



Rune

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When his father, his secretary, and even the thief who stole his car die under grisly circumstances, advertising executive Harry Buckingham comes under investigation and must go undercover to clear his name. Reprint. *PW*.

Rune Details

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Author : Christopher Fowler

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From Reader Review Rune for online ebook

Bob says

Set in London, a pair of old time dectives are trying to solve a series of apparant suicides when they discover that they may be caused by the victims exposure to sumliminal runes sent by a mega corporation whos head is trying to establish a hidden means of controlling the public's attitude. Interesting idea reasonably well done.

Louis says

Rune was based on interesting concept: ancient runes being used as a tool of control and murder. It'd make for an interesting plot for a TV show or movie. My only issue came down to the characters. They just didn't seem...right. Especially the Carmody. Anywho, decent read. Good for a cottage or a distraction from something heavy.

Pat says

Before reading "Rune", I had only read Christopher Fowler's books about the Peculiar Crimes Unit starring detectives Arthur Bryant and John May. The two detectives appear in this book, but they aren't the main characters.

The story is a very tangled web between mythological beliefs from the past and modern technology. There is every kind of death imaginable and terror enough to go around. Very interesting!

Lisa says

how odd to read the prequel to a series I've already finished. I enjoyed seeing the characters in their incipient states and I'm thankful that some of the heavy-handed almost cartoonish characterization was subtly fleshed out when Fowler moved into an actual series of Bryant and May mysteries.

Jon says

Rune is a supernatural thriller by Christopher Fowler and the first book to feature his famous police detectives Arthur Bryant and John May. However, it is not part of that series. Overall, the novel was suspenseful and engrossing, but the premise was just a little too over the top with too many cliches.

Soho Black says

The afterword to this novel provides an interesting insight into Christopher Fowler. He admits to becoming

excited when Hollywood bought the film rights, less so when they started to make changes, and angry when they removed his favourite parts. He closes by saying that “I’ll be the first to wince when the cheerleader kills the talking snake.” Needless to say, neither appear in the novel, and he is clearly looking forward to seeing what a mess Hollywood can make of this book as much as I am. Not at all. What makes this interesting is that he works in the film industry.

Fowler writes that this novel was inspired by a short story called “Casting the Runes” by M. R. James, which was interpreted in a 1958 film called “night of the Demon.” However, there are parts of the storyline that bring vague recollections to Dean Koontz’s 1979 novel “Night Chills.” It’s really nothing more than a minor link, and only in the concept, rather than the story itself. However, it’s a good pointer in that, if you enjoyed the Koontz story, you’ll more than likely enjoy this one.

Fowler is often categorised under horror, which limits him a great deal. This novel, like many of his others, does contain some nasty moments, but is more of a crime thriller than an out and out horror novel. He has also been compared to Stephen King, which as inaccurate a comparison as there is. He writes a lot shorter, for one thing, and spends less time on peripherals, much preferring to concentrate on the story. If there is a comparison to be made, it is really more to Dean Koontz’s older work. The story shifts along at a decent pace. People die, often in unusual ways, but the real fear is generated by the concept. And, more particularly, by stepping back a little and realising that this could actually happen. If he can think of it, so could someone else, maybe a person with the drive and the knowledge to push it through into reality.

The story is one that mixes the occult with big business, in this case, the entertainment business. Daniel Carmody is trying to out his business rivals out of the picture by combining the ancient forces of runic curses with video and TV. His theory is that he can cause people to become cursed, up to the point that they feel and urge to harm or even kill themselves, by showing them runic curses in the form of a video, or even printed on a video box or a piece of paper. It’s not been done for a while, and it’s not been used in business, but he thinks it may work. Anyone who gets in his way will be shown a rune, and will be forced to do things they really don’t want to do.

Harry Buckingham isn’t having a very good day. He has just been pulled out of an important meeting to be told that his father has been killed. Before that, however, his father had been acting strangely, running through the streets as if the devil were after him. He’s eventually crushed against a wall by a lorry. Shortly afterwards, a man steals Harry’s BMW, ties a rope around a tree and his neck, and decapitates himself by driving off at high speed. This is only a beginning. All around people he knows are dying in strange circumstances, and the police, in the form of Fowler’s recurring characters Bryant and May, are wondering about his involvement.

In the meantime, Harry’s life is going to hell, too. His employers are not happy that he is taking so much time away from work, and being called out of so many important meetings to sort out his father’s affairs. His frigid girlfriend has ended their relationship (ironically, this is probably the best thing that happens to him) and the woman driving the lorry that killed his father has turned into someone who is part stalker, part investigator, and part love-struck teenager. She’s got an idea of how to link the incidents together, and drags Harry along with her, trying to solve the crime. Harry, on the other hand, is an advertising executive, and really isn’t into that kind of thing.

In the meantime, of course, Harry is trying to avoid being held by the police, who still think he must be involved, and trying to stay alive after Daniel Carmody finds out that Harry is trying to find out what he is up to and prove that he is responsible for Harry’s father’s death.

Bryant and May, however, are upsetting their bosses by using unorthodox methods to solve the crime, methods which aren't uncommon in their investigations, as readers of "Darkest Day" and "Soho Black" will be well aware. Bryant in particular is consorting with witches and runic experts, and basing his whole solution on a hunch.

Neither side is getting anywhere terribly fast, as everyone they try to involve ends up getting killed, or killing themselves. Harry is prevented by a lack of knowledge and access to information, and the police just can't figure out what's really happening anyway.

The ending. Well, of course, I'm not going to tell you what happened. What I will say is this. I have written on Fowler's work fairly regularly before, and I have often criticised his endings. There is an unnecessary bit tacked onto the end, or some things just don't add up when you reach the last page. I'm not going to repeat that here. As far as I'm concerned, he's got it right here. The past is wrapped up, nothing is out of place, and there is potential for the future. This book ends in much the same way as a film would, which perhaps explains the aforementioned Hollywood interest, and I don't have a problem with that at all.

It is perhaps the story itself that disappoints, if only slightly. The style is totally Fowler's. It darts between characters, with each linking into another at some point. The story rips along, the chapters are short, and the pages keep turning. The story itself is realistic enough for you to relate to, but fanciful enough that you want to see what's going to happen next.

Fowler's interest in runes and runic curses has clearly been strong enough for him to investigate the possibilities, and make a decent story out of them, in much the same way as his knowledge of London did with "Disturbia." However, in this instance, his storytelling instincts have beaten off his love of showing his knowledge of London. Yes, it's largely London based, but there are few of the little nuggets of historical information sprinkled about that have made some of his other works so entertaining.

The character of Grace seems a little unnecessary, too. She is the lorry driver who hooks up with Harry. Although she provides a couple of little pieces of plot advancement, I can't help but feel that the novel didn't really need her around, although this is really a minor gripe. For the most entertaining character, if the least well rounded, look out for Rufus!

The death scenes are particularly well done. There is not a simple death involved here at all, but they are all nicely described, but not in too much detail, in the manner of Graham Masterton, for example. Mostly, the people have been terrified into taking the action they do to kill themselves, and this is wonderfully portrayed. You can almost feel the fear in them.

Overall, this isn't the Fowler novel I have most enjoyed. There are a few things, which make Fowler quite distinctive that are missing, so this would be better for the first time reader, rather than the Fowler addict who may, as I have, find a few holes. However, this is quite possibly the best story idea he has come up with, being real enough to make you nervous, and is certainly the most satisfying end to a Fowler novel I have come across.

If you like Dean Koontz, especially his older work, this is something you will enjoy greatly. If you like novels that are a little off the beaten track in terms of concept, you will enjoy the idea. If you like a few unusual deaths, and a bit of blood, you'll like this. I would suggest you avoid this novel if you have a weak stomach, or if you have just eaten.

As far as buying this book goes, the advice I have given in these pages previously still holds true. Offline,

Fowler's work is not easily found. Online, this can be bought from Amazon, along with the rest of Fowler's work, with 20% off. It is interesting to note, however, that the price Amazon use to start with is £1 more than I paid for the novel about two years ago, for what looks to be the same version. It is not, however, a novel that will disappoint, if this is your kind of thing.

This review may also appear under my name at any or all of www.ciao.co.uk, www.thebookbag.co.uk, www.goodreads.com, www.amazon.co.uk and www.dooyoo.co.uk

Caley Ann (Katie) says

Does the corporate world have an insidious side that is attempting to take its clandestine and rather evil activities multinational? Fowler breaths some real life into the idea. Part detective, part urban horror story, it's well worth a read.

Tony says

Absolutely loved this. It's made even better by the appearance of Bryant & May (and a few of the other characters) in embryonic form.

Bryant & May on acid. Old and new worlds collide with runes and technology, wonderfully fleshed-out characters and excellent page-turning pull.

Read this if you like your tales dark with a slight undertone of humour.

Charlie Curran says

When I first started reading this book, I didn't grasp just how far its tongue was going to be in its cheek but, once I got used to that, I started to realise just how good a book it is. It's not going to change your life but it's a good fun read from start to finish.

Kim says

I got the Dutch version of this book from my mother in law who is cleaning out her book shelves but can't throw out her books nor donate them to second hand book shops. So she gives them to me and I read them (except the drama and romance she gives me, I hate that genre) and then donate them (with her permission)

I would never have bought this book for myself. The title in Dutch was awful (De Komst van het Kwaad) and it had the worst cover in the history of book covers. Luckily Goodreads showed me some good reviews and I decided to give it a go (if only for the reason that I could then donate it so I wouldn't have to keep a book with such a cheesy title on my precious bookshelf)

This book was better than expected. It had a number of crazy deaths and paranormal videos very similar to

the Sadako videos in the Ringu. I also liked the detectives who were not really like realistic detective, but very funny nonetheless.

Now the ending of the book was a bit over-the-top for me (especially the last sentence; I think that 1 sentence ruined the entire last chapter for me) But I'm going to let you read it instead of just spoiling it ;-)

Richard says

Basically the first Bryant and May mystery. A BIG CORPORATION starts using ancient runes in advertising, sort of. Interesting more for the early B&M stories and characters. The rune plot never quite worked for me, however if you like Bryant and May you do need to read this one.

Lyra says

This story could have been great. It had the potential of being something quite unique and interesting, but failed catastrophically as it went on.

This train wreck starts with many dead bodies being found around London that seem to have been killed in mysterious ways. The police tries to get to the bottom of this after realising that they all seem to be connected with Harry Buckingham, our main character and the worlds biggest blank slate in the planet.

I am all for making the stakes higher and whatnot; however, when three quarters of your book is entirely sustained by person after person dying for the most stupidest reasons you have to draw the line somewhere. Put yourself in this scenario: you ex boyfriends mail has been accidentally brought to your house. What do you do? a) Call your ex boyfriend to tell him about this misunderstanding b) Bring it to his house c) open the packet, see that its a VHS, call him about it and when he pleads you not to watch it because you may DIE, you GO AND WATCH IT WITH NO SECOND THOUGHT. Take a wild hint what this book does.

The worst flaw of this novel are, without a doubt, its imbecile cast of characters (as you can see in the example above). They frequently act completely irrational just for the sake of trying to advance the plot. We get it, runes kill if you see them. We all get it. Why do you need to keep killing people in the most idiotic way just to make that point clear?

Just for fun, here are more examples. You drive over this guy's dad and want to make it up for him. Obviously, the best solution is to stalk him all day making sexual suggestions (while knowing he is in a relationship) until you win him over. Another example. You are at a fancy dinner with your stunning girlfriend. She refuses to have sex with you for some stupid reason just to get the plot going on. Pissed off, you catch the eye of that-creepy-girl-who-seems-way-too-into-you that by COMPLETE COINCIDENCE is at the same restaurant as you and, ohmygod, she has a dress. As anyone would do, you follow her into the bathroom and have a violent makeout session in there until your girlfriend finds you and breaks up with you. As the man you are, you shrug it off and have sex with this other chick in her apartment.

The story picks up when the runes seem to let you see old gods of some kind which are ruthless and will try and kill you if you can see them. And then immediately drops it again and is never explained fully.

Don't read this book unless you are a fan of the authors other works.

Cat. says

Even though I finished this, I'm not sure why! Written in 1990, it's another end-of-the-millennium Armageddon novel about corporations using "evil runes" to kill off their enemies. Pretty far-fetched, but I wanted to see how many more inventive ways to kill people the author could come up with so I had to finish it. Lame.

Horace Derwent says

a light-up for me, a compelling brish attack

a satire or an assault on consumerism(more precisely, consumationalism), the governmental censorship and the process of globalization

Philip Jackson says

This is an early novel from the pen of Fowler, and although it features his most famous creations, the detectives Arthur Bryant and John May, it doesn't form part of the official Bryant and May canon. It's a clever, fast paced thriller/horror in which people are 'persuaded' to commit suicide through the use of subliminal runic messages. The body count is high, as victims fall prey to horrific visions created by the rune curses. Fowler acknowledges MR James' 'Casting the Runes' as part inspiration for this novel, but there are also echoes of 'The Ring' films (I'm not sure which came first though), and elements from the 'Young Sherlock Holmes' movie. Bryant and May are wonderful characters, very much in their infancy in this, their first adventure (chronologically at least - Full Dark House takes the pair back much further in their shared history).

As with all the novels of Fowler which I've read, this is a great page-turner - there is wonderfully quirky humour mixed in with the grand guinol, and all the threads are tied up beautifully by the last page. Highly recommended.
