



House of Smoke

J.F. Freedman

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J.F. Freedman is on fire once again with this novel, a blazing new thriller of power, murder and one woman's relentless search for the truth. An ex-cop-turned-private investigator searches for answers when a wealthy socialite's boyfriend is killed while in police custody. But no solutions lead only to more dangerous questions, as she enters a glittery world where the ultra-rich play the deadliest games.

House of Smoke Details

Date : Published December 1st 1996 by Signet (first published January 1st 1996)

ISBN : 9780451179890

Author : J.F. Freedman

Format : Paperback 496 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller



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From Reader Review House of Smoke for online ebook

Denise says

I thought this was a pretty good book, once I got into it. I thought the plot was great and timeless, it could've been written last year. I was sure I had the ending figured out, but I was way off, which is rare. I would recommend this book to anyone, just give it a fair chance.

Lorin Cary says

Sue Grafton's PI has a major competitor here: Kate Blanchard. She's a former cop, a former battered woman. Two kids, in the custody of her sister. Lots of emotional baggage. New life in Santa Barbara as a PI. Freedman creates a richly layered protagonist, and while aspects of the plot seemed predictable, in retrospect, the author has pieced together a strong, nicely paced story. Plenty of action. Plenty of local color. Plenty of digging into how PIs, and the police work. And, contrary to some reviewers, male interventionists did not always rescue her. That happened in one major scene, but in the end she created the solutions that led to solving the issue. Good stuff

Linda Reed says

I'm not generally a crime fiction genre reader. This book had plenty of crime and the main character, Detective Kate Blanchard, is a nicely flawed woman who grows through the book, and in a very believable way. Perhaps it is par for the course in this genre, but there was way too much gratuitous sex for my taste. Didn't seem necessary for the plot. There is a twist at the end, which I won't divulge. As a reader I felt duped and intentionally misled and wanted more clues so I could anticipate these twists. As they are, they just come out of the blue. The book has plenty of tension, but could have had more if we'd know as readers a few tidbits.

S. Lynham says

This book had been standing in one of my bookcases for ages and I am not sure why I didn't get around to reading it a long time ago as it was a great read. I really like the main character Kate Blanchard.....on the one hand, she is tough as nails, yet she has been badly hurt both in body and mind by her former husband. In this book, she is taking her first baby steps in a whole new life, in a new location, far from her abuser and also, her 2 daughters who are living in her sister's far more stable home as ordered by the court upon her divorce.

She had been a cop but in her new location she found a mentor who helped her get her P.I. license and she hung out her shingle. I found the story to be highly engaging....I read the book in one sitting as it was that good. The twists and turns of the story kept me fully engaged and the ending was far more different than I had expected, given the explanation for the whole plot dredged up by Kate. I am looking forward to finding more books in this series as I expect her story will be a complicated one personally. I also expect some great plot lines. Freedman has me hooked.

mark monday says

i gave up on this trite tale of a lady detective solving an utterly dull mystery at about the halfway mark. points of non-interest:

1. terrible intro. laughable. after that, the writing improves...BUT the author commits a cardinal sin in having the same scornful attitude towards the world be rendered not just through various character povs, but in his so-called 'third-person omniscient' parts as well. the characters and the author really should not be expressing the same blanket contempt towards the world; i.e. the *author's* voice and the *characters'* voices should not be the same exact thing! that was a real novice error there, freedman.
2. i was interested in this one because of its santa barbara setting. i've been there a lot and know the city fairly well. the author does too, but my gosh, freedman makes santa barbara sound downright ugly. it is NOT an ugly city. it has its issues, many of them, but santa barbara is actually beautiful.
3. if you are going to write about a tough but sympathetic lady detective, please make her *tough* and *sympathetic*. don't make her cringe so much. don't make her sound like she runs from her problems or just keeps her head down in nearly every situation. and don't make her an almost-home-wreckin' slut for crissakes! now i have nothing against sluttiness in general. but here it was just one more way in which the protagonist was anything but tough or sympathetic.
4. i will give freedman some mild props for including a totally inappropriate, needlessly graphic, way-outta-leftfield Lesbionic Interlude right in the middle of the novel. all attempts at narrative focus and realistic characterization fielded by House of Smoke (great title, btw) literally screeched to a halt for this scene. although it was another hallmark of this novel's muddled goals and this author's questionable decisions, still...i did get some personal enjoyment from that part and it certainly kept me reading for a few more pages. but then immediately afterwards, i lost interest, and just wanted to have a smoke then roll over and get some shuteye. no spooning with House of Smoke occurred. and i felt a little dirty.

Maurean says

This was a fairly good hard-boiled thriller. Actually, I really enjoyed Freedman's writing style and his characters all have depth, so I will probably read others by him; I just found the storyline of this novel (poor little rich girls) wasn't my 'thing' and I knew fairly early on (definately sooner than I was supposed to, I'm afraid) whodunit, so that lowered my journal rating a bit. But, overall, worth the reading time

Mary Newcomb says

Kate Blanchard is a hard-boiled PI with a sad back story (or was I just redundant?). There are some interesting twists and turns but the characters did not seem believable. I also think I would have understood that some of the women were complicated without so much detail about their sex lives. JF Freedman has joined my personal Do Not Read list.

Jerry B says

We were highly satisfied with our first Freedman suspense thriller, “Bird’s Eye View”, and so thought we’d try this initial entry in his ex-cop, private eye Kate Blanchard set. Kate is loaded with angst and issues, exacerbated by a history of abuse from her ex and her two daughters being raised by her sister (at court order). She has learned the PI trade by essentially assuming the business practice of her mentor and presents as a dogged and resourceful worker. Hired by a wealthy family to find out what happened to one of their employees who died in jail, the complicated plot weaves in and out from the family’s business dealings, to the (bi)sexual escapades of its lady in charge. Environmental issues, particularly with regard to off-shore and other forms of oil drilling, get a fair amount of ink, and eventually play into the story.

The writing was fine but the book was sometimes confusing and frankly a little too long to sustain solid interest and suspense. We definitely tired of the antics of the rich family who couldn’t keep anything secret but their business skullduggery – three generations of privileged women eventually took its toll on both the characters and we readers.

Mr. Gottshalk says

I get the feeling like I've read this book before. Battered female private investigator is trying to fight off her past demons, be a mother, find a new man, and, by the way, find out what's behind a suspicious Santa Monica murder. I like detectives who are flawed and things are not perfectly wrapped up in their worlds, even when you think they might be. This is a pretty long read, but entertaining. Great for the beach!

Theryn Fleming says

House of Smoke is a okay detective story, but nothing special. I kept getting ahead of the plot. The lead is a female ex-cop turned PI with Issues (her ex beat her, she's lost custody of her kids). My main quibble is that it was obvious to me that this was a male writer writing a female character. He kept having her do either a) things guys think all women do or b) things guys *want* women to do. Also, she inevitably had to be rescued by a dude. Arggh. So yeah. Somewhat exasperating, but an acceptable beach read.
