



The White Van

Patrick Hoffman

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At a dive bar in San Francisco's edgy Tenderloin district, drug-hustling Emily Rosario is drinking whiskey and looking for an escape from her desperate lifestyle. When she is approached by a Russian businessman, she thinks she might have found her exit. A week later—drugged, disoriented and wanted for robbery—Emily finds herself on the run for her life.

When cop Leo Elias—broke, alcoholic and desperate—hears about an unsolved bank robbery, the stolen money proves too strong a temptation. Elias takes the case into his own hands, hoping to find Emily and the money before anyone else does.

A sharply drawn cast of characters—dirty cops, Russian drug dealers, Chinese black-market traders, street smart Cambodians, and shady entrepreneurs—all take part in this terrifying tour through San Francisco's underbelly. Confronted with the intimate details of characters that blur the line between good and evil, and twists that surprise until the end, readers of THE WHITE VAN will find their own moral code challenged by the desperate decisions the characters are forced to make.

The White Van Details

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Author : Patrick Hoffman

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From Reader Review The White Van for online ebook

James Thane says

This is a very dark debut novel featuring druggies, loan sharks, Russian gangsters, bank robbers and crooked cops, all fighting desperately for turf on the very mean streets of contemporary San Francisco.

Emily Rosario is a lost soul who relies on booze and drugs to make it from one day to the next. One evening, she meets a Russian man in a seedy bar called the Kum Bak Club. After a few drinks, she accompanies him to a hotel for more booze and drugs, but once there, the Russian and his accomplices keep her drugged to the point of incoherence, paying her two hundred dollars a day for her help in what they insist will be an identity theft scheme.

Emily is so totally blitzed that she goes along for the ride, thinking of what she might do with her promised end of the money. Then one day she's loaded into a white van and sent into a bank, only to discover that she's been conned into what is really a bank robbery.

At that point, as it usually does in a noir novel like this, the excrement hits the proverbial fan and Emily finds herself on the run, trying to stay one step ahead of the Russians and the cops all of whom are searching for her desperately. In particular, a troubled cop who's deeply in debt named Leo Elias, sees a chance to grab the money from the bank for himself and solve all of his financial problems.

What results is a wild ride where anything can happen to anyone and everyone. Patrick Hoffman has created a number of interesting characters and placed them into motion against a very well-rendered depiction of San Francisco. There are any number of twists and turns that the reader will not see coming and in the end, it's a very satisfying book that fits brilliantly into the noir tradition.

L.A. Starks says

A compact thriller set among San Francisco's Russian mafia with original, well-considered characters. Definitely worth a read!

jo says

i won this as a **goodreads giveaway** during the great reading drought of 2015, when i couldn't read books and i could satisfy my need for reading only by listening to them. it was a fallow time for me but i thank the divinities that came up with audiobooks cuz they saved me. problem is, since i didn't read or review this, **i never got another giveaway again!!!!** at least this, i tell myself, is the reason.

in any case, i finally read it! and it's great! great fun, some implausibility that could have been fixed but who cares, and the second part is breathtaking. well the whole thing is breathtaking. some people here say it's dark and violent, but my tolerance for dark and violent must have gone way way up cuz i read it with great

pleasure and on more than one occasion i laughed a lot. and i loved the language. really cool language.

you will wonder all along *how will hoffman pull off a convincing end?* and the way he does is brilliant and fun and super cool.

Beth Sammons says

Intrigued by the authors background, I gave this book a read. The characters were gritty, and I am sure found in the seedy section of any city. I don't really understand drug addiction but Emily's character development shows the path to destruction. I must say I enjoyed Sophia's late character development, if it would have happened earlier in book I would have been sympathetic to her. I was not expecting a happy ending so it had a surprise ending.

Aengus says

"The White Van" is a dark, dark noir set in the underbelly of San Francisco. If it were a self help book, it would be titled "When Bad Things Happen to Stupid People." A dimwitted drug addict, an alcoholic cop, and a Russian businessmen all get themselves mixed up in a failed bank robbery. Before you can say "Let a thousand bad ideas blossom!", the bodies start dropping. While these losers make cringeworthy choices, Hoffman never lets the reader lose sight of his characters' humanity. The plot continually ratchets up the tension. Hoffman (a former P.I. in San Francisco) knows his seedy spots. So instead of Golden Gate Park and Coit Tower, we get McLaren Park, San Bruno, Airport Blvd, and Minna St., all dreary havens of the underclass. Nice for a change.

Peter says

Patrick Hoffman's 2014 short novel *The White Van* has one of the best beginnings I've read in the crime thriller genre, and the snappy pace continues throughout the novel. This is a good one!

Emily Rosario is an alcoholic and a drug addict. She is picked up in a San Francisco bar by a Russian named Benya, and she spends several days heavily sedated in a motel room as Benya and Sophia, his partner, prep her for some "simple identity theft" work. It turns out that Benya owes a huge chunk of cash to the Russian mafia and that Sophia had bought his note. To get the cash, Benya and Sophia plan a heist in which Sophia's niece, the innocent Rada, is forced to assist.

The plan goes awry and drugged-out Emily wanders away with \$800,000 in cash. Knowing that the Russians will insist on a successful outcome, Benya and Sophia search for Emily. Now enter Leo Elias, an alcoholic SFPD detective, and his rookie partner, Sam Trammel. Elias is not assigned to the case, but he likes the idea of intercepting the cash; as he tells Sam "it is ours." Apparently, property rights in New York are a confusing concept.

So begin separate searches for Emily and the missing loot: one by the Russians, Benya, and Sophia; the other

by Elias and Trammell. As will happen when a drunk decides to strike it rich, unexpected things happen in Elias's search for ill-gotten gains. Will Emily be found? Who will benefit? Who will suffer? Perhaps the only good news is that criminals are so prominent at the low-IQ strata, but the bad news is that the police are also well below Mensa eligibility.

Oh, and we get sound advice on what to steal and what not to steal: "don't steal what you can't sell, and don't steal from anyone who would enjoy cutting your hand off." Words to the wise!

Four stars!

Reyhan says

While admittedly biased, I read an early draft of this book and thought it was great. It's only gotten better since. Literary crime is hard to pull off, but "The White Van" delivers (sorry.)

Joanne says

I'm not sure where all the rave reviews are coming from for this book. There were few redeeming features: not a single sympathetic character (except maybe poor Rada), too many plot lines moving too quickly, and a truly unlikely final denouement. I did like the descriptions of the ugly side of San Francisco; they were an interesting contrast to the mostly romantic images usually portrayed in any book set in that city.

Raven says

Knowing my penchant for edgy American crime fiction, *The White Van* from debut novelist Patrick Hoffman, delivered in spades. With what appears to be an incredibly simple premise for a story, the power of Hoffman's incredibly understated prose, and the natural fluidity and ramping up of the tension, heralds a striking new voice in the genre. I am confident enough to compare Hoffman to another of my favourite authors Denis Johnson, in terms of the pared-down style. Like Johnson, the rendition of violence when it occurs is rapid and brutal, entirely reflective of the burgeoning intensity of the story.

From its 'what-the-hell-is-going-on' opening, I was utterly hooked from the outset, and immediately immersed in Emily's world sharing her confusion and fear at the situation she finds herself in. The build-up to her involvement in a bank robbery is brilliantly formulated, and likewise her attempts to extricate herself from the clutches of the Russian gang that have used her effectively as an unwitting pawn in their crime. She is a curious mix of vulnerability, underscored by a steely determination to both conquer and profit from the situation she finds herself in. Equally, Hoffman's cast iron characterisation of the burnt out cop, Leo Elias, down on his luck, in debt to his eyeballs with an imploding marriage, gave a real solidity to the storyline overall. As Elias becomes enmeshed in a maelstrom of problems, and his natural greed kicks in, his unrelenting pursuit of Emily and her cohorts adds a further intense momentum to the plot. This is further strengthened by the changing parameters of Elias' professional relationship with his police partner, Trammell, which can only be destructive as Elias goes into free fall.

Hoffman's depiction of the Tenderloin district of San Francisco also works terrifically well, as the down at heel, sordid and dangerous backdrop to this violent tale, easily assuming a character of its own. It's brilliantly done, and overall a debut that I cannot recommend highly enough.

Alyson Larrabee says

I won this book from a Goodreads Giveaway, started reading it and had a reverse reaction. Usually there's a clear hero and as I discover his or her failings I find the character more relatable and begin to care about what happens to him or her. All of the characters portrayed in Hoffman's debut novel enter the plot as total lowlives. I wasn't sure I'd ever care what happened to any of them. Then slowly, a couple of them emerged as victims and I like rooting for the underdog. Soon one or two managed to display some ingenuity and bravery and then the plot picked up speed and I was turning those pages faster than the alcoholic cop called Plastic Face could pound down Gatorade bottles filled with wine. I hated to see it end. I'm looking forward to Patrick Hoffman's next novel.

Darren McGill says

A quick and easy read that is certainly not light-hearted in tone. This crime novel delivers in its exacting perversity. All of the characters have despicable characteristics that fascinated me as a voyeuristic readers. Drug dealers, murderers, mob bosses, liars, cheaters, etc. The plot meanders in surprising ways and could possibly become too much to handle, but I was only amused. The narrative changes between characters as the book progresses which only added to my enjoyment. It's not a book that I loved or would want to read over and over, but I did enjoy reading it.

Catherine says

This is another awesome Goodreads First Reads win. It was an awesome book, I couldn't put it down and read the whole thing in less than two(2) days. I loved the story plot, and I liked how it was written. I was really surprised with the ending, though....definitely a great little twist there! I loved it, and my 20 year old daughter is reading it now.

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

<http://www.mybookishways.com/2014/10/...>

Emily Rosario is 31 years old, and addicted to crack. When she meets a Russian man in a bar and he invites her back to his hotel, ostensibly to take drugs, she goes with him. It isn't smart and she knows it isn't, but her habit won't let her say no. Soon she realizes drugs aren't the only thing on the menu. After days of being dosed with crack and various other drugs by the Russian, an old woman who calls herself Sophia, and a man named Georgy, she's put in disguise, a bomb is handcuffed to her hand, and she's sent by her captors into a San Francisco bank to rob it.

But...Emily does the unexpected. Her kidnappers thought they'd done everything right, so when Emily leaves the bank, with almost \$900,000 in tow, there in shock when, instead of getting in the white van that took her there, she runs, and keeps running.

Meanwhile, SFPD cop Leo Elias is falling apart. He's an alcoholic, he's on the verge of losing his house and his marriage, and he envies everything about his rookie partner, Sam Trammell, from his age to his looks. Everyone from the street kids that he interacts with each day to his fellow cops call him "Plastic Face" for the mask of fake toughness that he dons so effectively. He has no idea when or how his life started going off the rails, when this feeling of desperateness started leaking in, but his breaking point is near. He can feel it. When he hears of the bank heist, and the amount of money stolen, he resolves to find it, and take it for himself. That will solve all of his problems, right?

It's very easy to slot each of these characters into stereotypes: an irresponsible addict, a crooked cop, etc, but Hoffman never lets that happen. Emily is complex and very, very tough and resourceful. She longs for a better life, even as her addiction drives many of her actions. Elias is very, very unsympathetic at first, but strangely, as he gets deeper and deeper into trouble, even if you can't condone his actions, you can see how someone so desperate can go so low. The Russian that first lures Emily back to the hotel carries an undeniable undercurrent of sadness and futility. It's very evident he doesn't want to do this horrible thing, but later you find out why he does. Even Sophia, who looks like everyone's sweet grandma, yet casually talks about cutting off body parts, isn't completely without a soul.

There's no pure black and white in this book, and Hoffman presents his players, and their actions, in spare prose that somehow maximizes some of the inevitable tragedy that befalls them. Lest you think it's all doom and gloom, you may be surprised. There's light here, and it's quickly apparent that it lies in the broken, yet hopeful Emily.

You'll want to set aside a few hours for this noir gem. It's a quick, gritty, unputdownable book, and you'll probably finish it in one sitting. Crime lovers won't want to miss this one.

K says

Wow! This was a terrific book that actually meets the definition of a "page turner." I can't understand how the ratings are not higher (it's close to a 4.5 I think).

This is Patrick Hoffman's first novel, and I believe he's got a bright future as a writer. His characters are gritty, wholly unlikeable, and so well drawn one can almost smell their foul breath. And yet, I found myself engrossed, expectantly waiting for each of their fates to be revealed page by page.

This is a brief book at 240 pages and things move along so quickly that you'll be through before you know it. I sure hope the author focuses himself more on writing and less on his regular job (private investigator), as I'd love to read more by him.

Don Gorman says

(3 1/2). This book wins my award for one of the craziest first chapters you will ever encounter. All of part one just gets you spinning. Total wildness. It sort of calms down from there into an exciting mystery/thriller.

Lots of bad guys, a sort of good girl and a story that is mostly off the rails. This short read is big fun, a weakfish ending made me mark it down to a solid three stars.
