that the grit sticks to your fingers.

But it’s only as action switches to the present that we learn the truth of everything that happened in the past. And holy crap, are there some shockers lurking in the pages. When Kevin begins his own investigation, his intention is to stay one step ahead of the law & protect Bobby. What he eventually uncovers will rewrite his childhood memories & strip the veneer off the life he’s created.

These characters don’t just appear on the page. They come out swinging, shouting & scheming. There are no stick people here. Each is a combination of good & bad, capable of great love & thoughtless violence. Part of

the rising tension is due to not knowing who can be trusted when push comes to shove. And while you may dislike some of them, you can also understand how they became who they are. Although it's ostensibly Kevin's story, Bobby is the one that stuck with me. He's a man who never caught a break but will go down fighting to protect a friend or keep a promise.

This is a dark & compelling story that will have you holding your breath in the final chapters. It definitely reminded me of books by Dennis Lehane (especially "Mystic River") & Greg Iles, 2 authors who excel at creating stories that are richly atmospheric. This is the first I've read from Mr. Harvey. Guess my groaning TBR pile just got taller.

John Owen says

I grew up two blocks from where most of this story takes place so I found all of the references to real Brighton stores and parks interesting. Harvey does a good job of describing that neighborhood of Boston, although it was not quite as gritty and desperate as in the novel. This is fiction though. Not social history. (Today it is actually somewhat gentrified.) I wonder if the many references are confusing to readers not familiar with the time and place?

Often, mysteries are tightly wrapped so that the plot gets wrapped up in surprising and satisfying ways. This plot has a bit of OCD. Everyone is connected to everyone else and in unlikely ways. The main character just happens to live with the prosecutor on the case and people are jumping into the passenger seat of other people's cars far too often to be believable. Guns and knives are constantly held to people's heads and throats. Characters appear at convenient time to help wrap up the plot.

Brenda says

This was an incredibly gripping read. The setting of Brighton, a Boston neighborhood, was expertly written, and life there is bleak and rough. Hard drinking men, strong but subservient women, baseball, Catholic priests, and school desegregation are all part of the atmosphere of this book.

Kevin Pearce is a 14 year old. His grandmother sees something in him and she is resolved to free him from Brighton's hold. After a tragedy, Kevin is moved away, and he eventually becomes a Pulitzer prize winning investigative reporter for the Boston Globe. Well, you can take the boy out of the neighborhood, but you can't take the neighborhood out of the boy. Kevin returns 27 years later when his childhood protector, Bobby Scales, is being investigated for the murder of a cop. Bobby is not an upstanding citizen, but he's smart and is a survivor.

What a story! Gambling, drugs, murder, and other crimes are commonplace among Kevin's peers, all of whom remained in Brighton. A crime from 1975 reverberates through the years. Relationships with family and friends are complex, and there is a lot of history between characters. I was entranced and really enjoyed this book!

Robin says

This novel is an instant classic, which I read slowly to savor. Harvey is one of the most beautiful of all prose stylists but he is also a storyteller of great power. The setting and the characters in this book, set in Boston's Brighton neighborhood in the 70's and beyond, follows the paths of two boys - after a family tragedy, one becomes a prize winning journalist and one becomes a bookie and career criminal. While it bears a resemblance to *The Departed* and Dennis Lehane's great *Mystic River*, Harvey is telling his own story. He's a gritty storyteller who also finds poetry and meaning in what he writes about. I have long been a fan of his, but this book is absolutely exceptional. If there is a better book published in 2016 I would like to read it.

Debra says

Stephen King recommended book. He said: "Helluva Boston crime novel. Helluva novel, period. If you liked *THE DEPARTED*, you'll like this. Drops in June."

Corny says

Sorry but I am in the minority with this review. This is a story that takes place in a working class suburb of Boston and for me it makes little sense. After a murder takes place in 1975 the story jumps to 2002 where the rest of the action takes place. The plot centers around the Pearce family whose oldest child and only son Kevin is yearning in 1975 to break free and leave the neighborhood. When a death occurs, Kevin with the help of his friend Bobby, has to disappear to New York. When we pick him up again he has become a successful investigative journalist with the Boston Globe. We are offered little information about how he spent the 27 years. Suffice it to say that he had not been back to the old neighborhood until 2002.

There is little logic to the chain of events that carries Kevin, his sisters, his friends and his girlfriend through multiple murders to a totally absurd ending.

I did enjoy the author's depiction of Brighton as a place like many other low income suburban towns where if you grow up there, you can't get out.

As for the dialogue, it simply doesn't ring true. I would give this one a pass.

Gram says

An absolutely stunning story, beautifully written. It tumbles out at a pace that will leave you breathless. Each character is drawn to perfection and their lives seem too real for this to be fiction.

There's an old saying - "You can pick your friends but you can't pick your relations" which fits this story perfectly. Old wrongs are righted as even older scores are settled. Long buried lies are brought into the light. The plot's twists and turns are relentless with a finale that you'll never see coming.

I've read all but one of Michael Harvey's novels and this is one of the best. Highly recommended.

Truman32 says

Brighton, located in the northwestern corner of Boston has been the venue of many true-life criminal acts. Earlier this year a man known as the Brighton “Tree Ninja” used the cover of night to covertly chop down his neighbor’s trees in their own front lawns as they slept like babies in their beds. And back in 2014 there was a particularly diabolical fellow known as the Brighton Tickler, a serial tickler who would break into houses and surreptitiously tickle the feet of (male only) sleepers. While these deplorable criminals and their nefarious stories torn from the pages of the Boston Globe would more than make for riveting reading, Michael Harvey has chosen to go another route, with his excellent crime novel **Brighton**.

At fifteen, Kevin Pearce was on the fast track; a baseball star and an A+ student he was well on his way to making something spectacular of his life. But then in a flash of misguided vigilante justice, a man dies and Kevin flees his family and home. His best friend Bobby Scales is left behind to face the crime-ridden streets alone as well as any ramifications from their secret act of violence.

25 years later, Kevin, now a reporter for the Globe is finally back home in Brighton, investigating the murder of an undercover cop. A crime that ties into his own past. A crime that connects to Bobby and the events that drove him away decades ago. As he digs deeper, Kevin begins to fear that the past he worked so hard to escape never went anywhere.

Brighton is a heck of a lot of fun. You don’t believe me? Well maybe my friends John Grisham and Stephen King who freak out about the greatness of this novel on the book jacket like I do when I spot a spider in the basement might persuade you a little more. Harvey’s writing is evocative of the early work from George Pelecanos (back when he was posing for the author photo on the inside book jacket in a white wife-beater tank) and Dennis Lehane (think *Mystic River*), where the sense and influence of story’s setting is just as important as the characters’ actions.

The power of family and even greater, the power of your community permeates the story and it’s players. That you can’t escape who you are and where you come from-- which in many instances here is the same thing is the message. Not that Kevin and the other characters don’t try.

The location is sharply drawn, the characters are honest and the violence is damaging. Harvey effortlessly manages to juggle multiple characters as their stories merge into a taut, tension-filled, and tragic conclusion that William Shakespeare would be proud of.

Sure there’s nobody sneaking into bedrooms and tickling the feet of slumbering men, but **Brighton** is still a riveting read and a book that deserves to be read by many many many people.

Faith says

Kevin and Bobby were boyhood friends in Brighton until a tragedy forced their separation. Kevin went on to become an investigative journalist and win a Pulitzer Prize while Bobby remained in Brighton and became a bookie. Twenty seven years later, Kevin is drawn back to Brighton to investigate the murder of a young woman. This book started out as a coming of age story and an authentic-feeling slice of life in the Brighton

neighborhood. I loved most of the characterizations, except for one character who turned out to be so over-the-top crazy that they were totally unbelievable. What was compelling for me were the interpersonal relationships. Less compelling was the crime story which I thought was unrealistic and too obviously trying to be a movie.

While I thought the book was suspenseful, and it was certainly entertaining, there were just too many coincidences and plot holes and irrational motivations for this to be a five star book for me.

I'm sure Brighton is not a very large place, but still it seemed too easy for the characters to find each other, even when they had no possible way of knowing where they would be. Towards the end of the book, one character desperately needed to hide out, yet they continued to go from place to place meeting with various people instead of just getting the hell out of town. It was an incredibly long departure. Also, conveniently there was always someone to drop a clue or reveal a secret at just the right moment.

There was a very high body count in this book, which I'm sure will increase its chances of being made into a movie. It will probably make an entertaining movie. I hope they find someone good to play Bobby, he was my favorite character.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Nicolette says

I enjoyed this book and found the twists to be unpredictable. Its possible it gained a half a star or so because it is set in my neighborhood, although the culture described in 2002 couldn't be more different than what I experience in 2016. I'm not sure if things have cleaned up a lot in the last 14 years, I am naive, or its just a matter of fiction melding with reality.

In once section, the author specifically describes the street where I live: "...parked on a hilly side street full of shitty apartments rented out to students and even shittier apartments reserved for Brighton's illegals." Well, Michael Harvey, you can add young professionals who read your books to that list.

Ed says

The town of Brighton is close enough to Boston to be a city neighborhood which was also a rough neighborhood back in the bad old days during the 1970's forced busing. Michael Harvey's working class Irish residents were not the liberal young college grads that populate the gentrified Brighton today. Harvey's brilliantly drawn characters are trying to survive and hide the sins of their youth from their hard luck neighbors, friends, enemies and themselves. Kevin Pearce, an investigative reporter for the Boston Globe, escapes Brighton for Boston leaving his sisters and best friend Bobby Scales behind. The murder of an undercover cop forces Kevin back into Brighton 25 years later to confront a related cold case, a possible serial killer and his own past.

This is one of those rare books that hits you like an NFL linebacker. Much more than complex, page turning crime fiction, Harvey's prose captures the thinking, the attitudes and the tribal loyalty of his Brighton characters from that time and place in a stunningly effective way. The title reads "Brighton" but the locale

could just as well be Somerville, Malden, Charlestown, or South Boston. My recommendation: drop what you're reading now and jump all over this book. It will be the best mystery and the best book you read this summer and maybe this year. It's Michael Harvey's breakout novel to date and in my opinion, a crime fiction classic.

Sue Em says

I'm torn on this one. The first third of the book is full of beautiful phrases and descriptions, but I found it awfully confusing. I couldn't keep the characters straight. The end of the book is twisty and almost redeemed the beginning. I was torn between three and four stars, and I rounded down after much consideration.

Ruth says

I am a really shallow person. After reading the first few pages which involve a dog I just couldn't read any further. I sort of understood the motivation but just could not get past that particular scene. So it was a dnf and I am unable to recommend to the normal crew.

Gary Branson says

Great book. Suspenseful and thrilling. Sympathetic characters. Reminiscent of the best by Dennis Lehane. Only bad thing about finishing a Michael Harvey is the wait for the next one.

Robert Intrago says

A very good Boston Noir story. Part one takes place in 1975 in a neighborhood of Boston called Brighton. It is the story of two Irish boys, Kevin and Bobby, and what happens to them during that period of time. Part two takes place in 2002 and involves the return of Kevin to the same neighborhood and his relationship with Bobby and some of the same people that he dealt with back in 1975. The story is populated by a lot of bad people including the main characters. The scale of badness varies among the different characters but they all are beyond the acceptable line. There are several things that I liked about this book. First, the ability of the author to relate the two periods of time and the changes that took place over 27 years. Second, the fact that people in ethnic neighborhoods take care of their own problems without calling on outside help. Third, the false code of honor followed by people that lack a moral compass and finally the rivalry that existed between different areas of town when the ethnic lines were distinct. I would have given this book a 5 but some of the flashbacks were a little bit confusing as I was unable to tell the present from the past. Other than that a very good Noir book that gets a 4.5.
