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Detroit:

Sharon Vanelli's affair with Joey Palermo, a Mafia enforcer, is about to be discovered by her husband, Ray, a secret service agent.

Brilliantly plotted and shot through with wry humor, ALL HE SAW WAS THE GIRL sees these two narratives collide in the backstreets of Italy's oldest city.

All He Saw Was The Girl Details

Date : Published May 15th 2012 by Story Plant, The (first published January 2011)

ISBN : 9781611880427

Author : Peter Leonard

Format : Paperback 290 pages

Genre : Thriller, Mystery, Crime, Fiction

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From Reader Review All He Saw Was The Girl for online ebook

Ron says

Not my kind of book. A contemporary guy adventure story. Several guys with converging plot lines. Guys take improbable changes, enjoy improbable luck, objectify women. (Yes, there is a well-drawn female character, but the male characters *react* to females in their vicinity like teenagers with raging hormones.) In fact, all the male characters act like adolescents: as soon as a course of action pops into their mind, they do it. No consideration of potential downside results. Of course, it works out for the "good guys." It was all too easy for everyone.

What's to like? Excellent writing. Leonard told the story from a variety of points of view. The reader immediately knew what kind of person each character was, far better than if Leonard had merely told us.

Set mostly in Rome, each character movement is described in such excruciating detail that the reader gets the feeling of it having been written map in hand. There was some place description, but more often bare facts, as if the reader is expected to know what all the famous buildings mentioned look like today.

It was only okay.

Sharon says

A very exciting book with lots of villains, which takes place in modern Rome.. The book also contains many facts about Rome and its history. Some of the characters do border on the unbelievable, however.

Lauren (Northern Plunder) says

This review was first posted on Northern Plunder, if you want to see more reviews please click here.

I first received this book two years ago, it was the first book I ever agreed to review as part of a book tour and I felt terrible that I just couldn't get into it that I promised I'd give it ago at a later date.

Well this year was the later date and yet again it just didn't grip me, back then I should've known I wouldn't finish it even after time had passed but I also was very stubborn and refused to acknowledge "did not finish" could be a thing.

The reason I agreed to this tour was because I was still very much in love with Rome, I always will be, I had a great time being there and I wanted to read a book set there to see how they'd portray the two cities and whether they'd connect.

After reading two chapters and then finding myself skimming the words I realised I just couldn't do it, nothing grabbed my attention and hooked me, it was simply a chore.

I've seen the book have some good reviews and I'm upset that I didn't get to see this part of the book, but alas

I just couldn't connect.

Jim Crocker says

It's a fast read and a good read, too! I like everything Peter Leonard writes. Yeah, he had a great teacher and he writes about Detroit, too. I lived in old Detroit (before the fire) and I knew a few people.

When you read this novel you're gonna get hungry. These people are always eating. And when they do, they take you through the entire meal, all the way to the cappuccino. So be ready for that. And it's the kinda story you can't put down.

Robert Carraher says

That rule is from Elmore Leonard's New York Times article, "Easy on the Adverbs, Exclamation Points and Especially Hooptedoodle". His son, Peter certainly had memorized that rule, along with the rest, in writing this marvelous novel. The prose are terse, hard-bitten and to the point. When a story opens with the protagonist in jail, well, it's got to be dark and hardboiled. And true to the Leonard name, its slapstick-caper-with-great-dialogue in vintage.

When American college buddies, the rich and arrogant Chip Tallenger and William McCabe, the son of a working class Detroit family, end up in an Italian jail after a night of drunken revelry that ends in Chip stealing a taxi they are on a collision course with disaster.

In jail, the pair meet an Italian street thug with delusions of grandeur. Roberto Mazara tries to strong arm Chip who looks like an easy mark in his \$400 Cole Haan boots, but McCabe steps up and puts Mazara in his place and on his butt.

When Chip and McCabe are "bought" out of jail by Chip's wealthy U.S. Senator father Chip puts the blame for the taxi fiasco on McCabe, even though he was responsible for the shenanigans. McCabe doesn't correct him and takes the heat from Charles Tallenger II. The story makes the local papers - U.S. Senators Son is Acquitted of Stealing Taxi - but the names were switched under the photos. When Mazara breaks out he hatches a plot for revenge for the loss of face. Italians are nothing if not bubbling over with machismo. He is going to kidnap McCabe, mistaking him for the son of the senator and he uses his beautiful girlfriend to insure that All He Saw Was The Girl. The senator ransoms McCabe, thinking it's Chip the gangsters have and because Chip is off to the beach no one is the wiser.

But McCabe decides to turn the tables on Mazara and get back the ransom money. He kidnaps Mazara's girlfriend, Angela who just happens to be the godfather of all mafia godfathers, Don Gennaro's only child.

Switching scenes to Detroit, Joey Palermo, another spoiled rich kid, the son of a local mafia lieutenant meets Sharon, an older bored wife of a too often out of town U.S. Secret Service agent. A one night stand is one thing, but when Joey falls for her and wants to marry her, it's crossing the line as the mafia doesn't need this kind of heat. When Sharon's husband, Ray, melts down on the job and walks away from his career, he returns to Detroit in the hopes of patching up his marriage. But, when he finds Sharon is gone he sets out to

find her, which of course leads him to Joey.

But Joey has been spirited out of the country until things cool down and is now in Italy with his uncle Don Gennaro.

It's not hard to shine in a field where your father is the master. None of the Hemingway's, though they could write competently, could live up to the standards of Papa. Bob Dylan's son is a fine musician, but not on a level with Bob, same with John Lennon's offspring. But Peter Leonard is proving the exception in his books. *In All He Saw Was The Girl* - his third - he tells a darkly humorous tale with great dialog and narrative. Lean, mean and as tightly wrapped as the characters that inhabit it.

He resists the urge to wax poetic in his descriptions of Rome and the Italian countryside, perhaps remembering Rule 9 in his father's essay : "Don't go into great detail describing places and things." Nevertheless, letting those details come forth in dialog and thoughts of the characters and the natural flow of the story. He conveys a sense of place while avoiding a travelogue style which works wonderfully. The characters, too, jump memorably from the page full of life and foibles.

The story is based on an incident from the author's life while he was a student in Italy in the '70s and that experience allows him to paint a masterpiece of fiction that can only be called Leonard-esque now that it is in its second generation of bearing fruit. The plot motors along like a sports car cruising down the Italian coast and never misses a twist or a turn. But there's bound to be a collection when this many egos get involved and the reader will enjoy the ride and the crash. Peter Leonard is in full stride with this, his third book and the future shines with a noirish light. This is "don't miss" crime fiction at its very best.

Title : All He Saw Was The Girl - Publisher : The Story Plant - Pub Date : June 05, 2012 – ISBN : 978161188042

Article first published as Book Review: All He Saw Was The Girl by Peter Leonard on Blogcritics.

The Dirty Lowdown

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

This was an unexpected hit for me. After a slow start -- in which I kept picking up and putting this one down -- around page 80 I suddenly got sucked in, and I found Leonard wasn't doing a standard double cross crime tale.

Initially confusing -- there's about three story lines that eventually come together -- I got hooked by Leonard's breezy writing style and slightly sarcastic style. Quip-y action flick, all popcorn and soda, this was a perfect beach read.

Charles 'Chip' Tallenger III, spoiled son of a US senator, and his roommate William McCabe, scholarship student from Detroit, are doing a semester abroad in Rome. When Chip steals a taxi and crashes it, he and McCabe are arrested and bailed out by Chip's father. Local newspapers misidentify them in a photograph, and low-level Mafia thugs decide to kidnap who they believe to be the senator's son for some quick cash. Back in Detroit, Sharon Vanelli, married to a Secret Service agent, starts an affair with 'Swingin' Joey Palermo, a Mafia thug who, needless to say, is stunned when he discovers Sharon's federal connections. These twists occur early on in the book and I thought I knew where the story was headed, but Leonard pleasantly surprised me. There's some double crossing, and poor life choice decision making, some thrilling chases and shudder-inducing fight scenes. Throughout it all is a kind of sardonic humor, no one quite black-and-white, but amusingly gray, and once the story clicked for me, I found myself racing through this one.

And oh, the ending. It's so ludicrous and odd, but darkly hilarious, and I ate it up. A super satisfying, sugar-buzz of a read.

Susan says

Sorry guys, This one was not for me.

Katy says

Disclosure: I received a free eGalley eBook ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Synopsis: Rome: McCabe and Chip, two American exchange students, are about to become embroiled with a violent street gang, a beautiful Italian girl, and a flawed kidnapping plan.

Detroit: Sharon Vanelli's affair with Joey Palermo, a Mafia enforcer, is about to be discovered by her husband, Ray, a secret service agent.

Brilliantly plotted and shot through with wry humor, *All He Saw was the Girl* sees these two narratives collide in the backstreets of Italy's oldest city.

My Thoughts: This is my second Peter Leonard book - I recently read *Voices of the Dead* and my review for that one can be read here: *Voices of the Dead* .

This was a very complex thriller, lots of threads and different people involved. It actually reminded me strongly of the sorts of books written by Nick Wastnage. His stories are similarly complex and have a similar flavor, so if you like this one, you will love anything by Nick, and vice versa – if you like Nick Wastnage's stuff, you'll like Peter Leonard.

The fun thing about crime thrillers, at least with a well-written one, is that you often find the villains as entertaining and interesting as the heroes, and that is certainly the case here. However, as complex and fast-moving as this book was, I often found my attention drifting – for some reason, which I just can't put my finger on, I was unable to really get into this book. There is nothing technically wrong with it, but it just didn't hold my attention as well as I felt it should have. Fans of Peter Leonard, thrillers and suspense, and people who enjoy stories involving the mafia should all find this a satisfying read.

Jo Linsdell says

Rome: McCabe and Chip, two American exchange students, are about to become embroiled with a violent street gang, a beautiful Italian girl and a flawed kidnapping plan.

Detroit: Sharon Vanelli's affair with Joey Palermo, a Mafia enforcer, is about to be discovered by her husband, Ray, a secret service agent.

All He Saw Was the Girl takes place as these two narratives converge in the backstreets of Italy's oldest city.

Peter Leonard throws you straight into the action in this book and keeps the story fast passed until the end. He describes the settings well and you soon find yourself taken along with the characters.

As an English person living in Rome I could really identify with the speech patterns of the Italian characters and his detailed descriptions of the setting.

All He Saw Was The Girl is a quick but interesting read. I'm definitely now curious about reading the other work by this author.

Alan Mills says

The concept was good, but the characters fell flat.

There are two basic plots here, both of which have great potential: First, the wife of a secret service agent is feeling abandoned and has an affair, with someone who turns out to be mob connected. Second, two college kids doing a semester abroad in Rome get drunk, arrested, and meet some mob connected people in jail. Leonard does a nice job of building these two plots into a compelling narrative. So far, so good.

The problem is that not a single character has any depth. They are all cartoon characters, playing a stock role: mob boss, mob boss's arrogant, no talent kid, Senator's frat boy son, beautiful woman who is a criminal's girlfriend (there are actually two characters who play this exact same role), an alcoholic law enforcement type who just needs a challenging case to save him, and a working class sidekick to the Senator's wastrel son who has amazing unrecognized talents.

All of these stock characters are here, and not ONE of them is given a meaningful backstory, or any personality that would flesh them out as actual human beings. Rather, they are just allowed to play their assigned roles.

Bottom line: the narrative is compelling enough to keep you turning the pages, but in the end, there is no substance.

Rachel French says

This novel is a great mixture of love, action, and culture. The way the author jumps from one person's perspective to the next is exciting and allows the reader to know more about the story than the characters do. Beginning with drunk college guys crashing a taxi and heading for jail, All He Saw Was The Girl takes the reader on a thrill ride through kidnapping attempts, love affairs, and the inner workings of the Italian mafia. The reader learns of the strange ways lives can become tangled together with each other.

A wild emotional rollercoaster allows the reader to hate a character then in the next chapter love that character and even later hate them again. I caught myself hating Angela ("the girl" he saw), then feeling sorry for her tragic childhood and bad relationship with her father (the mafia don), and then loving her for loving McCabe (the "he" who saw her).

I would recommend this book over and over again to find adventure with a Secret Service agent, love with a beautiful Italian, and humor in the sarcasm of a born-and-raised Detroit boy.

Sherry Fundin says

McCabe and Chip, a senator's son are going to school in Rome. Chip steals a taxi and they are arrested. The Senator greases some palms and they are released.

As McCabe sits at the cafe waiting to meet up with Chip and some friends, he sees "the girl". She encourages him to walk with her and when they meet up with "Fabio", who is a tough guy Mafia man he met in prison, McCabe realizes she has set him up to be kidnapped. They have mistaken him for Chip because of a mix-up in the newspapers. They had printed Chip's name under McCabe's picture.

Meanwhile, in Detroit, Sharon Vanelli is lonely and bored in her marriage to Ray, a Secret Service agent. While she's sitting in the bar she is approached by Joey Paterno, a Mafia enforcer. As the affair progresses to a level she's not sure she wants it to reach, she wonders what would happen if Ray found out.

I won this book in a giveaway on Goodreads. Imagine my surprise when I realized that I have also checked his books out of the library before.

In the beginning of the book you wonder how what is happening in Rome has anything to do with what is going on in Detroit. Does the title, All He Saw Was the Girl, have anything at all to do with the book. Don't worry, just keep reading because it all comes together.

I'd stop as I was reading along and think, "Hey wait a minute. What happens next?" It kept me reading because I had to know.

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Eero says

Converging storylines

At first I didn't appreciate the structure: the narrative jumped from one storyline to another, seemingly

disconnected one. The connection did eventually emerge in a degrees of separation kind of way. One storyline involves an American art history student in Italy who gets mistakenly kidnapped for ransom but turns out to be a kind of badass action hero (well, McCabe is kind of an action hero name). Also, he is the one who sees the girl of the title. In another plotline Ray Pope, a newly resigned Secret Service agent is searching for his missing wife who had an affair with an American mobster. The two characters meet only briefly during a gunfight at the Spanish steps in Rome, but the stories are connected.

The author uses a wry laconic tough guy prose not unlike that of his father. There is plenty of detail about Italy, art and history sprinkled in the dialogue.

I ended up enjoying the book.

Brian Blocker says

Disclaimer: I did not pay for this book. I received a free copy to review for a magazine which will remain nameless. I have no vendetta against Peter Leonard. I'm sure he is a nice man and I wish him all the success in the world. This is just my honest review.

I asked for this book for the same reason a lot of you discovered Peter Leonard. His dad is Elmore Leonard, a novelist and writer of the story 'Fire in the Hole', which became the basis for 'Justified', one of the best shows on TV. When I saw the list of books I could get for free, I did quick searches and when I found out who Peter's dad was, I jumped on it. Surely, the apple can't fall that far from the tree.

The story started out great. Two college friends, studying in Rome, get drunk, steal a taxi, and get arrested. One of the students' dad is a rich senator, so he pulls some strings and gets them out. Their picture is taken and put in the paper, which mixes their names up, so when a group of thugs want to kidnap the son of a wealthy American for ransom purposes, they abduct the wrong one. So far so good. After the ransom is paid and he is set free, he decides that he wants the money back (that wasn't his) so he tracks down the hot girl that tricked him and kidnaps her and holds her for ransom. Did I mention that she was the local mafia don's daughter? He didn't know that yet. So he kidnaps her, and it is obvious that they're going to start fooling around and fall in love, which is what happens. The other characters are Joey, an American relative of the don, Sharon, Joey's girlfriend, and Ray, a disgraced Secret Service agent and Sharon's husband.

Early on, I could tell that these separate narratives were going to end up together and be awesome, so I kept reading. The reading was the hard part, because Leonard put so many Italian street names and landmarks in his writing that by the time you reached the end of a paragraph, you forgot what he was trying to say. It's like he wrote this specifically for American expatriates living in Rome. Editors have a rule they like their writers to follow: No info dumps. It's okay to talk about how old something is or some unique aspect of a building as long as that building plays into the story or tells me something about a character. Leonard clogged paragraphs with details that only contributed to a higher word count. One particular sentence has the following points of interest: Corso Vittoria Emanuele, Pantheon, Fontana del Moro, and Piazza Navona. And that was a short sentence. There are hundreds like this, so much that when trying to mentally follow someone's route through the city, I skipped ahead three paragraphs and didn't miss a beat. He acts like more of a tour guide than a writer at points, so much that I told my wife, "I bet this guy used to live in Italy." A quick Google search told me I was correct.

The constant listing of things continues with everything. Leonard lists everything the character packs in his suitcase and everything each character eats, drinks, and wears. Even if it's not important to the story. He describes the main character's love interest, Angela, as looking like Manuela Arcuri. Don't know who she is? I don't either, probably because I don't keep up with Italian soaps. That reference would make sense if he was an Italian writer whose book was translated into English, but instead it leaves the reader searching the

web for a picture.

Another problem I had with this book, which is a major pet peeve of mine, is using brand names. Some brand names are iconic enough to make a statement. Having a foreigner offer an American a cigarette and having the American say "I only smoke Marlboros," tells me something about that particular character. Drinking Jack Daniels, driving a Ferrari, riding a Harley, you get the idea. If someone drives a Prius, you automatically assume something about that character, though you can say it was a hybrid and get the same effect without name dropping. See what I mean? So having a kid pay for dinner, then telling me it was a Visa, does nothing for anyone! I don't care what kind of bottled water the Secret Service guy drinks, or what kind of scooters clog up the roads, or the name brand on the gym bag used to hold the ransom money, or the brand of the lighter used to light a particular cigar. None of it matters. I know the rich mafia dude has money, because you already told me about his house and boat, so telling me what luxury car he drives feels like wasting my time, because I already assumed it was nice. This is a selection from chapter ten: Costco, US Bank, Visa, DTE Energy, Honda, Verizon, People, Rolling Stone, Vibe, Scene, Murder Dog, SKBK Sotheby's, and TruGreen. I imagined him sitting behind his laptop wearing an outfit like NASCAR drivers wear, with sponsorship logos everywhere. Does saying Visa instead of 'credit card bill' make it better? Back to the story. As the tension builds, and all the parties are about to collide in some park somewhere that Leonard mentions by name but doesn't matter to anyone, and you know it's about to get real. Everyone is armed except the guy facing down the mafia. The secret service dude is there, and so is the guy that's having sex with his wife. Here comes the epic-ness that will make all of the clutter worth it. Pssssshf. That was the sound of the air being let out of my balloon. When the moment comes, the cops show up and arrest the bad guys, and then the mob guy gets arrested for having a gun in a train station. I think maybe one person got shot. Then the kid gets the money he was after (that wasn't his to start with). That's it. Honestly, I think that if he left out the info dumps and the name brands, this would barely be a novella. He had the beginnings of a good story, but it felt like in the end he was trying too hard.

Viviane Crystal says

Two college students, McCabe and Chip, are students out on the town who've had a wee bit too much to drink. Chip gets the bright idea to steal an Italian taxi and enjoy a joy ride. But things don't turn out so well for McCabe. Chip's very wealthy and powerful father saves the day by rescuing his son and giving him one tongue lashing. He does succeed, however, in infuriating some mob characters in prison over a pack of stolen cigarettes. McCabe, meanwhile, is warned by the College Dean that he will be dismissed if there are anymore unruly and troubling antics, a threat that would mean the end of his scholarship.

It seems the mob characters have bad memories and decide that kidnapping Chip, getting some knocks back, and demanding ransom money will even the scales of justice. The only problem is that they mistake McCabe for Chip and kidnap the wrong victim. Now the hunt is on to save McCabe (and his scholarship), who has been sucked into the scheme by a very sexy lady.

The scene just as quickly shifts to Detroit, the home of the mob characters holding McCabe. It seems the husband of our sexy gal has quit the Secret Service and is looking for his absent wife. He's got some competition, though, from the mob boss. To say more would ruin the story but it's non-stop action, truth, lies, battles, death threats, and high-stake scenes that keep one flipping the pages (or buttons in e-book form) and unable to figure out how it will all come down in the end.

Peter Leonard definitely knows how to craft and pace an international and domestic crime thriller. This second novel read by this reviewer is just as thrilling as the first. Readers who want to get engrossed in a

fast-paced, unpredictable story will love this novel!!!
