



## South of Good (Hardin Steel #1)

*Randall Reneau*

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Forced out of the DEA after twenty years, Hardin Steel, Stainless to his close friends, has managed to get himself elected Sheriff of Cameron County, Texas. Twice divorced, with a bit of a drinking problem, he's now dating Rory Roughton, a fiery sixth-generation Texan who's as rich as she is beautiful—and hell-bent on keeping Steel on the straight and narrow. But then his best friend, Wes Stoddard, is nearly shot down flying in a load of pot, Rory is kidnapped by a Russian mercenary working for the most dangerous cartel in Mexico, and the Cuban Mafia decides they'd like the former DEA agent—dead.

Steel is forced to take unsanctioned, unconventional—and mostly illegal—action in order to save himself and those closest to him . . .

## **South of Good (Hardin Steel #1) Details**

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Author : Randall Reneau

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## **From Reader Review South of Good (Hardin Steel #1) for online ebook**

### **Esther says**

This is my first time reading any book by Randall Reneau and I have to say that this was impressive.

If only you knew me then you would all know that I am not easily impressed by books but this one was good to the point where I am pointing it out to the rest of the world. Yes, rest of the world including you who is reading this right now.

South of good is the first book in the Hardin Steel series by Randal Reneau and you know something is good when book one is inviting you to continue to read on book two. Well this happened. Anyway to continue with my review, The plot of the story had a nice flow to it.

Now to my favorite part, which I believe is what makes the novel...the character.

Ex DEA agent turned County Sheriff Hardin Steel is the main character and the story is told from his point of view. He is a nice leading man and keeps it going good. He brings it good to the whole plot and adds to it perfectly.

Switching of the pOv was a bit weird but all in all it was a good read.

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### **Aryan Sarath says**

The story is an excellent value for your time and money. I could hardly guess what exactly would be happening down the line since I usually guess how the story would turn around.

This is a lengthy novel but trust me, it would never fail to satisfy you and gives you the feeling of having watched a perfect Hollywood thriller.

This story is all about a drug lord Mr.Ochoa and how he is being tackled by Sheriff Hardin Steel. There were few characters involved in this story which includes Wez,Buck,Yazov,Rory etc and all have done their bit pretty decently.

It will not be a wonder for me if this is being made into a feature film.

All I can say is, read and enjoy. I am sure you will also give a perfect 5 star rating just like I did...

This review was written as a part of Good Reads Review Program and the book was sent to me by the Author himself FREE of cost.

Many Thanks for the autographed copy Mr Randall Reneau and looking forward to read more of your writings, preferably a sequel of this book ;-)

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### **Eileen says**

3.5 stars for me. A good story, easy to read. Dialogue a little macho for me.....

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### **Wendy says**

"South of Good" is an action-packed, explosive Hardin Steel novel that begins with the loss of a drug dealer's shipment of cocaine and his go-fast boat as well as a missile attack on a King Air plane owned by Hardin's friend Wes Stoddard that's carrying a marijuana consignment. When a Russian mercenary hired by the Mexican cartel attacks the DEA office during a hurricane to recover their stolen merchandise and he kidnaps the Sheriff's girlfriend Rory Roughton, Hardin plans a dangerous and unconventional sting operation that will take him to Cuba to rescue those he cares about and to bring his enemies to justice.

The plot is fast-paced and engrossing from the first page to the last as Hardin, a sworn law enforcement officer in Cameron County Texas, wages his own war against the drug lords in Cuba and Mexico even when it means walking a fine line between actions that are legal and those that are unsanctioned. In a story filled with slices of wit and humor, where Hardin's best friend is a drug runner forced to go straight or have his plane blown up, the plot twists and turns as it gains momentum. With every stroke of his pen Randall Reneau builds suspense and intrigue as the story heads towards a showdown that could mean death for Hardin and his friends Wes Stoddard and Buck Bateman.

In this skilfully written plot Randall Reneau has crafted starkly honest and heroic characters like Hardin (Stainless) Steel an elected sheriff burdened by a drinking problem and two divorces. A former DEA officer he has a commanding presence and is resourceful, confident and steadfastly loyal to his friends. His girlfriend the wealthy and beautiful Rory Roughton is a firebrand who's firm in her resolve to curb Hardin's drinking, but not always constant in love as she bonds too quickly, emotionally and physically with her captor. Alexsie Yazov the Russian mercenary, an enemy turned ally seems tenacious and hard, but is loyal to his friends and has a soft spot for beautiful women.

Of the other colourful characters in the plot Wes Stoddard, Hardin's best friend is a shrewd, likeable and clever pilot; Buck Bateman the quick-witted licensed PI with a droll sense of humor; and Frederick Ochoa, the heartlessly cruel and vengeful drug lord. In this novel all these personalities and more, add to the spice, drama and energy of an intoxicating plot.

I thoroughly enjoyed "South of Good" which I won through Goodreads Giveaways and have added Randall Reneau to my list of favorite crime novelists.

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### **Cassandra says**

South of Good was an action packed ride right from the very start and it featured some unusual and interesting characters. This is not one book that I would class as realistic, but it did not stop it from being a fun and entertaining read. In fact, this is one of those books where unusual plot twists simply make the story

better. I liked the flow of the story overall and some of the plot twists were both entertaining and exciting. My one issue with this book is the narrative wasn't always clear, particularly when the narrative moved away from the main character. Nevertheless, this did not diminish my enjoyment of the book.

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### **Maggie Thom says**

This is a good crime mystery. It will take you on a wild ride as Sheriff Hardin takes on the drug cartel and other bad guys. His plan is to stop or at least do some serious damage to the drug trade but that just stirs up serious trouble for him that is very personal. He finds himself having to make several decisions about how far outside the law he was willing to step. I enjoyed the quirky humor and I really enjoyed many of the conversations, the dialogue. I thought it was generally well done and felt very real. For me the story was missing a bit of depth and lead up to some of the events. It is worth a read, it's definitely action-packed.

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### **MWPB says**

Last Man Standing – A review of the novel ‘South of Good’

“Adventure is not outside man; it is within” - George Eliot

Author Randall Reneau’s latest novel ‘South of Good’ is the first in a series of Hardin Steel books with its titular protagonist Hardin Steel. Stainless to those close to him, Hardin is an ex DEA officer turned elected sheriff of a small county in Texas. When Rory, his girlfriend gets kidnapped due to his association with a long time friend Wes Stoddard, a drug running pilot; that’s when everything starts going south. Hardin and his PI friend Buck and Wes have to now deal with Mexican drug cartels, a Russian Mercenary and Cuban gangs and also find a way out of the various dangers which seem to be creeping up on them from all sides.

South of Good introduces Hardin Steel as the sheriff / vigilante dishing out justice to those who deserve it; he is a rugged adventure seeking hero who always seems to be one step ahead of his antagonists. The good thing about author Randall Reneau’s writing is that he seems very sure of what he has set out to do. There isn’t any trickery or trying to sensationalize the story or awe the reader with poetic prose. He is a good old story teller in the truest sense of the word, someone who is in complete control of the pacing of the story and the dialogues his characters speak. His main focus isn’t necessarily on concealing the ‘mystery’ in the adventure story but rather on great characterizations and this is what drives the story forward too. He manages to catch hold of the reader’s attention early on and leaves them always wanting more. And that is where the beautifully crafted character of Hardin comes in handy, because no matter what else is going on in the background, you will always be thinking about what Hardin’s next move will be and guessing how he will react next. Along with him, Randall has created some interesting supporting characters as well and they float in and out of the story overwhelmed by our hero.

Even though this is the first book in the series, Randall has created his characters and given them such settings that it is more than implied that they all have been in each other’s lives for a long time. You have to hand it over to Randall for the unpretentious ease with which the plot lines and themes come to him, almost as if he has been living this alternate life of the protagonist in secret. Balancing economy of words with reading fluidity, Randall Reneau has created a highly detailed and accurate landscape for his characters to

operate out of. By establishing the flavour and the routine the characters follow in this book, he has already made it easy for the readers to acclimatise and look forward to the rest of the books in the series. And having a super villain like Frederick Ochoa and making Hardin come one up on Ochoa every time is pure guilty pleasure inducing material.

At the end, it's hard to say who has left you more impressed, the no-nonsense hero Hardin Steel or his creator Randall Reneau. South of Good is a masterful example of how a talented author can manipulate readers at a very visceral level with quick pacing and rapid development of the plot that helps to create a sense of tension that begins on the first page and never lets up. With an excellent plot, well drawn characters and detailed descriptions of red hot scenarios, this should easily find top slot in any reader's wishlist.

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### **Amanda Walker says**

I received this book via First Reads.

I was very excited to receive this book, being a fan of the genre (adventure/humor). The book description grabbed me as well.

Cameron County Sheriff Hardin Steel (who goes by the nickname Stainless) has a job history with the DEA. Now in charge of law and order in a southern Texas county, his contacts and friends from all walks of life come in handy when his best friend is nearly shot out of the sky while delivering a load of pot. This instance begins a roll of events which lead Steel and his friends to Cuba, Mexico, and the British Virgin Islands.

The premise of the novel is good, but there are some parts that seem unnecessary. The relationship between Steel and his girlfriend seems a little forced to make the story work. Additionally, the point of view of some sections is unclear - does Steel know what the Mexican drug cartel is thinking? It's written as if he does, which becomes confusing in some parts. Other paragraphs/sections are then without a character backing - it's just information presented to give the story more background.

The author does write very visually, which I appreciated. I was able to follow the characters well. I did note some spelling/grammar errors every few pages.

All in all, parts of the story felt forced, like a puzzle that didn't quite go together, but I understood the overall storyline. I like the idea of the novel, and I think with a little more polish, it could be really good.

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### **Lou Wooten says**

I ENJOYED THIS BOOK FROM THE FIRST PAGE TO THE LAST PAGE..I'LL READ MORE BOOKS BY RANDALL RENEAU IN THE FUTURE

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### **Tom says**

A bizarre story about some very immature male friends who are also written as very shallow characters.

Steel is now a sheriff who was once in the DEA. His antics leave no doubt as to why he's no longer with the DEA, but rather, "how did he make it 20 years there?"

Most of the other characters are less than believable, reminding you of those in a cheaply done film. That said, it was a short read, which left me feeling like it was just a short, fun trip.

The writing wasn't bad. The author should just spend a bit more time developing his characters, as well as letting the plot develop itself a bit more. This author has the capability, and I'll bet will produce something meaningful in the future.

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### **Peter says**

I received this book via First Reads.

I really enjoyed this book. A fast snappy intriguing story line with lots of twists and turns. Not the ending I expected, but it left me wanting to read the next instalment to find out what happens. I assimilated with Hardin Steel, the main character, mostly good, with a touch of bad, like most of us. I'm looking forward to more of Hardin Steel.

It's an easy read.

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### **Contentmo says**

#### **Hardin Steele and crew entertain you on every page**

From Texas to Mexico, Cuba and the British Virgin Islands, this criss crossing adventure is a real page turner that will keep you at the edge of your seat. Looking forward to diving into Book 2!

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### **Brenda says**

I won this novel with Goodreads & when it arrived - I thought "Oh, no - it is a man's book" just from the cover. I know that I would not have picked it up and bought it at the book store. I have put off reading it and picked it up the other day and finished it pronto.

I was thrilled. It got me at the first chapter - I had to keep reading to find out what was happening. As it was getting closer and closer to the end - I kept thinking no, it cannot be so soon finished. I really was amazed and I thoroughly enjoyed the writing and pace of the novel.

Thank you. I will definitely be looking for other books by Randal Reneau!

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### **Angela Fristoe says**

I was pleasantly surprised by South of Good. This is not a genre that I typically read, yet from the blurb South of Good sounded interesting enough that I decided to give it a try. The first thing I have to say is that this book came across to me very much as a man's book, which I am not. For me it's like watching Rambo (which I do love by the way). There is nothing in there that women typically go for (true love/romance, high emotion or personal drama, waxing poetic, etc.), yet it still manages to appeal to some of us simply because it is an interesting story. I would attribute that mainly to Reneau's writing style. His writing is clean and to the point. He doesn't bog it down with unnecessary filler, such as long internal monologues or with extended metaphors that seem to go on forever. Yet he still manages to capture the essence of his main character within the first couple of chapters. Hardin comes across as a very real character. Although aspects of him border on stereotypical, they never cross the line. This was worth the read.

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### **Sue says**

Thanks to Goodreads and the author Randall Reneau for giving me the opportunity to read this book. South of Good is an action packed, fast paced thriller. In this book Hardin Steel is a former DEA agent who was forced out of that job and is now County Sheriff in Cameron County, Texas. In trying to help an old friend stop pot smuggling into the US from Mexico, Steel and two of his friends become a target of the head of a drug cartel in Mexico, wanted by the Cuban Mafia, and involved with a Russian mercenary. This is the first book in the Hardin Steel series. I look forward to reading the next one, and think this book would make a great movie.

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