



No Colder Place

S.J. Rozan

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Bill Smith is going undercover again as a favor to an old friend who wants him to investigate thievery on the 40-story Manhattan site of Crowell Construction's latest project.

His bricklaying is a little rusty, but passable as he checks out the foreman who's under suspicion. A crane operator has disappeared—along with some heavy machinery.

But when a well-orchestrated riot causes the foreman's “accidental” death, Smith plunges into a morass of bribery, blackmail and blood looking for answers.

With the help of his Chinese-American partner Lydia Chin, he follows a trail of twisted loyalties, old-fashioned greed and organized crime to its heart-stopping conclusion.

Murder—with no end in sight.

No Colder Place Details

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From Reader Review No Colder Place for online ebook

Katherine Clark says

I'm surprised to say that this is my second favorite of the series. This is a Bill Smith book, and I found this quite subtle, yet so lovely. I actually wrote that certain lines were elegiac. I think what I liked best is despite the confusion that the principle characters felt (which is the norm in private investigator books), I wasn't confused about how they were feeling or acting. The previous book was often messy , and I didn't enjoy that. This book had a greater sense of control. I liked it so much that I started the fifth book without typing up my notes for interview.

Hobart says

Rozan was able to tap into her day job here and use her knowledge of architecture, construction -- particularly the idiosyncratic way that construction is done in NYC. Bill, and the tune/atmosphere Rozan uses for his books, is able to be pensive, reflective, and almost poetic in thinking about the act of building. Lydia wouldn't be able to do that. This type of thing is a real advantage to switching POV characters the way Rozan does.

The series feels different when Bill is at the center, and I found myself liking it more this time than last. I feel bad for him as far as Lydia is concerned. When the novel is told from her perspective, there's something quixotic about his pursuit of her, and you can give a sympathetic chuckle when he tries. But from his point-of-view, it's just sad.

There is just so much unsaid about Bill. The retreat to the cabin. His piano playing. Why he won't move on from Lydia. Rozan's walking a fine line between having an enigmatic character and just withholding information. I do want to see and learn more about him, but I'm not feeling cheated (for now).

Anyway, I should focus on the case in this book. Again we have Bill going undercover (also again, thanks to someone from his murky past) -- with Lydia providing backup and support. This time on a construction site plagued by robberies, a disappearance -- and perhaps a little bookmaking or drug dealing. Naturally, it doesn't take long for things to get ugly and far messier than he'd expected. It's deftly told with the right amount of twists, turns, and danger. Plus interesting and compelling sporting characters, and not your everyday detective novel crimes.

Come to think about it, that's one of the best parts of this series -- the crimes they are hired to investigate are not your typical mystery novel fare. Yeah, things eventually return to the mainstays (murder, blackmail, etc), but they start in interesting places.

No Colder Place is worthy entry to this series, and I'm ready for the next one.

LJ says

NO COLDER PLACE - Ex

Rozan, S.J. - 4th Smith/Chin book

When a Manhattan construction site is plagued by an escalating series of thefts and misfortunes, the contractors suspect that they've been targeted by one of their own subcontractors' employees. Brought in to investigate, P.I. Bill Smith goes undercover on the site as a bricklayer - a profession he hasn't practiced for more than twenty-years - to try to uncover the truth about the suspect as well as the troubles on the job site. With his sometime-partner, Chinese-American P.I. Lydia Chin, working as his inside contact, Smith finds himself in the midst of a much more serious case - a case that has escalated from fraud to murder, one that could reach through layers of corruption into the very depths of the underworld.

1997 Top Read - Truly excellent; wonderful characters, great turn of phrase, strong sense of place. I love this series.

Stan says

Excellent murder/suspense tale that takes you into the world of construction, and more specifically into the world of masonry. That may not sound especially fascinating, but Rozan can make you feel what it's like to be standing on the scaffold slapping on mortar and setting bricks. In fact, the writing is at times strikingly beautiful, especially, it seems, when the author is anthropomorphizing weather:

"The sun had made it, splitting a heavy cloud over the Hudson and pouring out a deep yellow light that glowed triumphantly off every west-facing surface it found."

"I could see dark clouds massing on the Jersey side of the Hudson, jostling each other in place, hungrily eyeing Manhattan."

Rozan also creates characters, relationships, and dialogue that feel real and alive.

Highly recommended.

Spuddie says

#4 Lydia Chin/Bill Smith mystery set in New York City. This series is somewhat unique in that it alternates points of view every other book. This one is told from Bill's point of view. Both are private investigators with separate agencies who work together. Bill would like their relationship to be more than it is, and I think Lydia would as well, except that her family is traditional Chinese and her mother dislikes Bill--or the idea that any Caucasian would woo her daughter.

Bill is contacted by an old cop friend who now runs his own much larger and more sophisticated PI agency. A construction company boss has hired him to discover who's stealing from his company--and also if possible to find a worker who disappeared a few days ago, seemingly without a trace. They have an idea who the thief might be, but proving it and dismissing him without the Union raising a fuss is another matter--and as Joe Romeo is also suspected of being a bookie and possibly running other kinds of illegal activities on site, even trickier.

Bill goes undercover as a mason working with the company--not so far-fetched as he did construction work when he was younger. First day on the job, there is an 'accident' that puts one of Bill's co-workers in the hospital in a coma, and the second day, they dig up the body of the missing guy in an elevator pit that needed to be redone due to water seepage. The situation deteriorates from there, when Bill discovers (via Lydia,

whom the client has agreed to put in the office as a temporary 'secretary' to keeping an eye out there) that the company is having financial problems, that the architect has her own agenda, and that there may well be a mob connection somewhere in the works.

I enjoy this series and find that the switching back and forth from Bill's and Lydia's point of view in every other book works great--much better, IMO, than swapping about within the same book. It gives the story more cohesiveness. Although I had figured out most aspects of the actual mystery and figured out the murderer well in advance, I still enjoyed this book immensely. Looking forward very much to the next one!

Judy says

3.5 stars rounded to 4. I didn't enjoy this as much as I have the other books of the series. Maybe it's because it takes me longer to get through the audio when I have to use this "old-fashioned" type of recording. Don't we get spoiled with technology quickly! But I am glad that the book is at least available in audio of some sort. I really enjoy the unique partnership of the two protagonists. In this story Bill is undercover for a former cop friend working on a construction site. Lydia works in the office of the company trying to get information. I like the repartee between these two partners. It is an exciting story with some close calls for Bill. He, of course keeps declaring his love for Lydia. I think that she secretly loves him, too, but can't give in because of her Chinese family, especially, her mother. I will continue enjoying these books.

Richard Thompson says

The third (I think) S. J. Rozan mystery novel, *HOST HERO* was set in the New York art world. *MARDARIN PLAID* was set in the fashion trade. I was beginning to wonder if that was a pattern... some kind of New York cultural niche. *NO COLDER PLACE* though is different. Unlike the others it is told in the first person by P.I. Bill Smith. He is approached by a much larger detective agency to take on a case involving corruption and theft at a highrise construction project. (In the author bio we find out that S. J. Rozan is an architect.) Smith goes undercover a mason (he worked as a bricklayer in construction in his youth) and finds himself looking at a much more complex problem than the missing front end loader.

Another engaging and entertaining mystery. Late winter 2012 is turning out to be the Rozan Season. We are half way through *ON THE LINE* as a read-aloud.

Lukasz Pruski says

"There's no place colder than a construction site. [...] the chill that pulls the warmth from your bones while you're working, the wind that blows through steel and concrete carrying the ancient dampness of echoing caves."

I am livid. Until the last 35 pages I felt this was a great book, one of the best books in the PI genre that I can remember. At least a four-star rating. But then the author resorts to the tired, cliché, theatrical ending that reminds me of the badly dated noir movies of the 1950s. S.J. Rozan's *No Colder Place* (1997) won the

Anthony Award for the best novel in 1998: I wholeheartedly agree provided we remove the last 35 pages of the book. Why is the author - who is clearly capable of speaking with an original voice - determined to end most of her novels with a stock style of denouement? Why is the author defacing her great work?

The action takes place mainly on a construction site in New York. Bill Smith is subcontracted by another PI to investigate problems on the site: tools have been stolen, construction equipment has vanished, and one of the crane operators has disappeared. The owners of the construction company suspect one of the foremen and want to catch him at wrongdoing. Mr. Smith, who had worked as a bricklayer in his past, gets hired as a mason to watch the crew and find out what is going on. The tension on the site escalates when the body of the crane operator is found. Lydia Chin, Smith's partner and undying target of his romantic interest, is hired as a secretary in the construction site office to help with the investigation.

The story is interesting, moves fast, and - what's most important - is logical and plausible. But the best thing about the novel is that the plot is firmly grounded in labor relations conflicts, and additionally complicated by racial issues. The passages about the assault on the construction site conducted by the "full employment coalition" and its ramifications are the high points of the novel. The whole thread featuring the "Strength Through Jobs/Jobs Through Strength" organization that arranges busloads of rioting people is superb. It is indeed rare to find a mystery so attuned to rhythms of social issues. Even better: the author does not find easy solutions in the superficial political correctness.

I find the construction site scenes and the conversations between the crew completely believable (disclaimer: my labor experience, dating to 49 years ago, is from a steel mill rather than construction site). I have also enjoyed various references to crew members who might be "connected" (wink, wink, Italians in New York, *capisce*?)

This is my fifth Bill Smith/Lydia Chin novel and once again it is Lydia's character which is superbly drawn. Once again I can fully believe she is a real person. Bill is more believable than usual - the author does not cheapen the plot with references to his traumatic past. Another highpoint of the novel is the scene on the ferry and Lydia's rescue of Bill. Clever, sweet and funny. And no guns are involved! No guns! If only the author could maintain this good form until the end...

Three and a half stars.

Carl Brookins says

Wit, excellent characters and twisted plot lines mark this novel as a distinct reading pleasure. Add to that a high level of writing skills, and you have another winner from Ms. Rozan. That the novel retains solid interest is testimony to its staying power.

Take two very different professional investigators, Bill Smith and Lydia Chin. Insert them into a Manhattan building project to investigate theft. It sounds simple on the surface, but there are circles within circles, and motivations that are only revealed as the story unfolds into murder and more. The cultural differences between the two investigators, their often bristly relationship, add texture and dimension. There are more than the overt dimensions to this novel, as the reader will learn from carefully structured scenes throughout the book. They add to the richness of the reading experience. Finally, in the most positive manner, I can say

that unlike many genre novels today, *No Colder Place* does not offer up endless, needless verbiage. This novel, no longer than it needs to be, comes with a strong positive recommendation from this reviewer.

Deb Oestreicher says

Bill Smith goes undercover on a construction site, first to establish whether a foreman is involved in criminal activities, and also to see if he can find out what happened to one of the construction workers, who's disappeared. The case turns out to be more complicated than it seems when the pace of "accidents" on the site accelerates and Bill becomes convinced that his client is hiding something. Lydia goes undercover also, as a secretary. Aside from life on a construction site, this story introduces readers to local politics, urban development schemes, and fraud of various kinds.

Another good one from SJ Rozan.

Lynne-marie says

Bill Smith, that uber-detective, gets upper billing in this Smith/Chin novel, and hires himself out to go undercover on a construction site (the coldest place of the title) for a friend/client and talks Lydia Chin, much against her principles and her will, into going in undercover, too, as a secretary in the construction trailer headquarters. Expensive items have been disappearing and then suddenly men are getting killed. What does this have to do with a name whispered into Bill's ear that connects to his client's old neighborhood? The plot is like the hiss of a snake in its serpentine twists and turns. Bill is solid, his specialty and saving grace; Lydia, all heart and Chinese firecracker of action. They back each other up like few detective pairs we see in fiction. I'm working my way back through the canon and having a splendid time!! I don't know what mystery lover I couldn't recommend these books to!!

Kathy says

Bill's point of view... asked by an old friend, excop, current PI to go undercover at a construction site to uncover its secrets... the old friend has given up a lot for a childhood friend/adult gangster (including his career as a cop) and though he doesn't tell Bill this, he wants the gangster taken down, as there are rumors he's going legit & the cop will have given up much for nothing...

Bill takes a job as a brick layer - and there 3 deaths - and layers of corruption, which Bill and Lydia unravel and find that construction company son was making the cuts in materials & stealing and selling equipment and killing people, to keep the company afloat until his father dies in 6 months - not trusting that his father had things calculated - if they finished this job, then there would be many more for his son...

I like how Bill, who is working on mastering a piano piece draws the similarities to his detecting... how he breaks the music apart, he contemplates it, he practices it, and his subconscious works on it until it all clicks into a beautiful piece...

I like Lydia - who comes to Bill's rescue on a ferry when his friend's bad gangster is about to have him beat

up to send a message - she comes up to him with her mother's Japanese accent happy to see him and wanting to take him to her family to meet them... and then when he has broken into the contractor's office, and the son catches him and hits him upside the head, Lydia comes in to rescue him again with her gun...

but Lydia shuts him down when he gets too personal - jealous when she goes out with a nice bricklayer (to get information)... I wish she'd accept him and her own feelings... perhaps then he would play the piano for her. hmmmm

Robyn Miller says

I was in BN looking in the mystery section and someone recommended this series to me. I was a little reluctant but after finishing 3 of the books in the series (I skipped #2 and will go back) I am really enjoying the series and the authors style of writing. Looking forward to the rest of the series.

R.J. Koreto says

A taut and lean mystery, with a solution that plays out like a classical tragedy. However, the real joy of the book is its cast of characters, where even minor players are beautifully drawn. Especially well done is the relationship between the two sleuths, Lydia Chin and Bill Smith, something more than a friendship, less than a romance, and completely real.

Another great feature of this book is the setting, the construction site of a Manhattan office building. I see the author is an architect, and this shows in the details, which are always interesting but never intrusive.

One minor quibble: in dialog, the author frequently has various characters speak in grammatically incorrect English to indicate they are uneducated. After a while, that's grating on the ear, but I'm an editor, so maybe it's just me!

In the end, a wonderful mystery, a wonderful story, and I'll be sure to be reading more in this series.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

This is an award winner and many professional critics thought this the best one so far in the series, but I thought it lacking in energy and emotion. It goes by the numbers, required by the mystery genre tag. Also, I'm getting tired of the ridiculous relationship between Chin and Smith. By my clock, they either should break up the relationship or become lovers by now. If they kept their feelings hidden, I can see it being dragged on like this, but they refer to the uncomfortable state of Smith's unrequited passion all of the time. It doesn't seem realistic to have such a relationship in the open and yet continue without some sort of explosion of tension.
