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—Jonathan Kellerman

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"The most horrifying story since *The Silence of the Lambs*."
—*Los Angeles Times*

"Forceful...surprising."
—*The New York Times*

Forty Words for Sorrow

GILES BLUNT

Author of Black Fly Season

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In the quiet Canadian town of Algonquin Bay, a frozen body has been found in an abandoned mine shaft. She is quickly identified as Katie Pine, a teenager who had disappeared months ago. At the time, Detective John Cardinal insisted that Katie was no ordinary runaway. His relentless pursuit and refusal to give up on the case got him demoted from Homicide. But now the Canadian police force wants Cardinal back on the case—with a new associate by his side. And as these two untrusting partners gather evidence of a serial murder spree, a pair of sociopaths is closing in on the next victim.

Forty Words for Sorrow Details

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From Reader Review Forty Words for Sorrow for online ebook

Lynn says

[the captivity and torture of the victims was seriously horrible to read about. (hide spoiler)]

Terence M says

Audiobook - 11:15 hours - Narrator: James Daniels

I'm pretty sure this is my first "Canadian" novel and a very good one it is!

4.0 stars - Review to follow.

Larry says

"Forty Words for Sorrow" is the first novel in an excellent series by an accomplished writer. Early in the book, the reason for its title is made clear. John Cardinal, a homicide cop in a northern Ontario city, has just talked to a woman whose daughter has been murdered. "Eskimos, it is said, have forty different words for snow. Never mind about snow, Cardinal mused, what people really need is forty words for sorrow. Grief. Heartbreak. Desolation. There were not enough for this childless mother in her empty house (p. 37)."

The six John Cardinal-Lise Delorme novels are the best police procedural series that I've read. Blunt writes as well as anyone I've read in any genre. His novels work as novels, not just as thrillers or cop novels. His characters are well drawn, even the secondary and tertiary ones. As examples, look at how economically Cardinal's irritating immediate superior is portrayed. You learn everything that you need to know about the character in a couple of scenes without Blunt turning him into a cardboard figure. Or look at the girlfriend of a young man who is missing and feared dead. She emerges as a believable character in two short scenes, and those scenes reinforce our appreciation for Cardinal's basic humanity. Or look at his creation of a believable, sad character in the killer's accomplice. Blunt's depiction of Algonquin Bay itself (a city of 58,000 two hours north of Toronto, modeled on North Bay, Ontario, where Blunt grew up) makes it seem a real place.

There are several plot lines in this novel. They mesh quite skillfully, and that skill marks all of the books in the series. A serial murderer is active in Algonquin Bay. Cardinal knows this fact to be true, even if his superiors do not. How he and his new partner, Lise Delorme, find the killer makes for a riveting novel. There is a rat in the police force who feeds information to a major criminal. This plot arc is not a disconnected addition to the main story, and finding out who it is tells us a lot about Lise Delorme's skills and integrity as she works her way out of internal affairs and onto the homicide squad. John Cardinal carries sorrow because of his wife's bipolar disorder and guilt because he ripped off a big-time drug criminal years before when a cop in Toronto so that he could send his daughter to an expensive university. It doesn't reduce his skills as a homicide investigator, and it doesn't make him less of a man, but it makes his life harder. One of the characters, the young woman he interviews twice, tells him that he is a good person after he risks his life to find her boyfriend. Cardinal can't quite believe it. His wife tells him that his inability to accept praise is a burden for others. It's his heartbreak.

There are six novels so far, written between 2001 and 2012. I look forward to another.

Jaksen says

The start of another mystery series set in Canada, but a pretty good one. This isn't for those who dislike a lot of 'gore,' or prefer not to read about people *being* killed, however...

The writing is excellent; the characters are not stereotypes; the setting is cold, bleak, hard, unforgiving. I liked the MC, John Cardinal, who's not perfect, and the partner he's working with, Lise Delorme, who's also less than -

The men act like men and notice a woman's body before all else, but it's not overdone. In fact, it's quite realistic. In all other ways they're professionals - and their own selves. Some are profane and hard-working, others are ordinary joes who go home to wife and kids at the end of a long day. Detective Cardinal has a wife suffering from severe depression and an upbeat daughter working on an art degree at Yale. (And yes, the way he's paying for that is explained in the course of the story.) His partner, Delorme, may or may not be investigating Cardinal for offenses explained as the story unfolds.

The story itself: someone is killing young people - of both sexes - in a gruesome manner. There are clues and evidence this way and that, the frustrations of law enforcement in full view, forensics and the full emotional array of what police officers, detectives, and others must go through to 'get their man.'

However, and as I said, it's often a grisly read, but those sections or chapters are, thankfully, rather brief. A good read. I will probably read more in the series.

Four stars

Richard Derus says

****UPDATE MAY 2017**** A TV series, Cardinal, is now broadcast on Canada's CTV network. The first season is complete; the second and third are ordered. We'll get this at least on Hulu. These are good stories.

Rating: 3.75* of five

The Publisher Says: When the decomposed body of 13-year-old Katie Pine is found in an abandoned mine shaft, Detective John Cardinal is vindicated. He'd kept the Pine case open, and was demoted for his zeal. But Katie isn't the only youngster to disappear in the Canadian town of Algonquin Bay. Cardinal is allowed to reopen the files on three other lost kids. When another youth goes missing, he sees a pattern that screams serial killer.

My Review: ****WARNING: GRAPHIC AND HORRIFYING SADISTIC VIOLENCE**** (The book, not the review.)

The first John Cardinal mystery, we're introduced to Detective Cardinal as he is reassigned to Homicide after being yanked into burglaries and other such unglamorous pursuits for daring to investigate the strange disappearances of several very young people in fictional Algonquin Bay, Ontario. The disappearances all have

in common the fact they're run away before, not an unusual thing there in Algonquin Bay, which is a central exchange point for rail, bus, and highway travel for the whole country. Cardinal smells something wrong, though, and spends the town's resources too freely for his boss's comfort...until suddenly one of those disappearers turns up "all corpified and gross" (to quote a character on the late, lamented TV show *Firefly*). Cardinal is brought back to Homicide, with a new partner called Lise. She just happens to be on her first murder investigation, rewarded for her huge success in nailing a corrupt politician as the result of a special forensic accounting investigation.

And spying on Cardinal for Internal Affairs. There's a pickle to be in: Spying on your popular partner to see if he really committed a crime some years back and, if so, to rat him out to persons possibly untrustworthy. Go Lise! Way to start a new life!

Meanwhile, the author lets us in on the doings of the murderous in real time; feeds us clues to Cardinal's sad and stressful past and present; prefigures several inevitable moments in the pursuit of a sociopath; and blows up the entire power structure of the town. All comes out, surprisingly, better than the worst and not even all that bad.

This really shouldn't be marketed as a mystery. We know whodunit and whydunit. It's a chase thriller, and a good one. The violence warned of above is upsetting to me due to its victims being kids. In the end, Blunt's coolly presented, razor-edged prose and his vile, horrible imagination kept me awake and flopping from side to side in agonized suspense until I reached the end of the book. It was harrowing and horrible! I can't wait to read the next one!

Phrynne says

I accidentally read book 3 in this series first and it was so good I just had to go back to the start and read book 1.

I really enjoy the setting of this series in Canada and I like the frequent references to topics like the Mounties, the French/Canadian divide and the situation regarding the native Indian population. The main characters are good to, slightly flawed but interesting people just like in real life.

Combine all this with a cracking good story, a spot of internal intrigue and some good solid police work and you have a very readable book. Four stars from me and onwards to book 2.

Luis Alberto says

Mystery fans who haven't discovered Giles Blunt should rejoice. You have many hours of exceptionally well-written story ahead of you.

Deb Jones says

A psychological thriller/murder investigation, *Forty Words for Sorrow* more than took my breath away at intervals. This is a finely-written and plotted story with imagery that will not soon leave my memory.

The Los Angeles Times likened this story to *Silence of the Lambs* in its ability to reach inside the reader and

horrify; I agree. Not for the faint of heart, but definitely for fans of psychological thrillers.

Lukasz Pruski says

Giles Blunt's "Forty Words for Sorrow" is a very good, almost outstanding police procedural. One of the blurbs on the cover screams "The most horrifying story since *The Silence of the Lambs* (LA Times)". Well, not really, but it is pretty close. I would agree with Jonathan Kellerman's assessment, also published on the cover, "One of the finest crime novels I've ever read", as long as the pool of the "finest crime novels" is large enough.

This is the first novel in Mr. Blunt's notable series featuring detectives John Cardinal and Lise Delorme investigating in the fictional small Canadian town of Algonquin Bay, which is modeled on the author's own town of youth, North Bay in Ontario. Cases of missing young people turn into serial murders, and John Cardinal is teamed with Lise Delorme against his wishes (yes, this is one of the few extreme cliches of the novel). Then there is The Other Investigation going on as well (trying to avoid spoilers I will stop at that).

I love several aspects of this book. First and foremost, it is written very well. The vivid descriptions of this small northern town on the lake, in the throes of severe winter, convey the feel of the place and the time. Second, the novel does not make much pretense to be more than what it is - an engrossing police procedural with psychologically accurate portraits of both the detectives and the killers. In fact, the mutual co-dependency between the pair of killers (how the ostensibly controlled person can really control the controlling one) is shown with great insight.

There are some really funny bits, like the characterization of basement burglaries (I can't quote it here without risking being offensive). The reader will not be likely to forget the characters of Karen Steen and Martha Wood. I love the sentence "Murder is a rare event in Canada." Sigh! And the author manages to use the word "mucilaginous" without sounding pretentious.

Good book and a really great read!

Four and a quarter stars.

Aloke says

Dark and engrossing plot. I don't read a lot of crime fiction but I enjoyed this. The writing is generally solid but there's some clunky stuff especially when describing men's reactions to Delorme. Loved the Canadian setting. I've never been to North Bay (Algonquin Bay's thinly disguised real life analogue) but now I feel like I have. Perfect reading for the cold snap we're having right now. There's a tv series too. Haven't seen it but now I want to track it down.

Alexander Inglis says

I would give *Forty Words for Sorrow* a resounding five stars, if by the highest rating I also meant, most

satisfied. It is a brilliant book: the tale drags the reader along, mercilessly, into the warm hearts of the flawed good guys, the chilling heartlessness of the efficient bad guys, their brutality lashing out, page after page. A brilliant book? A deeply disturbing book ... I need a cleanser after this.

Giles Blunt's hero is Detective Inspector John Cardinal, 10 years already on the Algonquin Bay police force somewhere near Huntsville, Ontario. He's a dedicated cop, always struggling to be the best he can, weighed down by an action in his past, and by a wife whose mental illness does collateral damage on his soul, while he tries every day to be the best father to his Yale attending daughter. He's a cop with issues and he's a very, very good cop.

Stir into this mix: Toronto drug mafia infesting his home town of Algonquin Bay; a serial killer on the loose who targets teenagers; a frozen body found in a mine-shaft, a 13 year old whose case Cardinal worked on; and a new female partner who has one foot in Special Investigations and the target is John Cardinal ... the inside snitch who is feeding the local mafia guy "helpful" information for a fee. It's a police procedural with forensics and lead tracking; and a thriller, with a relentlessly suspenseful playing out as another teenage victim runs out of time and Cardinal and his team inch closer ... and closer.

Recommended with the caveat: it's a hard tale to put aside; it's a hard tale not to. And another half dozen books beckon when you're done.

Liz says

The first in a series and I'll definitely be looking to read the rest. Well written, well developed main characters. But be prepared, it is extremely graphic.

Bill says

I heard somewhere that this book was marketed with a money-back guarantee if the reader wasn't satisfied. Pretty audacious move. I wonder how this worked out for them.

I wasn't unsatisfied, but after all the high praise that had been heaped upon this, I was a little under-whelmed. It's a pretty good police procedural, and the nice thing about it for me is that it was set in a small Ontario town, with plenty of Canadiana spread around. This was nicely familiar for a while, but I have to admit there came a point where I felt it was being a little forced. It probably would have maintained a quaint feel if I wasn't Canadian.

Incidentally, there was one cultural reference that was considerably off the mark and exposed Blunt's American influence. It was where a character mentioned drinking a Molson's. That's what U.S. folks say. When we're drinking a Molson's beer here, we're either nursing an Ex or a Canadian. Really minor thing, I know, but it was enough to throw the authenticity off a bit.

Anyways, as a whole it was a pretty good read. The killer was adequately creepy, and the setting and characters were quite well done. But, in a genre as over-saturated as crime fiction, it takes something really unique to make a serial killer novel stand out from the rest, earn a high rating, and set the reviewer off imploring others to read it.

Although it didn't have quite that effect on me, I would still recommend it. I'm probably making this novel

sound more uninteresting than it was. That is probably a good attitude a reader should have going into this one, and then be pleasantly surprised. I think this was just too over-hyped for me.

Robert Beveridge says

Giles Blunt, *Forty Words for Sorrow* (Berkeley, 2001)

Giles Blunt first came to the attention of critics everywhere as a staff writer for *Law and Order*, one of the strongest television series in history. And when reading Blunt's first novel, the reader who is a *Law and Order* fan is likely to know, even without knowing Blunt's allegiance to the show, that there are similarities. Needless to say, for the *Law and Order* fan, this means you've pretty much got a free pass on this one; you're going to love it.

John Cardinal is a cop with his career in the toilet and a clinically depressed wife. His usual partner is tied up in court on another case, so Cardinal is assigned another one, Lise Delorme, who's just come to homicide from Special Bureau (Americans, think "internal affairs"). Cardinal, who some folks in the branch suspect of being crooked, immediately suspects she's been paired with him in order to investigate him. But he's got too much on his plate to spend much time worrying about that; first, his wife goes into the hospital with a particularly nasty bout of depression. Second, a body is found in a mineshaft, believed to be that of Katie Pine, a missing girl whom Cardinal always suspected of being murdered; his obsession with her case got him demoted from homicide in the first place. Who can worry about whether you're being investigated by your partner or not?

Perhaps the most intriguing thing about *Forty Words for Sorrow* is the tension between Cardinal and Delorme, and trying to decide whether a romance is getting underway. The two of them are very deftly handled, and while they seesaw back and forth between being nice to one another and loathing one another, there's never a sense that anything is being exaggerated for the reader; the perils of having a new partner, and one of the opposite sex.

That said, the best-written scenes in the book are those between Cardinal and his wife in the hospital. Cardinal is hopelessly adrift, completely unsure of how to handle himself around her as she struggles in the mire of her depression. Both characters are painted spot-on in these scenes, and they alone are enough to warrant the purchase price of the book.

What's missing from the above two paragraphs is the mystery itself. And, ultimately, the mystery takes a back seat to the characters. This is not a bad thing, as long as the characters can sustain the novel (and they certainly do here). But the end result is that the mystery becomes somewhat predictable, especially for regular watchers of (you knew I'd get round to it sooner or later) *Law and Order*. The twists and turns in the plot will be easily recognizable to the show's rabid cult following. Again, not that this is a bad thing; in fact, regular *Law and Order* viewers have come to expect this, and will feel right at home. (Non-regular viewers, or those who have never seen the show, may not find anything here predictable at all.)

A good, solid work, *Forty Words for Sorrow*, a promising debut from a promising writer. John Cardinal is coming back soon in Blunt's second novel, and if the first one is anything to go on, it will be just as well worth reading. *** ½

Dolceluna says

E' stato il mio primo incontro con Giles Blunt, che prima non conoscevo e che un amico lettore, amante dei buoni thriller, ha vivamente consigliato.

E per fortuna io ho seguito il suo consiglio.

All'inizio devo ammettere che "fa" molto il tipico thriller all'americana stile Connelly, ma poi acquista un'impronta tutta sua. E si rivela un thriller magistralmente costruito, con un ritmo incalzante e l'ambientazione in una cittadina canadese dove il freddo pare uscire dalle pagine. Mi ha proprio invitata a farsi leggere al caldo delle coperte, per scoprire, con curiosità sempre crescente, chi ha ucciso la piccola Katie Pine, e le altre giovani vittime; in realtà l'assassino (o meglio, gli assassini) è già svelato a metà circa del libro, il che non lo rende meno interessante, anzi, buona parte della narrazione a seguire ci aiuta a entrare nella sua testa malata, a capire cosa lo trascina, cosa lo spinge a compiere quello che compie. Magari non si arriva ad avere una risposta, ma intanto si riflette.

Che dire se non che consiglio il romanzo a tutti gli amanti del thriller puro, e che vorrei scoprire altro di Giles Blunt!
