



The Last Quarry

Max Allan Collins

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Coming out of retirement to do one last—and extremely lucrative—job for a media magnate, professional killer Quarry finds himself unable to take out his target, a young, beautiful librarian. This is also Book 7 of the Quarry novels.

The Last Quarry Details

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Author : Max Allan Collins

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From Reader Review The Last Quarry for online ebook

Dan Schwent says

When Quarry notices a gay hitman he once had a run in with buying tampons at an out of the way convenience store, he gets suspicious. The trail leads him to a media millionaire's daughter being held for ransom. Quarry re-unites the girl with daddy for a price and a few months later, the dad offers him a job. But why would anyone want a librarian like Janet Wright dead?

Max Allan Collins knows how to write 'em. There are quite a few twists packed into this slim 200-pager. I didn't really see the revelation of Janet's true identity coming. Collins makes you wait for the big shoot out but it's almost orgasmic when it finally happens.

The Last Quarry is rocketed near the top of my favorite Hard Case book. You wouldn't want to run into Quarry, the semi-retired hitman, in a dark alley but it's sure fun to read about him.

Steve says

Best of the series so far!

Josh says

HE LAST QUARRY sees series protagonist Quarry take on one last assignment, one that he falls into by way of professional curiosity. Having spotted a rival mob guy at a store, Quarry follows him back to his place of residence only to discover a damsel in distress - a kidnapped young woman, naked and tied-up to prevent her escape.

After taking care of the mob guys, and having returned the young woman to her wealthy father, Quarry is asked to take on one last assignment.

Quarry's latest target is a curvy and unassuming librarian. The reason for the murder contract isn't made clear early but delivers a delicious twist in the later stages of the novel.

Not one to shy away from the opposite sex, Quarry, during a routine follow up blows his cover by coming to the aid of his target when her abusive boyfriend makes a very public scene at a local watering hole. It's at this point the novel takes a turn and evolves into a more complex crime novel with motives and mystery at the forefront.

THE LAST QUARRY packs a hell of a punch, more impressive given the small page count. I love books that are fast paced, full of character and are concise; THE LAST QUARRY delivers on all fronts.

<http://justaguythatlikes2read.blogspot...>

Jason says

Perhaps I'm spoiled by Richard Stark's Parker, but this seemed flabby in its suspense, in its aggressive (and unfunny) sarcasm, in its run-through of the antiheroic tropes. Maybe I was in a bad mood, but the book really annoyed me--I instead suggest going to find *_Comeback_* or *_The Outfit_* or any of a number of sleek, wonderfully nasty Stark exercises in antiheroic crime.

Richard Block says

Tasty Big MAC

Craving more junkfood, I reached for *The Last Quarry*, another satisfying and fast read to fill me up. This 'last' novel places the charming hitman in 2005, now 50ish, supposedly retired. He has lost a lot of money, has to take a job for one of his Vietnam vet buddies, and somehow, shit happens. It's nice the way Quarry has aged - he gets more interesting the more mistakes he makes, and it's these mistakes which contribute to some decent progressive complication - plot twists.

A rich man wants Quarry to kill a librarian in a small midwestern town. Not his usual target, but for a load of money, Quarry will kill just about anyone. Structured with his usual 3 act panache - sharp beginning with inciting incident, longish middle, then explosive ending, this is a well honed noir, still exciting, funny and sharply conceived. It throws up surprises, but these are Happy Meal treats.

So Big MAC delivers again - up to but not beyond, expectations.

Jim says

I am not a BIG mystery or crime thriller fan like some people I know, but Max Allan Collins (born in Iowa in 1948) has been among my favorite mystery writers for some time now. This book is the only one in his Quarry series that I've read and I think this is not my favorite series of his. I much prefer his series about Chicago detective Nate Heller. About Quarry, he's a professional hit man who got into that line of work after returning from Vietnam. A very tough guy, he would be a match for Jack Reacher (but I'm sure Reacher would win!). The book is a very fast read. I give a *** because it's not up to the level of a Nate Heller story...

Travis says

The hitman Quarry comes out of retirement for one last job and proves he isn't "getting too old for this stuff" (to borrow a cleaned up phrase from *Lethal Weapon*).

I do include a very tiny spoiler but only enough to write a review and absolutely no details or anything that will detract from your enjoyment of the plot.

This is my second Quarry book (the first being "The Wrong Quarry") and already I'm amazed at the depth of the character. You can truly see a difference between how he acts at the different stages of his life and career. He's still a stone cold killer, as evidenced by the opening chapters and how he takes care of some kidnappers and the closing chapters where he cleans up all the loose ends. But how he handles himself in between those sequences during the actual job shows a man reluctantly opening himself up to another human being. Even his interaction with an old buddy from Nam, which sets up the whole chain of events, shows a guy that wants a calmer, more mundane life. He'll never have the white picket fence or 2.5 kids but one can believably see him living a happy ending. Amusingly the author states in the afterward that the most twisted outcome he could up with for Quarry is a happy ending.

All of this in a tight 200 pages. The writing is crisp. The narration is to the point, which keeps things tense, easy to read, and reveals even more about Quarry given the first person point of view. This type of neo-pulp writing is the antithesis of some many other modern books, especially my old favorite genre of fantasy. The essence of good crime fiction like this is to get "just the facts, ma'am". But a true master of the genre, as Max Allan Collins proves himself with the Quarry books, can get the facts and good details at the same time. The use of personal asides by Quarry is a great first person narrator trick that the vast majority of authors fail to utilize. The asides add great pulp/noir flavor, highlight characteristic's of Quarry himself, and point out specific details in the scene without bogging down in tons of verbiage.

I look forward to more Quarry books (I've already started "The First Quarry").

Greg says

When I hear the term hack writer the first name that pops into my head is Max Allan Collins. That is probably unfair of me, since before yesterday I had never read a word he had written, but seeing all the books he's written at work I can't help but think that is one of those mercenary write anything for pay writers. It seems like almost every movie novelization or tv show tie-in gets penned by him. Unfair to think hack, I know, but it's tough to take people seriously who write those novelizations of big block buster movies.

My two star rating for this book is also a little unfair. I enjoyed this book quite a bit, actually. It's just that the day before reading it I found myself thinking about how I rate books, and I thought, maybe I'm getting a little soft, maybe I'm giving too many high ratings, maybe I need to spread out my stars a little bit. Then later in the same day I was having a conversation about what Batman graphic novels I'd read with a girl at work and my swiss cheese memory was failing so I logged into goodreads so she could see which ones I read. I noticed that some of my memories of the books were not in line with what I had rated them originally, and that too many of the books were just rated three stars and I could remember that some of them I didn't think too highly of. I think sometimes I give three-stars the same way some teachers hand out high grades just because students put a little effort in to the piece of drivel they handed in.

Back to my earlier musings on how I rate books, I spent quite a while at work thinking about what makes a crime book good versus great. The story is definitely important, but most of the stories are just rehashings of older stories, there is a degree of originality that comes in to play, and was the author able to cover up the giant plot holes so that whole thing just doesn't come across as farcical, but generally this kind of stuff is done well enough in most of the books I've been reading lately. What it came down for me was the writing, the writing is what separates these books (crime novels I'm thinking about here) from being good to great. Raymond Chandler or James Ellroy are great because their writing is fucking amazing. Hammett and Spillane I generally can't get into because I find their writing to be plodding and strained. It's subjective,

sure, but some writing can be amazing, some distracting and unnecessarily difficult (like my reviews, with strained syntax and poor grammar) and some can be seamless where the writing isn't great but it falls enough into the background to let the story unravel without any distractions. I think the bulk of good crime novels fall into the last category.

This book falls into the middle category.

The book is competently written, unlike a couple of portions of the Mickey Spillane book I finished this morning where an unclear sentence here and there would throw the breaks on the story for me. But there were just too many little annoyances in the narration in this book, things said that made me want to roll my eyes or cringe. Things that if I heard someone in real life saying I'd think what a juvenile asshole. Lines like, "I got bored--being seen by the target was one thing, eating her pussy was another." Or in interactions with a Paris Hilton-ish spoiled brat every interaction with her was something like this, "I glanced over at Julie. She was standing next to the kitchen table, now, slipping out of the t-shirt. She tossed it on the table and stood there grinning at me, fists Superman-style on her hips, the nice little pierced-nippled breasts bare and perky and proud. My dick twitched." Oh, I forgot to mention the narrator is a middle-aged guy and there is really no reason ever given for this girl to out of nowhere just keep throwing herself at him like this. At the time of this scene they were eating breakfast or something, and the narrator was talking on the phone to someone.

And then there is all the musings on women's pubic hair. It comes up quite a bit in this book and in case your wondering the narrator isn't a fan of any kind of landscape work down there. I don't think my quotes are necessarily damning to the book, but they are just a couple of examples where I would put a bookmark after thinking enough is enough of this kind of thing.

In Collins defense he did have this line that I also tagged. "...I was stalking my prey-in jeans, running shoes, brown sweater, lighter brown shirt-with-collar, I might have been a teacher or writer, the kind of rumpled jerk who browses endlessly at Borders and never buys a goddamn thing, then complains that books sales are down because the world has gone illiterate."

Writing aside the story is pretty good, and there are some decent twists, I sort of think I saw most of them coming but they were still pretty good. I think the teenage approach to talking about sex and women is unfortunate and doesn't seem like the kind of things a middle-aged hit man would think and say, but then again I'm not a middle-aged hit man so I might not know what I'm talking about.

Oh, and I almost forgot, I really liked this line too, but I have to put it in spoiler because it gives away a pretty big twist, (view spoiler)

Ha!!

Dave says

If you are a longtime Quarry fan, you will probably recognize the beginning of this story. You know- the part where the retired hitman who lives by the lake stumbles on two gay mafia hitmen in a convenience store buying tampax.

In Last Quarry, Collins has taken that opening and run with it. He has turned it into one terrific feature length

tale where Quarry comes out of retirement to do one last job, one with the most incredible payday. He merely has to go to a small town and take out a librarian, but, of course, once this librarian strips down and dives into a swimming pool, even a aging Quarry knows she is going to be a difficult target.

As detailed in the First Quarry, Quarry is a former Vietnam veteran whose real name is never disclosed to the reader. He comes back, finds his fiancé, Joanie, in bed with another guy, finds that guy working under his car and kicks the jack out, survives a murder trial, and is then recruited by a mysterious figure named the Broker to carry out hits and we don't mean hits in baseball.

Collins published his first three Quarry novels in 1976, his fourth in 1977, and then his fifth in 1987.

Nineteen years later (except for a collection of shorts released as "Greatest Hits"), he published The Last Quarry at the urging of Charles Ardai, publisher of Hard Case Crime. This began a new series of Quarry novels, including First Quarry, Quarry in the Middle, Quarry's Ex, and Wrong Quarry.

The Last Quarry is a worthy addition to this great series. It is just as good as the original series of Quarry novels.

This is another great Quarry novel, tightly written, and I found that the pages flew at a furious pace. It was well-plotted and an enjoyable read from cover to cover. Highly recommended.

Collins has done a great job of placing Quarry in the timeline, setting out his motives, his intentions, his fascination with the dazzling librarian.

The book is funny - gay hoods buying tampons- gee, what could they be up to? The characterizations are great from Quarry himself to the young lady tied to the bed in the cabin, to the rich mogul who thinks he has outsmarted Quarry.

As in all Quarry novels, the writing is smooth and it won't keep you busy for very long cause it is a damn quick read.

Bottom line: Great crime fiction!

Jim says

Another new audio book from Skyboat Media, read by Stephen Rudnicki. Well read as usual & twisty. A fitting final episode for Quarry.

----- Current order -----

"The First Quarry" - early 70's

"Quarry's Choice" - a year to 18 months after "The First Quarry"

"Quarry in the Middle" - spring of 1986? (Reagan on 2d term for a while.)

"The Last Quarry" - after 2004 (Kerry's failed 2004 presidential race bumper sticker is old.)

Jim says

This, according to the author, will likely always be the last in Quarry's chronology. Very good. Excellent read. The epitomizes why I buy HCC books. The cover is great & the material in between is perfect HCC material. The ending is wonderfully done.

As I would expect, lots of hard boiled action, not all of it predictable. In fact, I was plain surprised more than once. Quarry never really steps out of character, but he has matured. Be warned that this book does contain some spoilers for earlier novels. They were not published chronologically.

Michael Stokes says

I rarely go five stars but Quarry is a series I can't get enough of. Knowing this isn't really the last Quarry story is a great relief. When he's gone.....it will be hard to find anything near as good.

Sheldon Wiebe says

Max Allan Collins' The Last Quarry is an exception to the rule - a 'one last job' story that doesn't end with the protagonist either dead or in jail for the rest of his life.

Instead it features 'the most perverse conclusion I can envision for Quarry...' - Max Allan Collins

Written with all the pulpy fluidity and edge of a master, The Last Quarry is a short (181 pages), sweet, dark thriller that finds a wealthy man - with some shady connections - finding the retired Quarry and engaging his services to kill a woman who doesn't deserve it.

An expansion of his short story A Matter of Principle (and the award-winning short film of the same name), The Last Quarry doesn't feel like a redo, or expansion at all. It's a swiftly paced, darkly comic (at times), occasionally sexy blast of sheer energy.

Highly recommended.

Joseph says

After reading Donald Westlake's The Cutie, I went out and got myself about a half dozen titles in the Hard Case Crime series. I wasn't thrilled with the second title I read (Somebody Owes Me Money, also by Westlake), and now, having been underwhelmed with this Quarry story, I'm starting to worry about my investment in the Hard Case imprint.

Whereas The Cutie's protagonist had an authentic Henry Hill-type feel to his narration, Quarry sounds more like a crime fiction writer who secretly wishes he's a hitman badass. Still, the book was readable, and any character who throws around phrases like "cupcake titties" represents the essence of what hard boiled noir is all about.

Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: Quarry, hitman

SERIES: #7 of 10

RATING: 4.5

WHY: Quarry is a hitman who has retired. He is convinced by a media magnate to take on one last assignment. The payoff is large. The target is a female librarian. Quarry accidentally becomes involved with her and can't figure out why she has been chosen. Collins is a deft hand at plotting and creates some very satisfying twists. A quick read with the only negative being an over-the-top killing scene near the end of the book. **THE LAST QUARRY** was written 30 years after the previous entry in the series and seems like it should be the last book. However, there are 3 more that follow, presumably set before this one.
