



## Hawke's Point

*Mark Willen*

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## **Hawke's Point** Mark Willen

Jonas Hawke may be past his prime, a recovering alcoholic with bouts of crankiness and sheer orneriness, but he's still a damned good lawyer. That's why everyone in Beacon Junction turns to him for advice as soon as something goes wrong. And plenty does—murder, adultery, corporate conspiracy—everything you'd expect from a small, sleepy Vermont town.

When a mysterious stranger shows up to question Jonas's handling of a 20-year-old murder trial, Jonas is forced to confront an ethical lapse in his past. And when evidence surfaces that a heart stent made by a local company may be doing more harm than good, he is drawn into an ethical quagmire that will determine how he'll be remembered.

## **Hawke's Point Details**

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Author : Mark Willen

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# From Reader Review Hawke's Point for online ebook

## Eric Slud says

This novel unfolds a plot in which secrets and human frailty are revealed through the conversations and thoughts of characters who carefully weigh the ethical consequences of what they tell and whom they confront. It is written in a simple and direct style which carries the reader along without calling attention to itself. The method of telling the story is based on transparency -- we learn facts about the past and about current secrets at the same time as the main characters do. The novel has a natural conversational tone throughout, which is an effective way of keeping us engaged with the story. That tone is maintained in the main characters' introspections. Much of the plot is advanced through dialogue in which characters give information and advice to each other. It is a mark of the author's considerable skill that he fashions so many characters as believable conversational partners.

The novel has some deft touches which are tangential to the novel's main concerns but evoke recognizable and true emotions. Examples are the widow Nancy's helplessness before the closets full of her late husband's clothes, Jonas's musings about gardens as he walks past his neighbors' yards, and the call girl's additional role as the town's provider of comfort food.

On several occasions throughout the novel, we see the evasions and hesitations characters go through before deciding to open up to one another. This is one of the author's recurrent themes, the decision to connect emotionally with others.

This book is satisfying on multiple levels. The flow is gripping, and I found it hard to put down. The secrets revealed are interesting, and the characters and their concerns are involving and real. This book is well worth a serious reader's time and attention.

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## K C Smith says

First, I should note that I won this book in the Giveaway. Second, I understand that this is the Author's first published novel. Disclaimers aside, I must state that I would have gladly purchased this book and I eagerly await Mr. Willen's next work.

Hawke's Point explores timely moral themes in a small Vermont town. While the main characters, namely Jonas, Emma, and Mary Louise, strike a familiar chord, don't assume they're always predictable. Willen loves complication; his story lines, human dynamics, and characters reverberate within layers.

Mr. Willen develops the story gradually, complete with twists (and a couple of knots) and ethical questions. Along the journey, he introduces each character as though he or she is a neighbor or co-worker. The main character, Jonas, is a wonderful combination of intelligence, sadness, trustworthiness, loyalty, and regret. He leads the reader through a set of circumstances that demands confronting the past while charging into the future.

I thoroughly enjoyed Hawke's Point; Willen's initial work is worthy of recognition it will undoubtedly receive.

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## **M.L. Doyle says**

The first thing you'll notice about Hawk's Point are the atmospherics. The story takes place in Beacon Junction, a little place where everyone knows everyone, the small town newspaper prints things everyone has an opinion on, a place where you can predict where someone will be, according to their habit, at any time of the day and life seems to progress on an expected, and steady pace and that's just how this story is; evenly paced and fully explored.

But like most small towns, dig a little deeper and there's much more going on, everyone has secrets, everyone has losses they are fighting through and they all seem to be struggling with something significant as we all do. The ethical dilemmas abound in this story. Who is right? Who is wrong? Does it matter?

Does it matter that the woman who cooks the best breakfast is also the town prostitute, servicing multiple regular clients? Does it matter that the main source of income in the town is producing a product that is dangerous, possibly fatal? Does it matter that everyone has secrets? Should you try to find out what the secrets are?

The town teeters on a ledge between its continued existence and one that could disappear should the main business in town go away. And it seems the lives of all the characters are teetering, between living a simple small town life and facing the dilemmas they've avoided for decades but seem now, to have to face.

It's a great story, wholly engrossing and well told. I could hardly put it down. A must read for anyone who likes a thoughtful, well-paced mystery.

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## **Kent Hackmann says**

I was drawn completely into the book and finished it in a single read. I warmed to the small town Vermont settling and its relaxed environment where progressively complex relations between the characters unfolded. The town also provided a context for the exploration of contemporary moral and ethical issues. Did a widely marketed stent, manufactured by the town's major business, cause deaths? Did management inappropriately, even illegally, hide facts from the FDA? Should an employee go public with his suspicions? Should the townspeople tolerate a discreet, middle-aged prostitute? Willens explores these difficult issues without preaching or offering simple answers.

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## **Andrew Schneider says**

"It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautified countryside."

- Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Copper Beaches."

Anyone familiar with Agatha Christie's Miss Marple or TV's "Murder, She Wrote" knows the truth of Holmes' maxim. Small towns are just as likely to harbor crime and corruption as any big city. With that in mind, it's easy to look at a book like "Hawke's Point" and expect a similar storyline. A small town in Vermont. A retired lawyer, now co-owner of a bed and breakfast. A long unsolved murder. A corporate coverup involving the town's main employer, formerly run by the murder victim. And mysterious stranger shows up in town, seeking the truth.

Full disclosure: The author is a former supervisor of mine. We worked together for several years at Kiplinger Washington Editors.

This is not a book for readers looking for easy answers. "Hawke's Point" is more a human drama than a puzzle in a bucolic setting. It's about people coming to terms with decisions and mistakes they've made, sometimes decades in the past, that have colored their lives and, sometimes, have caused great pain to themselves and others around them.

I enjoyed my visit to Beacon Junction, Vermont, and spending time with Jonas Hawke and his family. This is Willen's first novel. I sincerely hope there'll be a second one soon.

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### **Bette Crosby says**

Good book. Enjoyed the writing style.

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### **Pgricchi says**

#### **A satisfying small town tale**

I hate writing headlines, but apparently it is mandatory.

This novel has no flights of fancy, no profound observations or stunning descriptions. It has a fine sense of place; and the narrative and dialogue are highly competent, but not much more.

What impresses is the plot and its gradual development, and the hero, surviving his imperfections. The characters are finely judged, and you have probably met every one.

Seventy years ago, Frank Capra would have made a movie of this book.

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### **Sandy says**

I read the second book in this series first, liked it a lot, and then bought this one. It is every bit as good, with wonderfully drawn characters who I liked and identified with, despite their flaws. Like the second book, the plot is slow at times, but I didn't mind it. The people, the conflicts, the town, and the ethical questions posed, were all fascinating and left me much to think about afterwards. Great dialogue, a main character you'll want for a grandfather, and a sassy unusual female character who adds a bit of humor all make it a good read. I recommend it.

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## **Cindy Young-Turner says**

Hawke's Point is a thought-provoking read that examines the lives of the residents of Beacon Junction, a small Vermont town. There is something about small-town New Englanders (I happen to be one of them) and Mr. Willen gets it right, which for me added to the authenticity of the novel. His characters are fascinating--from retired lawyer Jonas, who continues to wrestle with ethical dilemmas, to Craig, who is employed by one of the main companies in Beacon Junction and wrestling with going to the FDA about the company's possible faulty heart stent, to Mary Louise, who is by day cook at the local B&B and by night a call girl.

Each character in the story has made choices that reverberate throughout the plot. There are family mysteries, ethical choices, and above all the effects that these decisions have on other people as well as themselves. In the beginning of the book Jonas has tried to wall himself off from the rest of the world, and it's interesting to see the small changes he undergoes as the story progresses. All of the characters and their relationships felt very real and at times poignant and bittersweet.

The story unfolds at a measured pace, which I felt matched the pace of life in Beacon Junction, and the plot kept me turning the pages to find out how the mysteries would unfold. Recommended to those who enjoy well-written, character-driven novels! A great debut for Mark Willen.

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## **Sally Whitney says**

Almost every day people are forced to choose between right and wrong. Usually these decisions involve minor issues, but sometimes they can be life-altering. Taken together, they define who we are. In Mark Willen's new novel, *Hawke's Point*, an accumulation of decisions, past and present, build characters who hurt, yearn, regret, and still hope as deeply as your wife, your brother, or yourself. They are real, which means as a reader I struggled with them in every choice they had to make.

The title character, Jonas Hawke, is a retired lawyer who thinks his decision-making days are pretty much over, his caliber, for good or ill, already determined by his past. His wife, Emma, is also settled in her life, having dealt with grief and remorse and found a place in her psyche to contain them. Their son and daughter are working to establish their place in the world as all young adults do. And in Jonas and Emma's bed-and-breakfast, the live-in cook, Mary Louise, is genially pursuing her two careers, preparing meals by day and entertaining men at night.

For all of them, life is manageable, maybe even good, in the small town of Beacon Junction, Vermont, until two forces rise up to pierce the fragile peace. The first is Steven Delacourt, a young man whose grandfather was the founder of Harrison Health Devices, Inc., a major employer in Beacon Junction, until he was murdered. Steven's father, Richard, was tried and acquitted of murdering his father-in-law, with Jonas serving as his lawyer. Steven and his mother moved away from Beacon Junction after the trial, and she's contended that Richard was guilty ever since. Steven comes back to try to find out the truth about his dad and discovers that Jonas and Emma know more than they revealed at the time of the trial.

The second disturbing force is the conscience of Craig Whitney, a man who works at Harrison and is an

evening client of Mary Louise. Craig correctly suspects that one of Harrison's blood vessel stents has a serious problem that should be reported to the FDA. Instead of making the report, Harrison's officers have chosen to try to fix the problem and keep the matter to themselves. Craig tells the CEO about his concerns, but the CEO assures him everything is under control and tells him not to worry. Craig is not convinced. Not knowing what to do, he tells Mary Louise about his concerns at one of their sessions. Given her connections with some of the influential men in town, she thinks she might be able to generate pressure on Harrison and solve the problem without getting Craig more involved.

Her plan is not as successful as she hoped, and she turns to Jonas for advice.

Once the lid is off, all of Willen's characters have to decide what to do. Should Jonas and Emma tell Steven what they know about his father? How will their son and daughter react if they learn their parents' secret? As the mother of two adult sons, I found this dilemma very interesting, although it was one of the more minor considerations in the book. Should Craig report Harrison to the FDA? Should Jonas report Harrison to the FDA? Should Mary Louise keep pushing others to create pressure on Harrison? And eventually, Mary Louise has another critical decision to make when one of her clients asks her to marry him.

Sometimes I agreed with what the characters did and sometimes I didn't. But I was always intrigued and rooting for them to do the right thing. In this way, Hawke's Point is haunting. Is anyone ever completely sure they made the right decision? I don't know if Willen's characters always made the right decision, but they gave me a lot to think about, and that's the kind of novel I like. I'll be thinking about these people for a long time.

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### **Chrissy (The Every Free Chance Reader) says**

Did I enjoy this book: Not too much.

Mr. Willen had a great story idea. This book was bursting with possibilities, but I couldn't enjoy it for two reasons.

First, writing style. The story read more like a newspaper article than a passionate work of fiction. The narrator spent most of his time telling us the story rather than allowing the reader to experience it. I didn't feel like I was in the scene. I couldn't hear the character's voices in my head. I felt like an observer, and for me that was boring.

The second turnoff for me was a subjective one. Mary Louise was a prostitute – not like the ones on the street corners getting beaten up by pimps and raped by clients – more like a Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* type of prostitute. Here's an excerpt from the book:

"Jonas, being an attorney and all, generally believed in enforcing the law, but he was never bothered by Mary Louise. He knew prostitution often came with some bad side effects, but he felt the higher-end work that Mary Louise engaged in probably did more good than harm, if you could tote up different sides of a ledger that way . . . If anything, he felt sorry for the guys who didn't have the money to spare for an hour's pleasure."

I would love for Mr. Willen to volunteer at a rescue center for prostitutes. Repeated beatings, sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted children, and drug abuse are just a few of the "bad side

effects” of prostitution. To suggest that Mary Louise is performing a valuable public service is abhorrent and offensive.

Would I recommend it: No.

As reviewed by Belinda at Every Free Chance Books.

Disclosure: I received a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

<http://everyfreechance.com/2014/07/re...>

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### **Gordon says**

I got this through BookBub. Saw it was a story based on my home state of Vermont, read the preview and wanted to read more. Great story, not a mystery but well crafted. As others have said I hated to put it down but alas I have yet to find a book that will "keep me awake all night". The dialogues between characters was like sitting next to Jonas on that front porch ease dropping. Look forward to Mr Willens next effort.

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### **Gary Garth McCann says**

Besides being a thoroughly engaging read with an intricate plot, Hawke's Point is impressive for the author's ability to move from the point-of-view of one to another of the novel's ensemble of well-developed characters. We meet each as they are in the throes of ethical dilemmas lingering from a years-past instance of adultery and an unsolved murder, both brought to the present when the estranged son of the man acquitted for the murder comes to the small Vermont town near Bellows Falls. He checks into the Sunrise Bed and Breakfast, owned by the lawyer who defended his father. The young man finds none of the older residents of Beacon Junction willing to tell him anything about the father whom he never knew. As he pushes for answers, old-timers realize the young man is going to uncover secrets and expose the questionable behavior of more than one person close to their hearts. As the older folks rise to the threat, they face their own ethical dilemmas, including what to do about the fact that the town's only remaining economically-viable employer may be playing Russian roulette with the lives of its medical-patient customers.

Willen's style brought to my mind that of Richard Russo. I've enjoyed all of Russo's novels and look forward to reading another novel by Willen.

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### **Noah W says**

A great read.

I didn't really know what to expect from this--it seemed to have elements of mystery, legal thriller, and literary fiction, and I don't often read about protagonists in their 70s--but this turned out to be something pretty rare: a thoughtful and thought-provoking literary novel with a genuinely interesting and suspenseful plot.



The book has two main threads. In the first, Craig Whitney, a scientist working for a medical devices company, has to decide whether to expose the company's cover-up of fatalities resulting from their new heart stent. In the second, a stranger named Steven Delacourt appears in town to investigate the mysterious circumstances of a courtroom drama twenty years before, in which his father was tried for the murder of his (Steven's) grandfather. The ways these stories intertwine and illuminate each other is revealed in a gradual and well-controlled buildup of suspense, but they both come to revolve around retired lawyer Jonas Hawke.

The story has a big cast--everyone in the small Vermont town of Beacon Junction is connected in interesting and often unexpected ways--and the characters are multilayered and realistic, particularly Jonas Hawke and the 30-something prostitute Mary Louise. And Willen is at his best when delivering spot-on insights into grief and the grieving process, as well as the tangled nuances of legal and ethical dilemmas. It's amazing that the ending manages to be satisfying on multiple levels when the conflicts in this book are so intricate and thorny.

Although there are lots of really tense and dramatic issues at play here--an unsolved murder, blackmail, a tragic car accident, a secret affair that destroys a family, a mishandled trial--the majority of the most sensational moments happen in the past, before the story begins, and instead, it's the repercussions that the story is mainly concerned with. The majority of the drama here occurs in well-constructed dialogue and argument scenes, and in the many momentous and difficult decisions the characters have to make. Much of the book takes place in only a few repeating locations--the porch of a bed-and-breakfast; the room of Mary Louise, the high-priced prostitute; the executive offices of the medical devices corporation. But the story works because you can feel the danger of a fraught and scandalous past constantly bubbling up underneath. I think most of all this is a story about finally reckoning with one's mistakes.

The bottom-line is this. Don't read this expecting a murder mystery or a legal thriller; the suspense is much subtler than that, and the questions the book is interested in are much less simplistic than who-done-it. But if you're looking for a story that uses dramatic real-life problems and well-drawn characters to make you evaluate and re-evaluate several fascinating contemporary ethical dilemmas and the limits and importance of the law, then this book is for you.

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## **Hannelore Moore says**

Hawke's Point quietly explores how the residents of a small town – in this case, Beacon Junction, Vermont – react to an ethical dilemma. What would you do if you worked for a company that manufactured faulty medical devices? Would you keep quiet and hope someone else brought this problem to the authorities' attention? Would you timidly try to approach management and hope they saw reason? Would you storm in to do the right thing and feel that you'd finally found a purpose in life, even if it meant that you were now in the spotlight and all your secrets were exposed?

The author, Mark Willen, deftly explores the varied reactions of at least seven major players – and a handful of supporting ones – without losing the reader. I was able to follow, and more importantly, sympathize, with these characters' different takes on this situation, whether Willen was focusing on Craig, a timid scientist; Mary Louise, a happy-go-lucky call girl; or Jonas, the retired lawyer who had "retreat[ed] from life."

Although the legal and medical aspects of the ethical dilemma were handled with confidence, I found myself

more engaged when Willen explored personal conflicts, especially Mary Louise's interaction with a client who wanted more. The outcome of that subplot was real and satisfying, even though it may have been disappointing for the characters involved. Extremely well done. I wish the other backstories had been similarly developed: Craig's struggle to connect with his sons after a divorce and Nathan's relationship with an estranged girlfriend.

A direct, well-written read and a great way to see the many sides of a complicated situation. I hope to see more from Mark Willen ... soon!

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