



Hammerhead Ranch Motel

Tim Dorsey

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Penzler Pick, August 2000: Is it Florida, or is it the mystery writers who set their stories there? There seems to be a tradition of Florida noir that is as loony as that name implies. Tim Dorsey is the newest writer from the Sunshine State whose stories are inhabited by a cast of characters who, in any other state, would probably be behind bars. In Dorsey's world, not only are they roaming free, they are also wreaking havoc with impunity up and down the peninsula.

In his first book, *Florida Roadkill*, Dorsey introduced us to several characters who are still at large as his second story begins. Serge A. Storms is a spree killer and Florida history buff, still looking for the five million dollars that's stashed in the trunk of a Chrysler--unbeknownst to the driver--somewhere in the state. Johnny Vegas is a playboy who, because catastrophic events always seem to get in the way, has yet to lose his virginity. Also along for the zany ride is 90-year-old Mrs. Edna Ploomfield, who blows away a man delivering her flowers and chocolates; a DJ who changed his name legally to Boris the Hateful Piece of BLEEP so that he would not be BLEEPED on the air every time he used the name; and Safety Officer Chester "Porkchop" Dole who watches the monitors on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. Along with a dancing Chihuahua who forecasts the weather, the Diaz Boys, Harvey Fiddlebottom, undercover cops, and a variety of oddballs, they will congregate in or around the seediest place never to have been shut down, the Hammerhead Ranch Motel on the Gulf of Mexico. There, they will play out their lunacy as Hurricane Rolando-berto bears down on them. This is a wonderful summertime read, relentlessly funny and impossible to put down. --Otto Penzler

Hammerhead Ranch Motel Details

Date : Published (first published 2000)

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From Reader Review Hammerhead Ranch Motel for online ebook

Nicole says

See Triggerfish Twist review, it applies to all of these : D

David says

This book was a chaotic mess. Not to suggest that it is all bad, but it is sort of like the author was smoking meth and up for days as he wrote it. The book has a frenetic pacing that is at times endearing and at others annoying. The characters are all unscrupulous nutcases and at times this is fun and at others frustrating.

Almost every chapter seems to introduce a new character, some of whom don't even survive the chapter. The reader is granted a readers digest introduction to these characters and then they soon are killed.

This book was a lot of fun, for the first thirty or forty pages. After that, the plot just didn't really go anywhere, it just ran around like a manic druggie who has been up for three or four days, spouting nonsense, some of which is comical and some of which is just tedious.

After all the wandering around, one would expect a resolution to what passes for the main plot, the search for the FIVE MILLION bucks in a suitcase. If it was actually found, I sure missed it, but I was struggling to get through the nonsense of the last few pages.

Serge is an interesting character, and it is only because his character, off his medications, is manic, that I put up with the manic writing style of the author. Serge likes to discuss Florida history, something that I'm not particularly interested in, but I enjoyed those discussions nevertheless.

Dorsey has a clever wit and the stories within the story are truly comedic and worthy of a laugh or two, but for me, it is sort of like the Brady Bunch Movie... after the first fifteen minutes, the gag gets really, really old.

Edward says

Dear God this was funny. My wife and daughter were staring at me as I read, because I couldn't stop from laughing out loud.

Dorsey's first book had some funny scenes but also dragged in some places. This book pretty much was hilarious the whole way. Imagine the most ridiculous Hiaasen scenes populating a whole book. I have to give a book that gave me this much enjoyment five stars.

Now, I will warn you that the plot was a little uneven. But the plot was totally effing irrelevant to liking the book.

Lee says

With Serge A. Storms, the schico/attention-deficit/spree killer/anti-hero of Tim Dorsey's zany series. Serge is a walking encyclopedia of his beloved home state of Florida, who will get side tracked, with an obscure history lesson. With bungling thugs, drugs, sex and rock 'n roll, this series is laugh out loud craziness.

One example...

"What kind of a crazy motel is this?" asked the cop. "Is there anyone here who's what they're supposed to be?"

"I am," said Serge, raising his hand. "I'm a one-hundred percent, made in Florida, dope-smugglin', time-sharin', spring-breakin', log-flumin', double-occupancy discount vacation. I'm a tall glass of orange juice and a day without sunshine. I'm the wind in your sails, the sun on your burn and the moon over Miami. I am the native."

Gotta love Serge.

Dipanjan says

Hammerhead Ranch Motel starts off right where we left Serge Storms and Mr. Dorsey's bunch of loonies in Florida Roadkill. It continues on the back of the 5 Million Dollars chase. I hate to admit this but I picked up this book right after I read Florida Roadkill JUST to find out whether Johnny Vegas gets laid? That's probably the weirdest motivation I have EVER had to read a book. The credit for that goes to Mr. Dorsey to even inspire a reader to come along for the ride to quench my curiosity about a fictional characters sex life. Jesus Christ, I know how it sounds, but you will know what I mean when you do start this series.

Hammerhead Ranch Motel continues to be the laugh-riot of non-stop bizarre antics of the freakiest collection of characters that can ever come together in a book together. Exploring the trials and tribunals of Johnny Vegas is hilarious, but once again, it's Serge, the sociopath with scruples that carries the book squarely on his shoulders. Unlike "Florida Roadkill" the plot remains in the forefront with the characters resonating with it all the way. The plot and players are weaved in with precision. If you get a bit confused with so many players romping around throughout the book, be patient, everything and everyone comes together in a grand finale that is excitingly unpredictable. Hammerhead Ranch Motel continues the "twisted tradition" that started in Florida Roadkill. Its, once again, a dysfunctional story about dysfunctional people with dysfunctional relationships in a dysfunctional world. Buckle up your seat belt, you WILL be experiencing turbulence.

Thomas Todd says

Definitely a series I will continue to read. I believe the total book count in this series is around 20 & Dorsey

has me hooked 2 books in with the likeable serial killer Serge Storms and the many, many wacky and weird characters involved in each book. I've enjoyed the creative ways one might lose their life, with Dorsey you just never know. Coleman's gone but we're introduced to somewhat of a sidekick Lenny and Dorsey is spot on with a lot of good Florida history that he mixes in rather well with the storyline. Where will that briefcase with \$5 million turn up next? Good series for those that appreciate dark humor and don't mind the cursing.

Frank says

This is the second wacky entry in the Serge Storms series by Dorsey. A followup to *Florida Road Kill* with Serge still after the briefcase containing \$5 million in missing drug money from Road Kill. This one again is full of violence and crazy characters who all converge on Tampa on the brink of a major hurricane. These include the owner of the titular Hammerhead Motel, Zargoza, who is using the motel as a front for a drug operation and other scams evidently prevalent in Florida; the Diaz Boys who provide the drugs and are involved in the scams of Zargoza; City and Country, a pair of young women who are on the run for being in the wrong place during the accidental death of an Alabama sorority girl; a would be detective who is looking for a man who thinks he only has weeks to live; and of course, Serge Storms, the serial killer suffering from mental conditions who is off of his meds! Overall, I liked this followup novel, but it was a little difficult sometimes to keep track of all of the characters who were randomly introduced and sometimes seemed to have no bearing on the story. Mild recommendation for this one.

Snotchocheez says

"Hammerhead Ranch Motel" further cements my opinion of Tim Dorsey: a very funny storyteller. "Hammerhead..." is a sequel to his first novel, "Florida Roadkill", and is a little tighter with the plotline on this one. I consistently found myself laughing out loud at many of Dorsey's depictions of Florida (and Alabama) eccentrics, criminals and would-bes. My only complaint would be that he tries to pile in TOO MANY crazies in the mix, and the reader can often get lost in trying to decipher labyrinthine plot lines. Clearly Carl Hiaasen has been a big influence in Dorsey's oeuvre (which perhaps can be best described as "bizarre crime fiction", although that label is hardly sufficient to describe the zaniness that ensues in his works). I also am reminded of the craziness of Tom Robbins' plot set-ups. In "Hammerhead...", the plot loosely continues the pursuit of a briefcase filled with \$5 million in drug money, pursued by a zany ensemble of criminals (some career, some aspiring, some unknowing). Central to the plot is Serge, a loon with an encyclopedic knowledge of Floridian history and arcana. Zaniness ensues when the search for the money takes Serge and other wanna-be millionaires to a kitsch-y motel in the Tampa area where they contend with condo owners, racists, themselves and a force-4 hurricane.

It reads much better than can be described here.

Greg says

I read this author's "Florida Roadkill" and thought it was good enough for a second try with this author. I was wrong. This one is pretty much the same book as "Roadkill" but with a few different names. So it's back to the always reliable Travis McGhee "James Bond on a boat in Ft. Lauderdale" books by John D. Macdonald.

Craig Brown says

Very funny, laugh out loud. If you are offended easily stay away, if you can find humor in odd ways, read on. Check out Dorsey's web site though, he explains his characters. He uses the characters over and over but reserves the right to kill one in one book and bring them back in the next as if that book never occurred. It confused me at first but once you say, it is just another book you are fine.

Mike French says

My GR Friend Fred Forbes commented that Serge Storms grows on you. He is correct! Serge (Tim Dorsey) and Skink(Carl Hiaasen) have to be two of wackiest characters in American Literature and I love their antics! If you like Carl Hiaasen,Paul Levine and Dave Barry, you will love Tim Dorsey.

Adam says

You can only continue reading this review if you promise to leave you judgements at the door...everyone deserves to see how the other side lives...and writes. I generally lean towards non-fiction books - from the political side over to the self-help genre - but every once in a while I will venture into the world of fiction, and Dorsey's early work is first-rate.

So, now we can get down to business...this was the second in a ten book series (might be more now) of one of the most underrated fictional characters of all time, Mr. Serge A. Storms. Though, as its predecessors it does have its intermittent, egregious venereal episodes, just breeze over them and carry on because it is one of the funnier books I have ever read...and even better than his series opener, Florida Roadkill. You have to read the series in the order they were published because the way he mixes up the chronology throughout the series is worthy of four stars on its own. Again, Dorsey comes through with superb character development, and best of all was another easy read that will most definitely leave you wanting to pick up the series' next book - Orange Crush, but don't give up there...in fact skip it if you must, because then come the unofficial Pulitzer Award winning pair that ARE ALL TIME CLASSICS - Triggerfish Twist and Stingray Shuffle...which are quite possibly two of the funniest books ever written. After that Stingray Shuffle the rest were kind of hit or miss...but man his early stuff is CLASSIC!!! These first five books are an absolutely must read for anyone who has ever lived, or stepped foot in The Sunshine State...ENJOY!

Linda says

I explained my reasons for loving the Serge Storms series by Tim Dorsey in my review of Florida Roadkill - the same applies here. It's a hilarious book, fast-paced, lots of twists and turns and highly recommended.

Jessica says

Bad bad bad. Only useful as trashy beach fiction. Includes a roller-skating parrot and a murderer who taxidermies his victims alive. Hilarity!

Heather says

This takes place where I live and I can't help but notice the similarities between these fictional characters and the characters I know that hang out in places eerily similar to the "fictional" ones in the book. Tim Dorsey has a very warped sense of humor, and I for one love it. Laugh out loud funny but a little vulgar.
