



Night Is the Hunter

Steven Gore

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From the author of *Act of Deceit* and *A Criminal Defense* comes the third book in the thrilling series featuring ex-SFPD detective Harlan Donnally.

They call it pulling the trigger.

Not by a killer in the night, but by a judge on the bench.

Twenty years ago, Judge Ray McMullin proved to the people of San Francisco he could pull that trigger by sentencing Israel Dominguez to death for a gangland murder. But it meant suppressing his own doubts about whether the punishment really did fit the crime.

As the execution date nears, the conscience-wracked judge confesses his unease to former homicide detective Harlan Donnally on a riverbank in far Northern California. And after immersing himself in the Norteño and Sureño gang wars that left trails of bullets and blood crisscrossing the state and in the betrayals of both cops and crooks alike, Donnally is forced to question not only whether the penalty was undeserved, but the conviction itself.

Soon those doubts and questions double back, for in the aging judge's panic, in his lapses of memory and in his confusions, Donnally begins to wonder whether he's chasing facts of the case or just phantoms of a failing mind. But there's no turning back, for the edge of night is fast closing in on Dominguez, on McMullin, and on Donnally himself.

Night Is the Hunter Details

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From Reader Review Night Is the Hunter for online ebook

Barbara Mitchell says

This is my second Steven Gore novel but won't be my last. His hero, Harlan Donnally, is a cerebral former cop with a highly developed sense of right and wrong. Add in a pinch of action and danger and you have a satisfying read with a great story and characters who actually think about important issues.

Israel Dominguez is the subject of the plot in this one. He has spent 20 years on death row for the murder of a gang rival. Now he is nearing execution and the judge who presided at his original trial has admitted his doubts to his friend Donnally that Dominguez was actually guilty. Gang wars and the passing of time haven't cleared up anything of what happened, but Judge McMullin can't bear to just let it go.

An alternate plot line concerns dementia. Donnally's father, a Hollywood producer familiar to anyone who has read earlier books, is showing signs of it and so is Judge McMullin. As each faces the inevitable in his own way, the emotional toll on Donnally gives this story depth that you normally don't find in a mystery novel. I like the relationship between Donnally and his girlfriend as well. This is an adult committed partnership not based on lust, but not lacking it either.

I really must read Gore's other novels. This is an author who provides thoughtful plots and characters to engage my mind.

Highly recommended

Source: LibraryThing win

Diane Coto says

It's time to come clean. For Judge Ray McMullin, that means confiding in his friend Harlan Donnally about a judgment he made from the bench twenty years ago. The convicted man, Israel Dominguez, is still on death row with time running out. He's reached out in a letter to McMullin. Donnally is a former San Francisco homicide detective. The Judge wants him to review the investigation. On the night of the Edgar Rojo Sr's murder, Rojo had received a phone call, walked to his apartment window on the second floor, and was fatally shot from ground level. But from where Dominguez was standing, was the shot even possible at that extreme angle? They were members of rival gangs — Rojo for the Norteños and Dominguez for the Sureños.

Another reason the Judge wants to revisit this case is his own health. He's showing signs of alzheimers and just needs confirmation – was the conviction valid; was the sentencing fair? Donnally is facing alzheimers in his own family as well. His father, Donald Harlan, a well-known film director, is desperately trying to complete one more film. But, he's very hush-hush about the film. Will it turn out to be a jumbled mess, or a masterpiece?

I liked the character of Harlan Donnally and his longtime girlfriend, Janie Nguyen, who is a Psychiatrist. They are both portrayed as very mature and responsible. The gang members and gang rivalry was described very realistically. Donnally had himself been caught in gang cross-fire just months before the Rojo shooting. But, pacing of the story falls off with the amount of detail provided in his research as well as the by-stories of the Judge's and Donald Harlan's alzheimers. I rated Night is the Hunter at 3.5 out of 5.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: NIGHT OF THE HUNTER by Steven Gore

A compelling thriller, neither current police nor private investigator, in a series involving Harlan Donnally, former San Francisco PD detective, mustered out for disability, who lives in suburban San Francisco with a psychiatrist, operates a cafe in Shasta, fishes, and too frequently gets hooked into troubles not of his own making as a de facto investigator.

In this mystery, a judge invites Donnally into a trial conviction two decades old, with a defendant near execution. Meanwhile, Donnally's father, a film director, is either covering his tracks for his own reasons, or slipping into Alzheimer's.

Michelle says

This was my first book by Steven Gore and I have to say, while it's not my favorite I still liked the perspective. It's very intriguing to read about different points of view and this is mainly from the judge who tells people their fates. I can't imagine that kind of life or what must go through the mind of a judge, even years later. So this book takes you to Harlan Donnally and his interaction to solve the puzzle. Like I said my favorite part of the book is the perspective and there were a few times the book got a little slow for me. Overall I think this was a good read and I'd be curious to see what else the author comes up with.

"I received this book from TLC Book Tours for free in exchange for an honest review."

Bertha says

Ex San Francisco Police detective Harlan Donnally is asked by Judge Ray McMullin to look into a killing that happened twenty years ago. As the execution date of the convicted killer nears, the judge confesses his unease to Donnally. After looking into the Norteno and Sureno gang wars, which left trails of bullets and blood and in the betrayals of both cops and crooks alike, Donnally questions not only whether the penalty was undeserved but the conviction itself.

Even though this is the third book in the series you don't need to read the first two to enjoy this story.

Laura Kivi says

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads

Margot says

Harlan Donnelly is a former San Francisco homicide detective, now living in northern California in a small town near beautiful Mount Shasta. An old friend, Judge Ray McMullen has come to see him so he can fish — or so he says. Harlan knows the judge has something else going on in his head. It takes two days, but finally it pours out.

Judge McMullen is disturbed by a murder case that occurred twenty years ago. The convicted man, Israel Dominguez, was sentenced to death because, allegedly, during a gun fight between rival gang members, he shot and killed one of the gang leaders.

What's really bothering Judge McMullen is that he doesn't think he did the right thing. He feels he didn't do anything except agree with the jury's findings of guilt and sentencing recommendation of death. He remembers wishing he could advise the defense attorney on how to give his client a better defense. The judge is conflicted, but he's pretty sure that, if Dominez really committed the crime, it was not equal to first degree murder.

The judge asks Donnelly to look into the case. Donnelly is still a first-rate detective and the judge knows he can trust Donnelly's help. As Donnelly digs in, there are two things I notice: first, Donnelly is a really good in-depth investigator and second, the author must be a really good in-depth investigator. As I learned, Steven Core is a real-life investigator! It shows — big time — in this seriously good crime novel.

In addition to following a good investigation, I liked looking at the whole justice system through the example of this case. From the police investigation, to the prosecutor's office, to the defense attorney, to the court, this case does not seem to have been handled competently or ethically. There was a strong bias against the defendant because he was a gang member. Although I know most gang members aren't super-clean citizens, I'd like to think that at each point in the justice system, people would want to prove, without a doubt, that he did or did not do the deed. Does the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" still exist? In practice? Lots of issues here.

My final analysis: *Night is the Hunter* is a great story, tight plot, very good characters and an excellent look at issues. I want my book club to read this. In the meantime I'm going to read the other Harlan Donnelly books in the series.

SoWrongItsRANDI {Bell, Book & Candle} says

Bell, Book & Candle | *Night is the Hunter* Review

I absolutely am thrilled to read a book that takes place in the Bay Area! I'm from the East Bay, so reading about the protagonist being in Hunter's Point (which is a very scary place to me), San Francisco and Salinas had me feeling halfway famous because I've been to those cities! Also the topic of Norteños and Sureños brought back memories of high school. I had way too many friends who were in those gangs, plus I've witnessed a few riots between the two.

"You can't escape your history. It makes no sense to try. It just breaks you apart in your heart" - Magdalena

I loved the bits of information about the two gangs; for those of who know very little about the Norteños and Sureños, it will be vital to your understanding of the two. As much as I would prefer to say this novel was an eye-opener about the justice system, it really isn't. There are more people than I'd like to admit that are sitting in jail for a crime they didn't commit, and people who are supposed to uphold the law yet are corrupted by their power. It makes me very wary just thinking about it.

"Dead people are just hand puppets and we're the ventriloquists. And thinking the words we put in their mouths reveal real insight into who they were and what they would've done is a delusion" - Donnally

I enjoyed the mystery and suspense aspect, and the way it managed to keep me guessing throughout the entire book. Not to mention the way everything seemed interconnected: like a ripple effect caused by a single action. I don't want to assume, but I feel that it may have been the author's intention...and I loved every minute of it! On the flip side, I was sort of wondering where the direction of the story was heading in the first few chapters and impatiently awaiting for major bombshells to be dropped. Other than that, I haven't any other complaints: the writing was good as were the characters and the ending.

Joan says

Judge Ray McMullin finds himself wondering if his death sentence for a man convicted of a gangland murder was truly punishment that fit the crime and confesses his doubts to his ex-San Francisco homicide detective friend.

When Harlan Donnally sets out to look into the case and provide an answer for the judge, he discovers evidence of betrayals that force him to question both the sentencing and the conviction. As he comes between two rival gangs, events from his past return to haunt him once more.

There is gritty realism in the characterizations of the gang members and their confrontations and there is much to like in the character of Harlan Donnally. Ultimately, however, wading through convoluted threads of gangland murders, Harlan's own injury in a shooting, and the cruelty of memory-stealing Alzheimer's disease leaves the reader feeling flummoxed.

Although the telling of this tale is often jumbled, there are moments when the action truly pulls the reader into the story. Unfortunately, they are few and far between, making it easy for readers to set this book aside. Despite the author's insightful writing, the story never becomes truly compelling for the reader.

Theresa says

I won a copy of Night is the Hunter by Steven Gore in a giveaway for free on Goodreads First/Reads. Very excited to read and review this one... ;) Thank You!!

Julie says

Former homicide detective Harlan Donnally has offered to help Judge Ray McMullin by looking into a killing that took place twenty years ago. McMullin presided over the case and sentenced Israel Dominguez to death. But now, as the execution day draws near, the judge is questioning the sentence. And as Donnally gets deeper into the Norteno and Sureno gang wars, he starts to question whether Dominguez even committed the crime at all.

Night Is the Hunter by Steven Gore is part of a series of thrillers that feature Donnally, but it stands alone (I haven't read any of the other books in the series and didn't feel I missed anything). It's an intriguing mixture of criminal investigation, legal interpretation and personal struggles, as Donnally worries about his father who is exhibiting signs of Alzheimer's. Gore, who has a background as a private investigator, clearly knows his stuff about law and crime, and incorporates authentic details throughout the story.

As far as the characters go, Donnally is a genuine guy who is determined to find the truth ~ to ease McMullin's mind and to help ensure justice really has been served in the sentencing of Dominguez. The inner workings of the two gangs, their histories, and the impact the gangs have on the men and families involved with them seemed quite realistic and led me to feel for some of the characters who are technically bad guys.

The pace of the story was quick, although some of the legal details do take some time to digest. Donnally's father was a bit of an odd character, and I expect perhaps there is more to his story in previous novels in this series. His portion of the storyline provided a bit of a break from the criminal investigation, but wasn't my favorite part.

Overall, this was an engaging thriller that made me think and care about the characters. If you enjoy crime fiction and legal thrillers, I definitely recommend Night is the Hunter.

Samantha says

Summary from Goodreads:

"They call it pulling the trigger.

Not by a killer in the night, but by a judge on the bench.

Twenty years ago, Judge Ray McMullin proved to the people of San Francisco that he could pull that trigger by sentencing Israel Dominguez to death for a gangland murder. But it meant suppressing his own doubts about whether the punishment really did fit the crime.

Now, as the execution date nears, the conscience-wracked judge confesses his unease to former homicide detective Harlan Donnally on a riverbank in far Northern California. And after immersing himself in the Norteno and Sureno gang wars, which left trails of bullets and blood crisscrossing the state, and in the betrayals of both cops and crooks alike, Donnally is forced to question not only whether the penalty was undeserved but the conviction itself."

My Thoughts:

Night is the Hunter is one of those slow building mysteries where the suspense level slowly creeps up on you until it explodes at the very end. I really enjoyed this one for a variety of reasons but the main one was the way the author used age and a person's memories to really add to the mystery in this book. It was done in a way that left the main character Harlan Donnally questioning what really happened and the truth behind what he was finding out. I was questioning the truth in everything as well, and I feel like this sense of unreality really added to the atmosphere of the story. In fact, there were multiple instances throughout the book where age and memory played key points. Judge McMullin comes to Donnally struggling with the possibility that he made the wrong decisions and a young man is about to be executed because of it. He is getting older and his memories from that time are questionable at best. As Donnally begins to dig into the case he begins to realize that he is finding more questions than answers. All of this combined to create such a great atmosphere where I as the reader never really knew what was going on. I loved how the author used all of these different questions to really add to the mystery!

The mystery was great and I fully admit that I didn't figure it out on my own even though I was trying. The ending was actually really great because of this and because the author managed to throw in one final surprise. But what really left me intrigued was at the end of this book in a sort of afterwards the author goes on to talk about the law and how each of his books are based on problems found within the justice system. Say what?!? And then he goes on explain the law that he was using in this book and explain how it relates in understandable terms. The best part though is his explanation of how it relates to this book using the ending as an example. Be still my bookish heart! I absolutely love learning something new but then going back through and seeing how it was used in the story. Excellent choice! This may be the best ending to a mystery ever! I've always liked when mysteries or books are based on actual events and this is kind of like that but different. Definitely something that I appreciated though!

Overall, I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be reading more from this series! I've been lucky so far this year to find some great new to me authors and Gore is definitely on that list. The author takes his time building both the mystery and suspense but it is worth the wait! And learning something new just makes it even better. Another book that I can easily recommend!!!

Bottom Line: A solid mystery with a great sense of unreality!

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book from the publisher as part of a TLC book tour. Thoughts are my own!

Beth Cutwright says

In every situation in life, there is the good, the bad and the ugly. Cliche' but so true. Steven Gore is a master storyteller dealing with all three. His characters come to life on the page. They are realistic, dimensional, and suffer all the mental frailties humans are plagued with.

Gore masters a thought provoking and investigative suspense tale as he weaves in and out of the lives of his characters. His story is revealed one nuance at a time, thoughtfully, well plotted and flows smoothly. This novel also explored an aging mind as a sub story and was well delivered.

I recommend it to all who enjoy mystery suspense and love accompanying the Harlan Donnally's of the

world as they figure out the who and why dun its. Very enjoyable read.

Jud Hanson says

Night is the Hunter by Steven Gore features the return of former homicide detective Harlan Donnally as he tries to soothe a judge's conscience by investigating case in which the sentence was death. Judge McMullin sentenced a young man to death twenty years earlier for a gangland murder. He had his doubts then and now that the execution date is fast approaching, he has to know if his decision was the right one. Enter Harlan Donnally, who McMullin asks to take a second look at the case and report back to him. Donnally must enter the dicey world of West Coast gangs and what he discovers shines an entirely different light on the events of two decades ago.

This is the first book I've read by Gore, although not the first in the Donnally series. The characters are well developed and the plot engaging. Gore has done an excellent job in researching police procedures and this, along with his experience investigating a variety of crimes as a private investigator, is what makes this book such a worthwhile read. I fully intend to go back and read the first two novels of this series and happily give this book 4/5 stars.

A copy of this book was the only compensation received for this review.

Marcia says

I won this book on Goodreads. It is the first Steven Gore book I have read, and I look forward to reading others. I thought the story had suspense and kept the reader's interest to the end. The author had a remarkable ability to understand diverse characters and their motivations. Two other stories ran parallel to the main story. One concerned Donnally's father's increasing dementia, and the other centered on the shooting during which Donnally himself was wounded. Both of these would continue in future novels.
