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The stronghold of white-collar crime in the rarefied world of high finance—this is the setting for Peter Spiegelman's edgy, suspenseful, sharply-honed debut novel.

At the center: John March, who walked away from his family's venerable merchant bank for the life of a rural deputy sheriff—a life that would explode in personal tragedy and professional disaster. Three years later, he's back in Manhattan, working as a PI and running from his grief and the expectations of his wealthy family.

March takes the case of Rick Pierro, a self-made man who has everything—and who's in danger of losing it all. An anonymous, poisonous threat has implicated him in a vast money-laundering scheme already under investigation by the feds.

March's own investigation uncovers a blood-stained paper trail that leads him deep into the lives of both insiders and outcasts on the street. He discovers that his client may be the latest victim of a serial extortionist diabolically adept at psychological and physical intimidation, but the more March learns the more questions he has about Pierro, his wife, and the secrets hidden beneath the glossy surfaces of their lives. And the more he begins to fear that his own blood will be added to the trail before the case is closed.

With its headlong narrative, quick, incisive language, and brilliantly clarified details of finance—the legal and the illegal—**Black Maps** is a stunning first novel.

Black Maps Details

Date : Published August 12th 2003 by Knopf (first published January 1st 2003)

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Author : Peter Spiegelman

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From Reader Review Black Maps for online ebook

David says

A good standard mystery novel that I polished off in a weekend while recovering from a cold.

It occurred to me while reading this book that women who wish to understand men might profitably read this novel, as the hero is a modern variation on a standard male fantasy figure, the Last Moral Man in a Corrupt World, a familiar figure in mystery novels from Raymond Chandler onwards. This hero is especially beloved by those of us who have failed to cut a very successful figure in life. In this case, the Last Moral Man is born into enviable privilege (a problem that few of us, sadly, have to deal with), rejects it, finds and loses great happiness, shoulders crushing despair, passes through a dark night of the soul, and emerges at the other end physically fit, impossibly disciplined, and with a clearer moral vision. If reading about such a character is your idea of a good time, this is a book for you. If not, not.

Tina says

This is the first book in the John March series. While I can't say I enjoyed it as much as books 2 & 3 (*Death's Little Helpers & Red Cat*), I do have to say it had me interested enough to pick up the others. John March is an ex-cop turned PI. He's investigating a blackmail scheme against his client, Rick Pierro, an investor?? Wall Street guy?? ..I'm not really sure what he did because I can't remember but I know he's uber rich. Anyway.. there's a lot of financial jargon that I could've done without. It reminded me of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* & Mikael's financial journalism bs that took up way too much time in the beginning of the book. I mean, give me the basics & leave it at that. I don't think making my eyes cross is actually necessary. I'm sure it made a lot more sense to someone not quite as obtuse as myself, but what can I say ?? I felt this book was extremely drawn out and had a hard time really getting into it. If it weren't for the fact that I found March so interesting & wanted to learn more about him & the other characters I would have shelved it a long time ago. My recommendation would be to get through this book & pick up the other 2.... it's a very interesting detective/mystery series that left me anxious for the next in line.

Amorak Huey says

You have to like a PI procedural that has as its epigraph a quote from a Mark Strand poem and whose main character reads Raymond Carver.

Despite that, though, BLACK MAPS (the title comes from the Strand poem and has pretty much nothing to do with the plot of the novel) isn't especially literary. Rather, it's a solid, readable, fairly straightforward crime story. The writing is good enough, and the main character -- introduced here in what's clearly a series (this book is 10 years old; there are at least a couple more that follow, which I have not read) -- John March, is compelling enough to hold our attention.

March is one of those guys who has been beaten up by life (and who gets beaten up a surprising number of times in this story; the battered state of his face becomes something of a running joke): black sheep of a banking family, he was a small-town sheriff's deputy until a serial killer killed his wife and he took to the

bottle. Eventually he dried out and moved to the big city where he became an investigator for an attorney.

In BLACK MAPS, March is attempting to find out who's blackmailing his client. There's a lot of banking stuff that is a little tedious to slog through; one of those really really really vicious corporate security guys; a cute upstairs neighbor; a career-minded, short-sighted, mean-spirited FBI agent with a grudge against Our Hero: all familiar features from the genre. The pacing is pretty well-handled, and the prose clean enough. It feels in many ways like the pilot episode of a TV series, clearly intended to introduce the protagonist, a handful of supporting characters and the mood and style.

John Albers says

I mainly grabbed the book at the library as Scott Brick is the narrator. Was a good listen on drive to and from work. I plan to look for rest in series.

Monica says

I couldn't put this boook down.

Andy Plonka says

I got a bit bogged down in the financial aspects of the plot because of my total lack of background in this area, but when I got into the mystery part thing picked up quite a bit .

Susan Beamon says

Murder, blackmail, suicide: just a few of the results of high finance gone wrong. John March is a member of a family who's fortunes are a result of success when high finance is played correctly. John is not as comfortable in that world as his brothers and sisters. He would rather solve human problems, so he works as a detective for a lawyer. One of the lawyer's clients is being blackmailed about deals he made with a shady bank before the bank went all in criminal behavior. John's task is to find the blackmailer before the attempt can derail the client's career. It's a long but fascinating trail, filled with lowlifes, investment bankers, federal prosecutors, predators and people who did questionable things when they were young. John solves more than the attempted extortion, but without proof for many of them, he concentrates on his case.

I like a good mystery bordering on thriller. This is a good example of the genre.

Sonya Cabral says

This book was really amazing. It had lots of suspense and left me on the edge of my seat. This book is about a private investigator named John. His wife was killed in an apparent "house robbery". He tried to solve the murder but gave up after a year. A couple years later he became a private investigator for a law firm in New

York. He was investigating a man that somehow had connections to his wife's murder. He becomes very involved with this case and almost gets himself killed in the process.

I would recommend this book to people that like mystery, action and drama. I would recommend it for them because this book keeps you interested the entire time you read it.

Sam Reaves says

I liked Peter Spiegelman's Dr. Knox quite a bit, so I kept my eye out for more of his work. This is his debut novel from 2003, set in New York and starring private eye John March.

March is, as befits a modern PI, a bit of a tormented soul, having lost his wife in a mysterious affair which is alluded to early on and then revealed in bits and pieces as we go along. March is the rebel son of a Manhattan financier clan, who rejected his family's high-class ways and pursuit of filthy lucre to become a sheriff's deputy somewhere upstate, where the aforementioned tragedy took place. Back in the big city, he broods, goes for long runs and makes an occasional buck doing investigative work for a lawyer pal.

Said pal has a client who is being blackmailed by somebody with access to the records of a big federal investigation of a shady bank (think BCCI). The client had some dealings with the bank's star crook, now vanished, years before. The blackmailer claims to have evidence from that association that will put the client in federal prison. March is assigned to put a stop to all this. He will, of course run into trouble with the usual hard cases, flinty-eyed feds, enigmatic females, etc, turning up murders old and new and sustaining non-negligible physical damage along the way.

Nothing all that original here, but the tale is well told, with convincing inside dope on financial shenanigans, big-time lawyering and other arcane matters. The style is sometimes just a bit heavy on description; I don't really care exactly how everyone is dressed. But the story moves along smartly, the New York setting is deftly featured, there are some surprises, and Spiegelman made me care about what happened, which is pretty much what we want from a book like this.

Jim says

Too much clothes and appearance. I liked the story though so I'll try another.

Joe Shoenfeld says

Enjoyed this very much.

LJ says

BLACK MAPS (Private Investigator-New York-Cont) – G+

Spiegelman, Peter – 1st in series

Alfred A. Knopf, 2003- Hardcover

Investigator John March agrees to investigate a case of blackmail. The victim's career is being threatened by claiming he was involved in money laundering while at a bank that is now under federal investigation.

March finds his client is no the only victim of threat, and not each has survived.

*** Spiegelman clearly knows whereof he speaks and actually makes the world of banking interesting. He has created an interesting protagonist in John March, including a history revealed throughout the story. The story does start out slowly and one has to get through the information about the banking industry, money laundering and data security, which is interesting and relevant but not exciting. After that, the story definitely takes off and suspense builds to an exciting ending. I enjoyed this debut book and would, most likely, read his next.

Susan says

This was satisfying enough to go on to the second one but, honestly, not so amazing that I need to read another right away. I kind of got bored in the middle. I read the audible version and generally Scott Brick keeps me engaged as a reader but not this time. I felt like he kind of contributed to the blah. I know he doesn't do all the Spiegelman books so the next one will help me determine the problem.

Tony says

Spiegelman, Peter. BLACK MAPS. (2003). ****.

This was the author's first novel, and the winner of the Edgar for Best First Novel in 2003. It's a PI novel, but the PI of this book has some special experience. He's John March. He has had several years of experience as a Private Investigator, preceded by a few years as a cop in Upstate NY. His training and first jobs, though, were in the field of finance with his family's merchant bank in NYC. He's qualified, then, to take on the case of Rick Pierro, a self-made man who has everything, and who is in imminent danger of losing it all. A fully documented threat has been made against him that involves him in a vast and complicated money laundering scheme that is already under investigation by several federal agencies. The schemes themselves would probably best be understood if you had an MBA, but the details are not necessarily important to the plot. What we do learn, however, is that the threat is just the tip of the iceberg. John March begins his probe to uncover the identity of the blackmailer and discovers layers of blackmailing that go back for years, and have affected the lives of numerous finance men around the world. Soon, the white-collar stuff turns into blood on the streets, as March gets closer and closer to the culprit. His own life is also put in danger and he has to begin treading softly. Recommended.

Ed says

#1 of the John March series. I very much enjoyed Spiegelman's depiction of investigator John March's efforts. No computer specialist who can track a phone call in seconds or instantaneously match DNA evidence, rather this novel features intelligent following of available clues. This is not to say that March is everyman; he is obviously a superior physical and mental specimen without extending into the range of superhero. A much recommended read.

John March, a sheriff's investigator for seven years in upstate New York, gained fame for solving a serial killer case that had baffled locals and the FBI. He lost his wife to this killer, went into a tailspin of alcohol abuse, then emerged as a private eye in Manhattan. Now working for a lawyer friend, he must find out who

is blackmailing a self-made millionaire in danger of losing it all. A mysterious financier, missing for three years, seems to be the key, while both a sociopathic ex-employee of the financier and the FBI threaten March. Recorded.
