



## On the Ropes

*Tom Schreck*

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Duffy Dombrowski is not your average social worker. When he's not counseling sex addicts and drug users in a town outside of New York City, you can find him crooning Elvis tunes, getting "Schlitzed" with his quirky friends, or fighting ex-Olympians in the boxing ring. Our less-than-perfect hero occasionally uses his mean left hook on pimps and other lowlifes, too. But at least he cares about his clients.

When Walanda, a schizophrenic, crack-addicted prostitute, is murdered, Duffy pledges to take care of her basset hound "Allah King" and find her missing stepdaughter, Shony. He's horrified to discover the teenager is ensnared in a web porn ring-a vile enterprise that enslaves crack-addicted women and their children.

On the verge of losing his job-and his life-Duffy also gets mixed up with a creepy doctor with ties to Pakistani extremists. Still, nothing will stop this conflicted Robin Hood from trying to save Shony and foil a terrorist plot.

## On the Ropes Details

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## From Reader Review On the Ropes for online ebook

### **Elizabeth says**

I've never been a big fan of mysteries (but have read quite a few) I read this one because he's an local author and it was superbly written! I actually finished the book and that says a lot because if a book doesn't keep my interest, I won't waste my time finishing it. If mysteries are your genre definitely give this author a read!

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### **Kristen says**

If you're looking for a new hero for your mystery series, try Duffy Dombrowski, a Irish-Polish boxer who's a caring social worker and loves Elvis and dogs. There's some good action scenes, some to make you laugh and cheer, and some hard cold truth about life in New York and our culture. I don't want to give anything anyway. You'll enjoy it.

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### **Patty says**

Hard to believe that book about a boxer can be so much fun, but this one is! The main character is honorable and works to do the right thing. Oh, and the dog is a big bonus to the story! Highly recommended for all mystery fans.

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### **Chi Dubinski says**

Duffy Dombrowski is a social worker in upstate New York, who boxes professionally part-time. When Wallanda, a client with mental illness and a crack addiction, is arrested she calls Duffy with two requests. She wants him to look after her basset hound, Allah-King, and to look for her missing stepdaughter, Shony. When she calls from jail, she tells Duffy she fears for her life.

When she is murdered, Duffy asks his police friend Kelley to investigate. When two more of Duffy's clients are severely beaten and land in the hospital, he wonders if there is a connection.

Duffy is a hero with a heart. His clients may be down and out because of bad decisions and bad luck, but Duffy always treats them with respect.

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### **Marie says**

Nebylo to špatné - ale zázrak se taky nekonal. Hlavní postava sociálního pracovníka Duffyho je sympatická a pes baset je skv?lý - ale d?j je p?íliš protahovaný a n?které pasáže by šly vynechat , tak aby d?j m?l v?tší spád. Další díly vyhledávat nebudu

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### **Mary says**

Duffy Dombrowski - a tough-talking, no-nonsense social worker from a small town in upstate New York - may not suffer fools kindly, but he also isn't your typical sort of caseworker. When he isn't counseling chronic sex addicts and frequent drug users, people can usually find him crooning Elvis tunes, getting 'bombed' with his friends, or challenging ex-Olympians in the boxing ring. Actually, for a man who absolutely dreads doing any type of paperwork, Duffy lives for his extracurricular activities - particularly his time spent in the ring as a part-time professional boxer. As a matter of fact, those extracurricular activities tend to get in the way of his career more often than not.

When a schizophrenic, crack-addicted prostitute named Walanda comes to Duffy and asks him for help, he can hardly deny her. He solemnly pledges to take care of her basset hound, Allah-King, and to find her missing stepdaughter, Shondeneisha. While Duffy isn't quite sure how much of Walanda's fantastic story to actually believe: that she believes her stepdaughter Shony has been kidnapped, and that someone actually wants Walanda herself dead; he can certainly recognize a troubled mind when he sees one, so is determined to help ease her worries if he possibly can.

However, when Walanda's prediction tragically comes true and she is murdered, Duffy begins to believe that she may have been telling the truth about other things as well. In order to assuage his own guilt about doubting Walanda's story, Duffy promises himself that he will find Shondeneisha as soon as possible. But how can a not-so-social social worker who moonlights as an underdog boxer possibly hope to save the girl and solve a murder with only the help of a semi-housebroken, fully disobedient basset hound and four drunk friends at his disposal?

I have to say right from the beginning that I probably wouldn't have chosen to read this book for myself, considering that I've never been all that interested in learning the particulars of the sport of boxing. Yet, I will also say that this book was still surprisingly good, in my opinion. There was a thread of sarcastic humor running throughout the story which I enjoyed, and the mystery was very intricate and intriguing to me. While this is perhaps not the typical kind of mystery that I usually read, it was still a very interesting mystery to read for its genre; I would give this book a definite B+!

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### **Perry says**

A fantastic debut by an inventive, new voice. I enjoyed every page of this faced-paced mystery. Duffy is a likeable character, and his Schreck lures us into his world with the skill of a veteran writer. Highly recommended.

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### **Cecilia says**

This is a great, funny mystery, ala Hiaasen. Schreck has a strong writing style, a knack for developing fresh, fun characters and a witty, droll sense of humor that compliments the darkness of the subject matter (in this case child porn and a child sex ring). His main character, Duffy Dombrowski, is a rude, crude, messy social worker/amateur sleuth who is someone you want to keep reading about. I hope this series continues and continues....

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### **Amber says**

I loved this book. Great story, great characters, great voice. The only thing keeping me from giving it five stars is that it's basically genre fiction. But it's everything one would want in genre fiction. Looking for the next one now. :)

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### **Jen says**

Duffy Dombrowski is an Irish-Polish-American part-time boxer, full-time social worker. At least for the time being he's a full-time social worker. His boss, the "Michelin Woman," has her heart set on firing Duffy, and she's just waiting for him to give her the excuse to do so.

When Kelley, Duffy's cop buddy, calls him to help with an arrest of one of Duffy's clients, the fun begins. Walanda is a schizophrenic, drug abuser and as she is being hauled off by Kelley, she's pleading with Duffy to do two things. First, save her stepdaughter who's been kidnapped by the "Webster" and second, take care of her Muslim basset hound, Allah-King. Duffy agrees to both requests and they both lead him into a mess of trouble, especially after Walanda is murdered in jail.

In the most basic terms I can use, *ON THE ROPES* is plain and simply FUN...FUN, FUN, FUN! What else would you expect with a cast of characters that includes a Muslim basset hound, an old Jewish man who has "enough money to air condition hell," and the Fearsome Foursome who reminded me of a cross between a male version of the Golden Girls and the crew who hung out at the bar on *Cheers*? The characters that inhabit this book are colorful and unique, emphasizing what I believe was a major theme in Schreck's book - everyone is special and has a purpose, regardless of society's prejudices.

For some reason, in this book I became acutely aware of the power of a stereotypical character. Schreck has stereotypes in this book, especially his ex-girlfriends, but he balances those stereotypes with more dimensional characters. The reader can't help but remember that stereotypes exist for a reason. I don't think a stereotype would work as a protagonist, and Duffy is anything but a stereotype. Schreck does an outstanding job of making stereotypes work effectively in this novel.

Schreck's protagonist, Duffy Dombroski, is constantly managing to step into trouble, despite his good intentions. There were a few times that I, as a female, was taken aback by his testosterone-laden comments, but I also realized that those comments were probably spot on for boxing, locker-room talk. And Schreck should know, since he is a professional boxing judge. What was striking about Duffy, besides his wonderful wit, was his sincerity and devotion. I have to admit that I also appreciated his love of Elvis.

And of course there's Al, the Muslim basset hound. Al provides comic relief at all the right times, as any dog owner will appreciate. Al chews up Duffy's remote control and unless he manually changes the channel, the TV is stuck eternally on the Lifetime channel. Oh the irony! It's wonderful.

The characters really drive the plot in this book. It's a great plot, but if the reader is unable to engage with the characters, I don't think the plot is quite as strong. The plot is also very heavy, so the characters and their humor help the reader manage that weight and see hope. All in all, Schreck did an outstanding job of

balancing the seriousness of his content with the lightness of the humor as well as the dynamics of the characters. The entire book works like a well-oiled machine.

As I was moving closer to the end of the novel I became very frustrated with interruptions in my reading. I simply wanted to keep reading. This is a book that you'll find hard to put down until you've reached the final page. And when you do put it down, I would be willing to bet you'll put it down with, at minimum, a sly grin on your face.

Just an outstanding debut!

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### **Patricia says**

Crawford, New York is supposed to be the windiest city in the country. And why would you care? I didn't until I read *On The Ropes*. Then I understood why that fact was important to a lot of people.

Duffy Dombrowski is a caseworker at Jewish Unified Services in Crawford, New York. Duffy is also a boxer. The boxing is a side-line. He also isn't Jewish. I found Duffy to be a wonderful character and very humorous as well as kind-hearted. Duffy is an Elvis fans and lives in an AirStream trailer that he calls The Moody Blue.

When Kelly, a police buddy, phoned and asked Duffy for help with one of his clients Duffy dropped everything and went right away. Walanda had been in trouble with drugs and men and was fighting arrest. When Duffy arrived Walanda begged him to save her step-daughter Shondeneisha who had been kidnapped by Webster. Of course, Duffy had never seen Walanda's step-daughter and he had no idea who Webster might be. Walanda also made Duffy promise to take Al-lah-King, her Muslim dog. Duffy wasn't happy but did promise.

Then things really started happening in Duffy's life. Two of his cases who hung out in the park were attacked. Walanda was also attacked in jail. Al-lah-King was a handful and Duffy's love life and his fighting life weren't going too well. Duffy's boss was also making his life difficult because even though Duffy was good with his clients he was very bad at paperwork.

There is a real mystery here and Duffy manages to get to the bottom of what is happening to his people. He couldn't have accomplished this without the help of his buddies who hang out at a local bar. One is a doctor about to lose his privileges. Another is a computer whiz. Put the whole thing together and you come up with a great read.

I want to read more books about Duffy and I love Al-lah King although I don't think I have the energy to care for him. Duffy's buddies are a fun group to read about and I hope they continue to be a part of Shreck's novels.

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### **Randy says**

**It's a knockout!**

One of the most original and refreshing characters I've had the great pleasure of reading! Great story and a rogues gallery of supporting characters make this the beginning of a magical series. Bring on the next installment! I'm already a fan!

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### **Sandi says**

What I would call a promising debut. I really liked the first person narration, the humor, and Allah-King the basset hound. On the other hand, I wish the author had adhered to the less is more rule. There was enough plot for two books and the action became a bit frantic and over the top especially at the end.

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### **Bill Kelly says**

Skillful mixture of deadly serious crimes and high comedy. The crimes are solved credibly enough through the doggedness (pun intended) of Duffy and his Bassett hound, Al. Chipping in are his cop buddy and the bizarre group of barflies he hangs out with. Duffy, dog and barflies and his conflicts with an archetypal self-serving boss provide some laugh out loud comedy. Duffy is a social worker trying to make a difference and not take refuge in bureaucracy, social theory or PC pandering. He is actually more interested in helping people and righting a wrong than in making himself feel, look or sound good.

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### **Marti says**

I certainly agreed with the rating given to this book previously. It was Mr. Schreck's first effort--and it was a knockout! I hadn't expected to enjoy it as much as I do, since I don't understand the fascination with boxing, but that part of the book came early, and since Duffy cleaned his opponent's clock with a few illegal moves, he ended up not with the \$7000 purse, but a suspension. His daytime job was being a social work/counselor to a raft of lowlifes--they are the ones who need help after all--drug addicts, prostitutes, etc. He has a gang of friends who help him out in various ways, but he gets beaten up regularly. This was so much fun that I might try another of Mr. Schreck's.

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