



Pepper Pike

Les Roberts

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Introducing Milan Jacovich (MY-lan YOCK-ovich), Cleveland's favorite tough-guy private eye. An ex-cop, Vietnam vet, and former football player, Milan is a private investigator with a master's degree, a blue-collar taste for klobasa sandwiches and Stroh's beer, and a knack for finding trouble.

Milan gets a cryptic late-night phone call from high-powered advertising executive Richard Amber, who wants to pay him a thousand dollars for twelve hours of bodyguard service. But when Milan gets to the Amber house in the elegant suburb of Pepper Pike, no one is home. The next morning, Amber's beautiful but brittle wife hires Milan to find her husband, who seems to have disappeared.

The search will lead Milan through the haunts of the very rich, including an exclusive country club where the Slovenian American sleuth almost loses his life, and onto some of Cleveland's meanest streets. He'll meet Cleveland mob kingpin Don Giancarlo D'Allessandro and his sophisticated but deadly nephew Victor Gaimari, and even cross paths with the governor of Ohio.

Pepper Pike Details

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From Reader Review Pepper Pike for online ebook

Mary Lu says

I just love Milan Jacovich.

Jan Aldergate says

I LOVE Les Roberts. This was one of the earlier ones and I really enjoyed it. I always like books set in my area and he really gives you a feeling for Cleveland and its quirks. This one was a little more hardboiled than the later ones, lots of shootings and beating up. I had worked out part of the puzzle, but the villain was a surprise.

Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: PI Milan Jackovich

SETTING: Cleveland

SERIES: #1 of 17

RATING: 4.25

WHY: Milan Jacovich is a Slovenian private eye working in Cleveland. An ex-cop and Vietnam vet, he has just separated from his wife and having a hard time adjusting. Late one evening, he gets a call from Richard Amber, a very successful PR guy, asking him to come right away and serve as his bodyguard. When Milan does so, Amber is nowhere to be found. He is then hired by Amber's wife, Judith, an heiress and real cold fish to find Richard. Milan is a great character, down to earth with an appealing vulnerability. Only a bit of stupidity at the conclusion of this book when Milan faces the villain stops me from rating this book more highly.

Tom says

I had heard about this series and I thought it would be interesting to read a mystery set in a place I know. Since much of the action takes place on the East Side of Cleveland, a lot of it is very familiar to me. It is interesting to see where the author is describing a real place (an apartment above the Mad Greek where Cedar and Fairmount join) and when he decides to fictionalize areas (Chagrin Valley Police rather than Hunting Valley or Gates Mills). The protagonist is fairly interesting, a smart character. At times he seems more the classic tough guy, but often times he relies more on being sly. A strong character and interesting settings, so I think I'll read a few more of this series.

Erica says

This is such an addictive series! Milan Jacovich (MY-lan YOK-o-vitch) is a Cleveland gumshoe who solves case after case only on the merits of his dedication, street savvy, and constant ability to think and/or punch his way out of any situation. Pepper Pike is the first, The Dutch is the best I've read so far, followed by Deep Shaker. You don't need to know Cleveland as well as Milan, but you definitely won't be saying "Cleveland" in that snarky tone of voice after reading his adventures.

Jerry B says

We forget who recommended we try the first of Les Roberts' now 18-book Milan Jacovich series about a Cleveland-based gumshoe, son of Serbian and Slovenian immigrants, reminiscent of those PI stories set before personal computers and cellphones, at least in this inaugural work published in 1988.

When an advertising executive calls late in the evening and seeks Milan's immediate assistance as a bodyguard, it was disconcerting to find the caller missing instead. Hired instead by the man's wealthy wife to find him, over the next week Milan pursues the slimmest of clues, mostly collecting little but miscellaneous background information. The plot thickens later on, leading to police involvement; and a couple of attempts to rough up or even slay our dogged PI spices things up!

We liked the fundamental simplicity and straightforward momentum of the plot, without a bunch of red herrings and silly twists meant to dazzle the reader with the author's cleverness. It will be interesting to see how the character of our hero evolves, especially in some of the later tales published after 2000; but for now, we enjoyed Mr. J plenty well enough to seek out more in the set.

Sheya says

if you're from cleveland read this

Cheryl says

There's just something about believable characters having believable conversations with believable plots and outcomes. Roberts hits it 100%. I'm smitten with his exquisite detail and obvious care for his readers. And having it all set just 20 minutes from my front door? Mahhhvelous!

Private investigator Milan gets a late night hire as a body guard only to find his charge MIA when he arrives for duty. The wife then keeps him on to find her husband, which scrambles Milan into the flux of Cleveland Mafia, the hoity-toity, and the politics that play into it all. During it all, he rues his divorce, separation from his 2 sons and the old classmate who has taken up residence where he once had.. with his ex-wife and sons.

Milan lives like Oscar Madison, fights like Dirty Harry and solves crimes like Lieutenant Columbo. Roberts writes every scene like a painting: detailed, colorful and vivid. Get yourself hooked. You can thank me later.

Genevieve says

3.5 stars. I chose this because I was looking for a mystery set in Cleveland while I was staying in Cleveland during my dad's heart surgery. It definitely gave some interesting character and feeling for Cleveland (though Cleveland of 30 years ago, as this was written in 1987 - but led to some interesting conversation with nurses in the hospital about what is the same and what is different). Was pleasantly surprised (since this was a somewhat random choice) that the mystery was well done and the main character was interesting. I'll likely try the next in the series as well.

Dawn Livingston says

My rating for this book is more like a 3 1/2 stars than just 3.

I got this book for the novelty of being able to read about places I know, since I'm from Cleveland and it's set there. For that reason alone it was worth reading the book. It mentions lots of places in Cleveland that I know from the street to the city names.

I'm still trying to decide how much I liked the book (how many stars it deserves). I would say it was easy to read, interesting. The lead character was fine, not great, not bad. I would say that the book was straightforward. I'm not sure it was riveting, a real page turner but... certainly a good book to curl up with. A solid 3 1/2 stars and maybe even 4. It was good enough to make me curious about the next book in the series. I do like mysteries.

Stacy says

Milan is an ex-cop and current private investigator. He is called one night to play body guard for 12 hours, only when he arrives, there is no body to guard. The next morning he is contacted by the wife of the missing man and Milan is hired to find him.

Milan is forced to come in close contact with the rich of the CEOs and politicians to the powerful of the mob. He is shot at and beaten up and in the end, shoots someone too. Where is the mysterious Richard and is he still alive? While trying to answer this question, Milan finds himself dating Richard's ex-mistress and getting kicked out of the Chagrin Valley.

This book is wonderful in its depiction of Cleveland. There are so few books that are set in this city and is the perfect backdrop for this gritty detective. It's nice to feel at home as you sit down to read. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the series.

Paul says

Very fun read! A good mystery, and such a blast to read about local settings. I have read many of these books and enjoyed them all.

Jen says

Milan Jacovich is a rather eccentric private investigator in Cleveland, Ohio, and he receives a strange call one night from Richard Amber, a big wig in the advertising business. Amber wants to hire Milan as a body guard for twelve hours. The pay is good; Milan has nothing better to do; so off he goes to meet Amber at his house in ritzy Pepper Pike. If the call wasn't strange enough, when Milan arrives, Amber is no where to be found.

The next morning, Milan receives yet another call. This time the call is from Amber's wife, Judith. She's also calling to hire Milan. Judith Amber wants Milan to find Richard Amber; he's missing. Richard Amber's disappearance may turn out to be more than your basic "missing person" case for Milan.

PEPPER PIKE is the first book in the popular Milan Jacovich series, originally published in 1988. Being from the Cleveland area, it's about time I got around to reading Cleveland's favorite P.I. If you've never been to the Cleveland area, believe me when I say that Les Roberts is not only true to the flavor and feel of this part of Ohio, but his love of the region radiates from the pages. I shivered actually feeling the wet and cold when Milan was trekking through some residential back yards.

In addition to the physical geography, Roberts does a stellar job illustrating class distinction and the sharp contrast that can exist in the Cleveland region. One needn't drive far to see the struggling working class and then the obscenely wealthy: from a bar where everyone is hanging their hopes on the night's lottery numbers to homes costing in the range of the mid six figures (remember it's the 80s). Even organized crime has a face in the urban sprawl of Cleveland.

The realism doesn't stop at the setting. Roberts is also a master crafter when it comes to his characters. Milan exhibits many of the traits of the traditional P.I. He's witty, a loner and has a knack for finding trouble even when he isn't looking for it. But he also has some traits unique to the P.I. character. As a female reader, the one I most admire is his respect for women, which is probably a reflection of his creator because the female characters in the novel are also worthy of respect. PEPPER PIKE is not full of beautiful women with empty heads, nor damsels in distress who are saved through sex. Roberts' emphasizes Milan's intelligence, thoughtfulness and vulnerability, not brute strength. Milan is also principled, encouraging the reader to develop a strong faith in Milan, cheering him on when the odds are against him.

PEPPER PIKE was an enjoyable read, and I'm glad I finally managed to remove it from the "to be read" pile and check it off the "read" list. I will also be adding the remainder of the series to my must read list. The biggest benefit of discovering a series late? Not having to wait for the next book to be published! Les Roberts published the fourteenth Milan Jacovich novel last year, so I'll have plenty of Milan to keep me reading for awhile.

Moriah Venable says

While looking for an in between novel to read, (waiting for the eight book in the Hannah Swensen series), I thought I would try reading the Milan Jacovich series. Not only was I attracted to the plot but the setting. My home. Cleveland Ohio. It was so great reading all the familiar places as well as some true stuff about Cleveland that all Clevelanders know.

Set in 1988, (I believe) Milan Jacovich is an ex-cop, Vietnam veteran, and former football player. He is currently a private detective, trying to get his bearing after the divorce from his wife who he had been married to for 14 years and has two boys with.

He lives in tiny place with just enough room to eat and sleep not bothering to really have a social life other than drinking beers at bars. Two years after the divorce he is pinning after his wife who has moved on. We first see Milan at the bar, waiting on the lottery ticket numbers, only to be disappointed when they are not called.

While returning home, Milan get a phone call from a man by the name of Richard Amber who needs a bodyguard for 24 hours and request for him to his house in Pepper Pike. When he arrives Richard Amber doesn't appear to be home. Milan waits for him until midnight and then heads home. The next day, Richard's wife, hires Milan to find her husband. And the winners of the lottery are announced. There are three but one has not claimed their money yet.

While looking into Richard's life, he finds out that he is a high-powered advertising executive with secrets of his own. Although married, he has other relationships, and his wife does too. The more he looks into the life of Richard Amber, the more danger he gets in. While getting shot at, threaten by the mafia, squeezed by the police and snubbed by agency types, he starts to realized that this case is more complex then he initially thought it was going to be.

While reading this book, it gave me a film noir vibe to it. Especially all the insight into his marriage and how he viewed the world. I wasn't all the way sure I was going to like this book, but the plot really caught my attention. While I am not overly sure I when I will be continuing the series, I do want to know how his romantic life evolves after realizing, that he wasn't moving forward, he was standing still with the way he living. And that he now time to change that.

Sue Hess says

I enjoy reading Les Roberts. If you live or have ever lived in the Cleveland, Ohio area you are at home with the story as the plot thickens.
