



Garden of Beasts

Jeffery Deaver

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In the most ingenious and provocative thriller yet from the acclaimed *New York Times* bestselling author Jeffery Deaver, a conscience-plagued mobster turned government hitman struggles to find his moral compass amid rampant treachery and betrayal in 1936 Berlin.

Paul Schumann, a German American living in New York City in 1936, is a mobster hitman known as much for his brilliant tactics as for taking only "righteous" assignments. But then Paul gets caught. And the arresting officer offers him a stark choice: prison or covert government service. Paul is asked to pose as a journalist covering the summer Olympics taking place in Berlin. He's to hunt down and kill Reinhard Ernst -- the ruthless architect of Hitler's clandestine rearmament. If successful, Paul will be pardoned and given the financial means to go legit; if he refuses the job, his fate will be Sing Sing and the electric chair.

Paul travels to Germany, takes a room in a boardinghouse near the Tiergarten -- the huge park in central Berlin but also, literally, the "Garden of Beasts" -- and begins his hunt. In classic Deaver fashion, the next forty-eight hours are a feverish cat-and-mouse chase, as Paul stalks Ernst through Berlin while a dogged Berlin police officer and the entire Third Reich apparatus search frantically for the American.

Garden of Beasts is packed with fascinating period detail and features a cast of perfectly realized locals, Olympic athletes and senior Nazi officials -- some real, some fictional. With hairpin plot twists, the reigning "master of ticking-bomb suspense" (*People*) plumbs the nerve-jangling paranoia of prewar Berlin and steers the story to a breathtaking and wholly unpredictable ending.

Garden of Beasts Details

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From Reader Review Garden of Beasts for online ebook

Eric_W says

Paul Schumann is a mob hit man. He's set up by the Feds and captured then offered a choice between working for them to assassinate a key Nazi official, Reinhold Ernst, or face the gas chamber. Sent to Germany under the cover of a journalist following the Olympics in Berlin, he's soon involved in a serious cat-and-mouse game for a Nazi sympathizer has sent an anonymous note to the German High Command indicating that a "Russian" (Paul is supposed to use a forged Russian passport to escape following the assassination) will cause some damage to some unnamed important official.

Paul has been chosen because he speaks almost native German and is a very careful, precise hitman. But he doesn't have the cultural background of Nazi Germany in 1936 and little things, like whistling for a taxi, which no German would have done, provide clues for his pursuers. Deaver must have done considerable research to provide details like the "Hitler clothing" that help provide a good sense of time and place.) For example: Morgan said softly, "Don't use that word here. It will give you away. 'Nazi' is Bavarian slang for 'simpleton.' The proper abbreviation is 'Nazo,' but you don't hear that much either. Say 'National Socialist.' Some people use the initials, NSDAP. Or you can refer to the 'Party.' And say it reverently. . . .

After Paul and his contact are forced to kill an SA agent, Inspector Kohl (a brilliant cop who expertly maneuvers his way across the conflicting SD, Gestapo, SA, and SS interference which threaten to muck up his investigation) enters the case and now Paul is being sought by multiple agencies sometimes working at cross-purposes. And can Paul trust his American handlers? Great plot, well executed.

Everything in the novel rings true except the conversations between Ernst, Himmler, Hitler, and Goering. A couple other minor things that bugged me. We're all used to the phrases "Heil, Hitler," and "Grüß Gott", but here both are translated quite literally so they come out "Hail Hitler" and "Greeting God" which, ironically, rang very false to my ear. Better to have left them in their German form. But I quibble. Very engaging story.

David says

Garden of Beasts was a pleasant surprise. I have read and enjoyed the Lincoln Rhyme series by Deaver, but the setting of Germany in 1936 was presented so powerfully that I was left shaking my head. Characterization was very, very important in this novel as we follow American Gangster Paul Schumann, a hired killer, who is blackmailed into an assassination plot. The goal is to assassinate one of Hitler's men who is responsible for the rearming plan for Germany. The character is fictional, an amalgamation of several of Hitler's henchmen.

Then, there is Kriminal Police investigator who is gentle, patient, and insightful. He cleverly gets on Paul's trail rather quickly.

However, the clever thing is how much Deaver knows about Germany's black market, food and clothing substitutes, the fear of being denounced, the pride in a country attempting to rebuild, and the attitude towards Jews and other so-called races. Deaver pulls back the curtain of a nation torn by national pride and fear of being called an enemy of the state. I was thrilled and felt as if I was being educated about the terrible inflation, black marketing, and the multiple agencies and para-military organizations.

Put this one on your list, folks.. Because Deaver carefully carves out a calculated thriller with some very interesting and unforeseen twists and turns. Characters evolve as the story progresses and the story unfolds, twists and then roller coasters to a satisfying conclusion that is NOT what the reader saw coming.

Marti says

I was used to the Lincoln Rhyme series by Jeffery Deaver, but this book was a pleasure to read. For some reason, I am fascinated by World War II, and though fictional, there was a terrific feeling of what it would have been like to be in Berlin at the time of the Olympics. It is very strange to be rooting for a killer, but Paul Schumann was sent to do a righteous act. The civil policeman Kohl is an intelligent and interesting character. Ernst is portrayed as both a loving grandfather, and a ruthless, inhuman person. This book is over 500 pages, but worth it. =====

stephanie says

i wasn't sure what to expect, given that a) i love deaver, b) usually dislike historical fiction, and c) know a crap load about the interwar period in germany.

turns out it was surprisingly good. i mean, it won awards, but see the second two points up there. normally i wouldn't even read this, but. i am glad i did. i wasn't sure what the twists were going to be, or how, given that we all know how history plays out.

i liked that deaver created a fictional character for the enemy, because it didn't detract from the reality of the story. i wasn't distracted thinking, but how do you KNOW that about goring/goebbels/himmler or "but that's just wrong!"

paul is a character i felt ambivalent about, but understood, in a weird way. the story kept rolling, and there were excellent secondary characters, classic deaver twists, and an ending that made me seriously, seriously happy.

Michael Strahlman says

My favorite JD book. An interesting and believable insight into Nazi Germany. Particularly heartbreaking was the scene where the protagonist sees the officers leading the boys into the chamber.

Ed says

I'm not so sure that Deaver shouldn't stick to his Lincoln Rhyme/Amelia Sachs novels. They are so much better than his other efforts.

This story started off as a two star effort at best, ended as a four star offering hence the three stars I gave it.

I'm not sure why I endured through the almost childish early part of the story. I guess I'm a sucker for WW II novels, especially if they involve intrigue.

Staged against the backdrop of the preparation for the 1936 Olympics, the protagonist Paul Schumann, is a hitman with a heart of gold. He only rubs out people who God mistakenly put on earth. As he tries to carry out his assignment, assassinating Reinhard Ernst, the man in charge of Germany's military build-up, a deed which will clear him of all his past crimes, he is constantly put in the position of making choices that cause him problems.

Throughout the book, he is pursued by Willi Kohl, Germany's premier detective, as a murder suspect. He also becomes a target of the entire German police establishment when it is discovered what he's in Germany to do. He also manages to fall in love with his landlady and hook up with a con-man who saves his life on more than one occasion.

As always with Deaver's books, the plot has a great number of twists and surprises. I would suggest that the plotting is the real strength of this story and wanting to know "what happens next" is what kept me going early in the book.

Much like the background of a painting, the evils of Nazism are portrayed as a never-ending theme. In the end, we discover who are really the "good guys" and the "bad guys" but it's not always clear in the middle of the book.

I cannot unreservedly recommend a book of 542 pages as a quick read but once you get into it, I suspect you will want to finish it quickly, if for no other reason, than to unravel the plot.

Tony says

Jeffery Deaver- Garden of Beasts (Pocket Star Books 2005) 4.5 Stars

It's 1936 and Germany is trying to hide the fact that they are rearming. Paul Schumann is an assassin for hire and has just been caught by the government. He is given two choices either he does one last assassination, this time for the government, or he will be in line for the electric chair. Acting like a freelance sports journalist coming to Berlin for the Olympics, Schumann has been told to locate and eliminate Reinhard Ernst, the man responsible for the German rearmament and Hitler's power. Hitler's men are everywhere and he must avoid detection, but staying out of trouble in paranoid Germany is not an easy task. While being hunting by Germany's best investigators, he must accomplish his mission, or die a horrible death.

The introduction to Garden of Beasts was interesting as we see the main character being taken captive, which is an odd way to start the book, but it made it much more interesting. This intro set the stage for all the following events to fall into place. It was a key scene in the nail-biting plot that the reader's view. We see the main character grow from a heartless assassin into a man who really is deeper and more considerate than we are originally led to believe, Paul Schumann surprises himself at times. He was an incredibly deep character with many different sides. One thing I did find a little out of character was the budding romance. It just did not really fit into Paul Schumann's profile in my opinion. I loved all the twists involved in this book as it left me never knowing just what was coming next. It was a job well-done from an amazingly talented author,

who clearly did his research on this one. I enjoyed all the details I was learning about a time period I find to be very interesting. I especially loved the fact that I found out what Tiergarten actually means (Garden of Beasts).

I recommend Garden of Beasts to Deaver fans, thriller readers, and anyone who loves the World War eras.

For more of my reviews check out my website, www.tonypeters.webs.com

Tony Peters

Kids on a Case: The Case of the Ten Grand Kidnapping

<http://authortonypeters.blogspot.com/>

Strawberry Fields says

I have been a fan of Jeffery Deaver for quite a while. I love his Lincoln Rhyme series and he has also written Kathryn Dance and some stand alone novels. They are always in the crime/thriller genre. So I was at the library picking up books that I currently had on hold and was perusing the shelves for books by authors that always a win for me and stumbled across this book and checked it out on a whim.

As I first started reading this book I really didn't think I would like it because it was not what I expected at all. I read the first couple of chapters more than once because I wasn't getting into it and kept thinking maybe I was missing something. I almost just closed the book and putting it the pile of completed books to go back to the library unread. One night I decided to give it a good go, so I plowed through, and I am so glad I did. By the third chapter and beyond I was riveted.

This book is so different from Deaver's consistent style I was thoroughly impressed with this divergent gem. As I was rating this book I see that it is given overall less than 4 stars, and I can't imagine why. To me, this is Deaver's work I have read, and I have read a lot of his books.

It is set in Germany at the time of the Olympics in 1936 and a hit man has been confronted by our government. He has a choice. He can go to prison for the multiple murders he has perpetrated or he can accept and offer to have his record expunged, be paid a nice hefty fee and live out his life. In exchange he assassinate a high ranking government official in Germany close to Hitler, the one who is in charge of mobilizing Hitler's new army. No one took Hitler seriously as a leader, but this guy was considered a threat. The hit man, Paul, was of course privately funded since technically our government couldn't be involved in such a plight and the Olympics was a perfect to carry out the deed since so many foreigners would be in Germany for the games. The story is cat and mouse. When Paul starts discovering the real truth of the magnitude of Hitler's plan and insanity it becomes less of a job to do and more of a moral mission. The threat of him being discovered or being reported to SS is ever present and it seems very few people are trustworthy, and there are a few he has to trust to give him the information he needs and the arms to carry out the deed. There are so many things going on with all the characters in this story is intriguing. The characters are so well developed and intensely passionate either for or against what Hitler is doing in their country that we see a different side of Germany and how so many people were fooled into believing that Hitler was a messiah, not the crazed loon that he actually was. At this point in Germany, there were still plenty of people who knew him for he was, but the slow seduction of the people was already in place, and Hitler controlled the children. You imprint a certain system ideology to the kids and teach in school what you want them to know

and you have their loyalty, regardless of how the parents feel. It was in this way that Hitler was able to rise to power, by reaching the children first. Paul is appalled by what he sees and now what was a job has become a personal mission.

I highly recommend this book. It is still in the thriller genre but NOT what you would expect from Deaver. I was pleasantly surprised. To say it once again, I believe this is Deaver's best work.

Huaerzeng Suobao says

Garden of Beasts by Jeffery Deaver is an extremely thrilling read. Originally, I was searching the shelves at my local library for Chalice of Blood by Peter Tremayne, when at the corner of my eye, I see a book with a small swastika logo. Interested, I gravitate towards the book and read the summary. The book is about a "button-man" named Paul. I like how Deaver uses a slang to a hit-man. It gives a lighter tone to a dark occupation. Paul only assassinates other mobsters, all while claiming he's merely "correcting God's mistakes." While on the surface Paul's mentality may seem excusable, heroic even. This ideology brings up the question, "what gives you the right to choose who dies and who lives?" This type of "righteous" killing and brilliant tactics piques the interest of the government, and they ask Paul to become a covert agent, infiltrate Germany as a sports writer for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and "touch off" (kill) one of Germany's and Hitler's most important man. If he accepts, Paul will be pardoned and get the financial means to restore his life. If he refuses, his fate will be the electric chair.

With such an intense summary, I knew the book would be good, but the thrilling rush of adrenaline I got while reading the book was amazing. Deaver creates a vivid cat-and-mouse chase between Paul, the man he's to kill and a detective that realizes Paul's true motives in Germany.

Nancy says

This was an interesting novel set in Berlin during the 1936 Olympics. Paul Schumann was a "button man" for the mob. The Feds gave him a choice of prison or going to Germany to assassinate the key official in rearming the German military. Paul was chosen because he spoke fluent German, was a meticulous planner, intelligent, and interestingly enough, an avid reader (the Feds thought this was a key factor in determining his intellectual capacity).

Schumann travels to the Olympics with the US Olympic team under the cover of a sportswriter. He is boxer and is fortunately, very knowledgeable about sports. His mission in Berlin is compromised from the beginning and nothing is what it seems. Being fluent in the German language does not make him blend into Berlin like a native. A murder during his attempt to make contact with an American agent has Schumann being hunted relentlessly by an German police detective and the Gestapo while trying to accomplish his objective. There were many twists and turns in the plot and it keep you interested to the last page.

Although this is a work of fiction, it is believable. I enjoyed the characters - many were interesting because of their quirks.

Jaksen says

Great book. Great read. Worth the time. Set in 1936 Germany, as that nation prepares for war, (though pretending not to be), and against the backdrop of the Olympics, there are references throughout which are true to the events of the period. The MC is great, not perfect, but very likeable, and the cast of characters around him are realistic, non-stereotypic, and range from good people trying to live through horrific times to the truly sadistic, many of whom rose to power. There are plot twists; action; great descriptions; a love story; and insight into what drove the men who drove Germany to such a twisted and evil climax that it all had to come crumbling down. But of course, a lot of that's in the future, the 'stuff' we readers know that Paul Schumann, MC, and those around him do not.

I love Jeffery Deaver's books. I need to read more of them. He is def. going on my list.

Charles says

This was my first Deaver book and I found it to be a compelling read, perhaps because of my special interest in the events surrounding WW II. Paul Shuman is an American hit man recruited by a group hoping to derail German military preparations for war despite the limitations imposed on Germany after WW I by the Versailles Treaty. Sent to Germany under the cover of the American Olympic delegation, he is charged with assassinating the mastermind of the German rearmament. After arriving in Germany just prior to the opening of the 1936 Olympics, Shuman encounters a series of mishaps, including the assassination of his undercover contact and being pursued by both the Gestapo and the German civil police. The plot takes numerous twists and turns before a surprising final twist when all seems about to be lost. The author succeeds in creating fascinating characters and provides thoughtful insights into their thoughts and perspectives thorough a chaotic and historic period in Germany and the world. I look forward to sampling other books from this author.

Abe says

A good story. The setting is Germany in 1936. Although a work of fiction, the author provides good insight about living conditions during Hitler's rise to power. The story is full of intrigue and keeps the pages turning. I highly recommend it.

Karen says

This stand alone novel is quite different from the other Deaver I have read. Set against the backdrop of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, an American mob hit man is hired to "eliminate" someone in Hitler's inner circle. But there is a complicating "accidental" murder. One of the few remaining honest, hard working German detectives who has not bought into Nazism, is assigned to that case, and finds himself possibly in out of his depth. Meanwhile, the sympathetic hit man is having his own misadventures. Who may be connected to whom? Read it and find out!

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

Under the cover of the 1936 Olympics mobster hitman Paul Schumann is targeting Reinhard Ernst, a key figure in the rearmament of Germany. Taunt and filled with historical 'snap shots' this book will appeal to both fans of historical fiction and WW II 'what-ifers.'
