



Boston Noir

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Brand-new stories by: Dennis Lehane, Stewart O'Nan, Patricia Powell, John Dufresne, Lynne Heitman, Don Lee, Russ Aborn, Itabari Njeri, Jim Fusilli, Brendan DuBois, and Dana Cameron.

Dennis Lehane (*Mystic River, The Given Day*) has proven himself to be a master of both crime fiction and literary fiction. Here, he extends his literary prowess to that of master curator. In keeping with the Akashic Noir series tradition, each story in *Boston Noir* is set in a different neighborhood of the city—the impressively diverse collection extends from Roxbury to Cambridge, from Southie to the Boston Harbor, and all stops in between.

Lehane's own contribution—the longest story in the volume—is set in his beloved home neighborhood of Dorchester and showcases his phenomenal ability to grip the heart, soul, and throat of the reader.

In 2003, Lehane's novel *Mystic River* was adapted into film and quickly garnered six Academy Award nominations (with Sean Penn and Tim Robbins each winning Academy Awards). *Boston Noir* launches in November 2009 just as *Shutter Island*, the film based on Lehane's best-selling 2003 novel of the same title, hits the big screen.

Dennis Lehane is the author of *The New York Times* bestseller *Mystic River* (also an Academy Award-winning major motion picture); *Prayers for Rain; Gone, Baby, Gone* (also a major motion picture); *Sacred; Darkness, Take My Hand; A Drink Before the War*, which won the Shamus Award for Best First Novel; and, most recently, *The Given Day*. A native of Dorchester, Massachusetts, he splits his time between the Boston area and Florida.

PART I: FEAR & LOATHING

LYNNE HEITMAN

Exit Interview

Financial District

DENNIS LEHANE

Animal Rescue

Dorchester

JIM FUSILLI

The Place Where He Belongs

Beacon Hill

PATRICIA POWELL

Dark Waters

Watertown

PART II: SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

DANA CAMERON

Femme Sole

North End

BRENDAN DUBOIS

The Dark Island

Boston Harbor

STEWART O'NAN

The Reward

Brookline

JOHN DUFRESNE

The Cross-Eyed Bear

Southie

PART III: VEILS OF DECEIT

DON LEE

The Oriental Hair Poets

Cambridge

ITABARI NJERI

The Collar

Roxbury

RUSS ABORN

Turn Speed

North Quincy

Boston Noir Details

Date : Published November 1st 2009 by Akashic Books

ISBN : 9781933354910

Author : Dennis Lehane (Editor and Contributor) , Russ Aborn (Contributor) , Patricia Powell (Contributor) , Dana Cameron (Contributor) , Brendan DuBois (Contributor) , John Dufresne (Contributor) , Jim Fusilli (Contributor) , Lynne Heitman (Contributor) , more... Itabari Njeri (Contributor) , Stewart O'Nan (Contributor) , Don Lee (Contributor) ...less

Format : Paperback 236 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Mystery, Crime, Noir, Anthologies

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From Reader Review Boston Noir for online ebook

Carla says

Dennis Lehane's Animal Rescue is included (it is also in USA Noir) so that's one fantastic story. Another is John DuFresne's moving and frightening "The Cross-Eyed Bear." I read that one twice. Boston, with its ethnic pockets, turns out to be a rich source for noirish stories.

Andrea says

Ended on a low point--I didn't care for the last two stories.

msleighm says

4 stars.

Collection of short stories by different authors, all taking place in and around Boston.

From mom.

Like many short story collections, I found some of these exceptional and some were "eh", thus the four star rating. Though Boston is definitely a subject I could read about all day, after reading these tightly written, well constructed, stories, I have discovered Noir is not a good genre for me. Give me a standard 500 page murder mystery or a Victorian tome with a happy ending.

Read 1/27-2/10/2018

Michelle Despres says

I found this book at the library book sale and was eager to read noir for the first time (at least something identifying itself as noir) and revisit the capital of my home state. Boston is a fantastic setting for noir.

Much of what I have to say about this book has been said by others.

I like the Introduction more than any story in the collection. "In Shakespeare, tragic heroes fall from mountaintops; in noir, they fall from curbs." The description of a changing Boston on pages 12-13 is excellent. "As the city continues to lose its old-school parochialism and over immigrant tribalism, it's also losing a lot of its character." "The Italian tongues of the North End are being phased out by voices questioning why there's no Crate and Barrel beside the Paul Revere House."

Based on the Introduction, I expected more grit and more "working class tragedy." "Noir is a genre of loss, of men and women unable to roll with the changing times, so the changing times

instead roll over them."

"No art form rages against the machine more violently than noir."

"But Boston gives noir the strain of humor you never expect, which comes at you from directions you could never predict."

The stories in this collection don't live up to the expectation created here. In fact, some of the stories seem to have twists at the end that make them the antithesis of noir, as defined here.

The collection is also incredibly uneven. A few are well-written; most aren't. A few are compelling; most aren't.

Taryn Harbert says

I picked up with book because of Dennis Lehane's "Animal Rescue". Lehane's also writes the introduction, which ultimately sold me on the book. This series is an excellent idea - short stories focused on the nostalgia of cities. I also bought "Prison Noir", which was edited by Joyce Carol Oats. Each of these books appears to be headlined by a more famous writer, perhaps to bring in readers who otherwise would have passed these books over.

Being a big fan of noir fiction genre I was entertained by the themes of the stories. The book is comprised of eleven stories, broken into three themes: Fear and Loathing, Skeletons in the Closet, and Veils of Deceit. The first two themes made the book worth the purchase, but "Veils of Deceit" was a complete let down. The writing was choppy, hard to follow, and too obscure. That being said, the book as a whole is amazing. I've never been to Boston, but the writers did an excellent job of painting a picture of a cultured, rough, and grainy town consumed with pride and loyalty to its own. This is a collection of stories that are diverse and able to be enjoyed both by those who consider Boston their home, as well as those who've never been. It should be noted that the diversity of this book lies in the subjects, characters, race, premise, and timeframe. Stories range from modern day to the 18th century.

Kassandra says

Dennis Lehane's intro and story are the best parts of this, but every piece brought a bit of home back to me, and the first few were very, very good. The stories seem to get progressively less well-written and less interesting as one goes on. Njeri's story was so poorly written, so abruptly ended, and so gratuitously spiked with sex at the end that I have to wonder how it EVER got published anywhere. I guess being nominated for a Pulitzer means people think you can write anything well, whether that's true or not. I digress, though. Aside from the one bad story out of the 11, this is a good collection, a fast read, and a certain prompt for Beantown homesickness.

A says

A decent but pretty mixed bag, which I guess is to be expected when you throw into said mix everyone from Pulitzer Prize winners (her story was unreadable) to first-time writers (his story was great, classic Boston).

Very few of the stories were actually noirish, unless your definition of "noir" is nothing more than "logic-straining plot contrivances." Even fewer nailed a particular Bostonianness -- most either tried too hard and felt fake (the "white" noir of the pedophile priest story was particularly awkward) or tried not at all except to mention a token street name (Stewart O'Nan, I'm looking at you -- and you're FROM Boston!).

The first 5 of the 11 stories (which includes Lehane's, of course) were wonderful -- dark, twisted, bloody, and brooding. This was largely because these 5 were unique; Dana Cameron's "colonial 1700s noir" was particularly awesome. The rest of the stories (save the last) were either totally muddled and incomprehensible or just came off as pathetic rip-offs of Lehane. I mean let's face it, folks, when you think Boston + crime fiction you think Dennis Lehane, and nobody can touch him (PS. try the Kenzie & Gennaro novels if you thought Mystic River was any good). Putting anyone else's stories about Boston's seedy underbelly in a book with Dennis Lehane is like, I don't know, having Michael Phelps swim in the Special Olympics -- pathetic and cruel.

James Thane says

This is another in the series of books published by Akashic devoted to crime fiction centered on a particular city. In this case, the city is Boston and the collection of stories is edited by Dennis Lehane. Lehane contributes an introduction and a story of his own, "Animal Rescue." In addition, he has corralled a number of writers with ties to the Boston area, and they have produced a number of very good, often quirky stories.

MIA is Robert B. Parker, whose Spenser is perhaps the most famous of the detectives currently prowling the mean streets of Boston, and the collection somehow seems incomplete without a Spenser story. The book was published in 2009, a year or so before Parker died, but perhaps he was not asked to contribute or, for some reason, chose not to.

That aside, this is a very good introduction to Boston crime fiction and fans of the genre should enjoy it.

Ananya Ghosh says

Like I have always maintained, I'm a sucker for short stories and I had been pining to read this for a long time for the description at the back fascinated me. And I am a person who reads the introductions, acknowledgements, foreword, everything there is. And in this one, I was drawn in by the introduction by Dennis Lehane. It was so good, it set the pace for me and pulled me in deeper. However, as I began the first story, I was a little confused as to what was going on, but by the end of it, I loved it.

However, due to a reading slack and lack of mood, maybe, I couldn't complete the book and hoped I could pick it up again to finish it, but no such luck yet for it was a library copy. I have read the first few stories and as far as I can remember, I liked all of them, the one where a guy rescues a dog, the kidnapping of a child one, and one widowed woman gaining control of a bar that she had previously owned with first her father and then her husband despite all odds. I think these are the only ones I distinctly remember, but I think I have read about 6-7 of the first stories.

I hope I can find it again to go back to it.

Jen says

There's some good stuff here, and some not quite as good stuff. No surprise that I liked the Lehane story best, and while I didn't quite enjoy the historical fiction piece when I read it, I have thought about it a few times since then. Also--what's with dogs in noir?

Michael Beeman says

The Boston Noir collection marks our fair city's induction in the roving city-themed noir series, "Book Noir," from Akashic Books. Already the series has seen collections from Brooklyn, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Phoenix, among others. Dennis Lehane is an obvious choice as editor -I'd be hard-pressed to come up with a close second in terms of Boston crime novelists. He proves a smart choice, as well, and has put together a collection of noir stories as he defines them: working-class tragedies. In this collection, Lehane explores not only crime, or, as he calls it "skuzzy people doing skuzzy things to other skuzzy people," but explores what the Boston means to the people who live in, and more often just-outside, New England's second-place city.

In his intro to this collection Lehane sets himself an ambitious goal. "One of the recurrent themes of Noir has always been the search for a home," Lehane writes. "Yet the home being searched for in these pages might be Boston, and the journey to find it -however fruitless that goal might turn out to be- is as rich and varied, as hilarious and sad, and ultimately as engaging as the city itself." The worst of these stories are great noir tales in their own right that evoke the city in a paint-by-numbers fashion (throw in a Red Sox hat here, a view of the Prudential Center there, and, of course, a healthy amount of "wicked," and your story is set in Boston). In the best, the city itself is acting upon the musician from New York now living in the Back Bay, or the single mother relocated to the suburbs, and becomes the unseen protagonist in the story.

The only fault I find with this collection is that despite the breadth of locations and characters, there seems to be an obvious omission. Lehane writes of the feeling of loss experienced in a "less violent and beiger city", one being calmed and tamed by progress. Yet we are not presented stories seen from the side of the other. In a city with more students than pigeons, we never enter a campus—high school or college. The collection is free of entitled yuppies, another Boston mainstay. The "beigers" themselves, the affluent upwardly-mobile, the mid-thirties restaurateurs pushing into the south end, the hipsters painting murals over the graffiti in Somerville and Jamaica Plain, and the tourists being guided through the park by a man dressed as Ben Franklin are absent. The part of the city the locals roll their eyes at, but cannot disavow, is not represented. We don't necessarily need a story to take place on a Mega Super Duck Tour, but it wouldn't be Boston without hearing their ubiquitous quack.

Heather Costa says

Much like what the other reviewers have stated. The first stories were really good. Exit Interview, Femme Sole, Dark Island and Animal Rescue. Towards the end I just didn't think it had the same quality. The Hair Poets and The Collar I was just thinking to myself....."Really this got published?"

Joseph Gravellese says

I'm a sucker for anything that tries to tap into the character of Boston, and most of these short stories do just that. The stories themselves are, in my mind, of varying quality and interest. Some sucked me in whole, wrapped up in the characters and their situations and what they reflected about this place we call home; others were not as great, and I skated through them on the strength of the "oh hey, I've been there" moments as cafes and bus routes and stores were described.

Some of the stories were a little too disturbing and depressing for my liking - even knowing what I was getting into given the title and the fact that Dennis Lehane was the editor. There was one story about a pedophile priest that was alarmingly unnecessary. But about half of the stories were really gripping and enjoyable.

There was one story set in Dorchester where an old thug finds a beaten, injured dog and takes care of him & nurses him back to health, then ends up being forced to confront the dog's original owner out who hurt the dog. It managed to be both violent and touching at the same time, and highly amusing.

Recommended for any Boston-lover who's willing to be swallowed up in a dark reading experience for a week or so.

Janellyn51 says

Sometimes I wonder, would I like these stories as much, if I wasn't overly familiar with the locales they take place in? While I enjoy reading books from all over, names of streets are just that, names of streets. In these stories, when I read about a robbed bank on Broadway, and heading towards Sullivan, I think, I'm glad I didn't get to Somerville until the 80's, because, by that time The Winter Hill Gang had more or less stopped opening fire at each other on Broadway! Or, I think of how many times I've taken the bus down Broadway to Sullivan to get the T into town.

I really enjoyed most of these stories as Stories. I guess the one that struck me the most was The Cross Eyed Bear. by John Dufresne. I was brought up Catholic. I watched my father take up the collection every week, my brother was an altar boy. We had a monsigneur, I kissed Cardinal Cushing's ring, that seemed like such a big deal. Every Sunday, my mother dressed us up and we sat in a pew, my mother trying to keep the little ones quiet. As a mother of twin boys, finding out about all the sex abuse scandals disgusted me beyond belief, but what upset me the most was how much it must have shaken my father's faith, and I hate the church for that. I loved loved Loved that Mr. Dufresne mentioned Big Brother Bob Emery, just saying the name, I've got The Grass is always greener in the other fellows yard screaming in my head. Anyway. I liked that story the best and felt like, being somewhat familiar with Southie, and way familiar with the Catholic Church, it was pretty much on the money.

I liked the Waltham story, although I can't exactly say why.

Lehane, just blows me away, and I can pretty much agree with most reviewers that his introduction is as good as any of the stories. If you ever get a chance to hear him at a book signing or whatever, go, because he's one of the most entertaining authors I've ever listened to.

Dia says

The series is such a great idea -- noir stories set in various beloved cities -- but the publisher really should have been much more patient in soliciting and selecting submissions! The stories chosen here beg the question: What is noir? Apparently it's any story that has at least one character who's mean, as that seems to be the only characteristic common to all the stories in this collection. The best part of the collection is Dennis Lehane's introduction, where he characterizes noir thus: "No art form that I know of rages against the machine more violently than noir...Noir rages without much hope, certainly without romanticism or wish fulfillment." And: "The heroes and heroines of noir are usually chasing something they couldn't hold even if they caught up to it. Some part of them understands the futility of this chase even as another part clings to the need for it." This promising characterization of noir is immediately deflated by the first story offered and is consistently left limp, mangled, dazed, and confused throughout the collection. An exception might be the story written by Lehane himself. He gets off a few good lines ("The street signs and window panes rattled, and Bob thought how winter lost any meaning the day you last rode a sled. Any meaning but grey.") and maintains the existential balance between energy and stagnation in his animal lover's revenge story. Perhaps Lehane should've written all the stories in the collection. (Must they even be short stories? Couldn't we have a series of noir novels, each set in a different city?)

I'm just so disappointed that our "everyday writers" -- the college-level Creative Writing teachers and such who contributed to this collection -- seem to be incapable of writing decent noir! Garrison Kiellor and his team have been able to come up with parodies of noir, WEEKLY FOR YEARS, that are far more entertaining than the stories in this collection! I was so excited to see that there are Seattle and Portland books in this series as well, but now I hesitate to risk such disappointment again!
