



Without Prejudice

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Robert, recently returned to live in Chicago, is contacted by a childhood friend who has just completed more than twenty years in prison for a horrific crime. **Without Prejudice** is a compulsive story of race and the dangers that can lie in the past.

Without Prejudice Details

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Megan says

What a very interesting book. I really enjoyed the story and the characters. The characters were all very flawed in many different ways, which was frustrating and refreshing at the same time. I had no idea where the book was going, but loved the journey and the ending.

I also loved that the historical sections of the book took place in Hyde Park, especially on Blackstone Avenue. I went to the University of Chicago and lived on Blackstone Avenue, so all of the references were nostalgic and fun to follow. I could completely envision everything the author described about the neighborhoods and demographic, which made the book come even more to life for me.

Catalina says

This is a book that my boss recommended and insisted i read, saying it was one of the best books he had recently read, and i was not disappointed.

To be honest i was not hooked from the first chapter, but i wanted to know who was who and why were they acting in certain ways so i read on, and i am happy i did so. After the second chapter i started to enjoy the book more and more, to understand the characters better and to get a better idea of their relations.

The story alternates between the past and the present of the story. The first chapter takes place in Chicago and it presents the first interaction between the two main characters, Robert and Duval. Duval, after spending more then 20 years in prison suddenly calls Robert and tries to re-establish their friendship, maybe even pick up where they left.

The second chapter takes us back to Robert's childhood, letting us better understand who the characters and how they came to know each other. The rest of the book is written in the same flashback style, with chapter alternating between the past and the present. With every page read more and more is revealed, but the most important question, Is Duval guilty? is only answered in the last chapter.

This is one of those books that keep you hooked and in search for answers. Well written and entertaining, a must read

Julia says

It had great characters, and a great plot. Flashbacks kept me interested, and the ending was touching. One of those books that will remain with you for ages afterwards.

Isaw says

did not have me on the edge of my seat.

Lara says

Although well written, and a good story, I just didn't find the characters endearing. This spoilt the enjoyment for me as I really didn't care what happened to them.

Sherri says

Couldn't get into the characters at all. Just didn't grip me. It was hard for me to finish the book as it was just not interesting to me with all the jumping backwards and forwards. The characters were so bland. I wouldn't recommend this book at all.

Kinga says

Are all books set in Chicago crap or is it just my bad luck?

Robert Danziger, a middle aged publisher, moves back to Chicago, after having lived in the UK for many years. There he needs to confront his past when his black childhood friend seeks him out after having been released from prison after twenty odd years. Our Robert is a rather bland character, petty, and randomly racist but the sad thing is I don't think the author meant him to come across like that.

He has a young beautiful wife, who is a fierce human right lawyer. I have no idea how this relationship works, because Robert is everything Anna should despise - he is passive, prejudiced and boring. Duval, Robert's childhood friend who did time for a violent rape is probably the most interesting character of them all but he is also prone to illogical behaviour.

I think one of the main rules for any writer should be to make sure you know your characters and their motivations. They might not know why they're doing something, but the author has to know that always. Otherwise you end up with a book that makes little sense full of people doing random things. Additionally, for a book that's called 'Without Prejudice' if features an exceptional number of despicable black people, who for some reason all pick on poor Robert. It becomes disturbing when you compare the author's biography with Robert's biography and realise how much alike they are.

Other than that, the book has a whole load of cliché characters: there is Vanetta, the lovely black nanny, cook and cleaner, Merrill - the evil, purse-lipped stepmother, a young beautiful wife, and an ambitious vixen out to seduce poor Robert.

None of this is helped by exceptionally poor writing, dialogues verging on ridiculous, and a plot where I predicted every single plot twist but one. I couldn't believe how obvious it was 99% of the time.

Here are some quotes from the very beginning of the book when I still cared enough to mark them.

"The skinny awkward kid Robert had known must have filled out. Didn't all convicts lift weights, grow muscle-bound? Presumably for protection – Rober knew prison life was violent, scarily so;" – ah, isn't that

Robert dude smart? He figured it all out.

"Whatever the ups and downs they had between them, there was always conversation – sometimes funny (she often made him laugh)," – thank you, dear author, for explaining to us what funny means.

"London wasn't exactly a multi-racial utopia, but she insisted Chicago was much worse. He wasn't sure, though he certainly found himself more conscious of race than he had been in all his years in England. But he assumed that was inevitably in a city that probably contained more black people than the whole of the UK." Sigh. Yeah, probably not. Chicago has actually less black people than London alone (mostly because it is basically a smaller city). Seriously, if you want to write a book about race, check your facts at least.

"'Maybe he just wants more money.'

'No, he said money wasn't the issue.' He had always thought publishing was more about experience than IQ, but the way Anna inevitably got the point right away sometimes made him wonder. But then she was unusually incisive." Lord, how incisive Anna was! She guessed that the reason an author might want to leave a small publisher and go with a big one could be that he wanted more money. Damn, that chick got brains!

And let me wrap it up with this little gem of a dialogue:

(backstory: Anna is trying to clear Duval's name and get some information from Ferraro, the policeman who took part in his arrest. She called Ferraro's house.)

'Yes, well, we're never going to know for sure.' (here we all realise that Ferraro is dead already because it's been twenty-five years).

He was puzzled by this apparent abdication. 'Why?'

'Ferraro retired twelve years ago. He moved to Meyer's Beach on the Gulf side. I spoke to his wife on the phone this afternoon. She was a nice-sounding woman.'

'Yes, but what did Ferraro say?' How typical of a woman to start talking about how nice another woman sounded on the phone.

'He didn't. It turned out I was speaking to his widow.'"

How typical of a woman? Seriously? Blame your inability to introduce tension in your dialogue on women, way to go, Andrew Rosenheim.

PS. There was also a fascinating bit about Anna's aquamarine eyes paling in the sunlight or some such, but I can't find it at the moment.
