

Quotes and reviews Michael A. Black

A KILLING FROST

(2002)

Five Star

“Ron Shade is a great addition to the world of private eyes. His life, and his first case, show the depth and texture of a mature writer. His creator, a long-time Chicago area police officer, brings the same inside knowledge of police investigations and politics readers get from Joseph Wambaugh.”

—Sara Paretsky on *A Killing Frost*

“Professional gamblers always get to the fights early. If you watch those four-round prelims close enough, you can pick out tomorrow’s champions, and get your money down early in the game. Read Mike Black’s stunning debut, *A Killing Frost*, and you’ll see exactly what I mean. Mike Black breathes new life—and rare authenticity—into the classic American PI genre. If you like your action hardboiled and unrelenting, you can’t go wrong with Ron Shade.”

—Andrew Vachss

“Mike Black’s *A Killing Frost* is a chiller of a thriller and a killer of a debut by a welcome new talent from the Windy City. Black writes about Chicago with a keen eye and gritty edge that makes the streets come alive. Bring on the sequel!

—Paul Engleman

“Mike Black really delivers in his debut novel: a gritty, appealing private investigator, fast pacing and an issue as relevant as today’s headlines.”

—D. C. Brod

From Publishers Weekly

Police officer and short story writer Michael A. Black likewise brings authenticity to *A Killing Frost: A Ron Shade Novel*. A search for a missing fiancé, who turns up floating dead in a canal, leads Chicago PI Ron Shade into far more trouble than he bargained for in this assured debut in the classic hard-boiled tradition, which boasts blurbs from Sara Paretsky and Andrew Vachss. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

This intriguing first mystery by a police officer features Ron Shade, a Chicago-area tough-guy P.I. and martial arts aficionado. Looking for Carlos, an illegal immigrant gone missing, Ron hears conflicting stories from his shifty-eyed bosses and the other illegal immigrants with whom Carlos toils at dangerous tasks. The scene predictably shifts to murder, complicating Ron’s employment, training for a kick-boxing match, and romantic agendas. Black’s steadily engaging narrative and frequent action make this essential for fans of hard-boiled detective fiction.

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From Booklist

Black’s novel rings with the authenticity of an author who is also a full-time Chicago-area

policeman. His hero, Ron Shade, is a former cop who got kicked off the force and is also a champion kickboxer. As the story opens, Shade is approaching 30 and dealing with the departure of his girlfriend and the death of his beloved Chevy. He has replaced the latter with a brand-new Camaro Z-28, and a potential love interest soon arrives in the form of his old friend Maria Castro. She brings Ron a new client: Juanita, whose fiancé, Carlos, has disappeared. As Ron tries to help, he embarks on an exciting new relationship with Maria. Then Carlos is found dead, and Ron zeroes in on his workplace. Unlike Sara Paretsky, who uses Chicago as a major character in her V. I. Warshawski series, Black relegates the city to a backdrop. Still, his strong character development and ability to build suspense will hook readers' interest--and leave them eager for the next installment in what promises to be an engaging series. *Jenny McLarin*
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From Kirkus Reviews:

Having lost his wife to overwork, his job with the Chicago Police Department to politics, his ancient car to natural causes, and his girlfriend to LA, private eye Ron Shade is about to give up his office—why keep it when he has no walk-in clients?—when his old friend, social worker Maria Castro, walks in. Her buddy Juanita's fiancé, Carlos Sanchez, has disappeared from his job at Two Thousand and One: Space Oddities, and since he's a Salvadoran illegal, Juanita doesn't want to go to the police.

By the end of Shade's first visit to the storage facility, it's pretty obvious what's happened to Carlos and who's responsible. But it takes a long time for Shade to trace the spreading stain of fraud, payoffs, and cover-ups as far as it reaches for several reasons: He's busy training for the championship kickboxing fight an earlier job injury robbed him of; the theft of his spiffy new Camaro Z-28 robs him of his wheels just when he thinks he's got nothing left to lose; the clunker he borrows as a replacement needs mechanical work every time he puts the key in the ignition; and his sudden, unexpected romance with Maria makes every hour he's not spending with her feel like he's playing hooky. It isn't long, though, before he learns that fate held worse things in store for Carlos than deportation. *A Killing Frost* is a brawny debut, so foursquare in its characters and prose that you can hardly wait till Shade finally gets to put those kickboxing skills to use.

WINDY CITY KNIGHTS

(2004)

Five Star

“With *A Killing Frost*, his debut novel about private eye Ron Shade, Michael Black was a comer of real promise. With his second, he has arrived. *Windy City Knights* is at once character-driven and rich in plot surprises, action-packed and background-enriched, tough and sentimental, realistic and romantic. Michael Black handles the sleazy milieus of club boxing and full contact karate with irony and a finely tuned ear for nuance, the midnight world of drug dealing with an acute awareness of not only menace but temptation, the love life of his hero with both grace and passion. Best of all, Black knows, as did his idol John D. MacDonald, that in a story of violence and danger, suspense nevertheless means making the reader wait.”

—Author, Stephen Marlowe

Library Journal

Private investigator/kick-boxer Ron Shade runs into his first true love while running hotel security in Chicago. The pair spend a night together, but then she's killed-supposedly by a hit-and-run driver-and Ron's place is ransacked. He investigates her death when he finds that her apartment has been trashed as well. Training for a kick-boxing championship continues, meanwhile, as does an ongoing relationship with three cats. The plot offers plenty of hardcore action in the ring, on the streets, and with some heavyweight thugs, and it showcases the likable protagonist who debuted in *A Killing Frost*. High marks. Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.

From Publishers Weekly

Chicago kickboxer Ron Shade's knight errantry sometimes misfires in his second appearance (after 2002's *A Killing Frost*) from Illinois police sergeant Black, but the throwback PI goes the distance. Shade's work, which includes stints providing security for a downtown hotel and its two bars, doesn't interfere with his ambitious goal of winning the heavyweight kickboxing championship. But his proclivity for rescue work, ranging from an old girlfriend to a stray kitten to a Russian boxer in thrall to a gangster, throws a serious monkey wrench into his plans. Shade's old high school flame, Paula Kittermann, re-enters his life in dramatic fashion, only to become a hit-and-run victim soon after. When Paula's beautiful cousin, whom he remembers as a freckle-faced youngster, asks his help in finding the driver, Shade can hardly refuse. While the supporting cast, among them a crusty trainer, a cop buddy and a cop enemy, is fairly standard issue, Shade himself is an attractive blend of tough guy and sentimental softie. One gets the feeling that Shade may never take top honors in the ring, but he'll always be an entertaining fighter as long as he answers the bell.

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From Booklist:

Readers who applauded the debut of Black's Ron Shade series--*A Killing Frost* (2002)--will find their faith in the new writer justified. This time kickboxing detective Shade, working security at a hotel to pick up a few extra bucks, runs into former flame Paula Kitterman, who is being pushed around by a man. After saving Paula from the creep, whom she claims not to know, Ron invites her back to his place, where passions are rekindled. The next day Paula turns up dead, supposedly the victim of a hit-and-run accident. When Paula's cousin Laurie comes to Chicago to find out what happened, she hires Ron to investigate--and the two soon become romantically involved. As Ron trains for a big fight and helps Laurie search for clues to Paula's death, another body turns up--and Ron becomes the prime suspect. Fans of V. I. Warshawski will appreciate both the hard-boiled yet soft-hearted Shade and the way in which former cop Black captures the grit of Chicago's streets.

THE HEIST

(2005)

Five Star

“The product of a professional is always a treat, especially when a career law enforcement officer has become a marvelous crime writer as well. Michael A. Black’s *The Heist* crackles with an intricate plot, gritty dialogue, and indelible characters. Think ‘Elmore Leonard comes to Chicago’ and you’ll know what I mean.”

—Jeremiah Healy, author of *Turnabout* and *The Only Good Lawyer*

“Ex-Chicago cop Michael J. Black writes about his city (and mine) the way Nelson Algren used to. *The Heist* is tough and uncompromising. There aren’t many good guys on hand, but the bad ones are vivid and colorful enough to make up for it. A fast, hardboiled read.”

—Les Roberts.com

From *Publishers Weekly*

In Black's fast-paced third novel (after 2004's *Windy City Knights*), a stand-alone thriller, the veteran Chicago police officer skillfully interweaves several plot strands—the decision by Johnny "The Mink" Osmand, a high-level Chicago mobster, to cooperate with law enforcement; the schemes of Osmand's boss, Salvatore "Vino" Costelli, to evade prosecution; and the plans of two ex-Marines, Linc Jackson and Rick Weaver, to hit the jackpot by stealing the contents of Osmand's safe-deposit box. Jackson and Weaver don't know that the box holds little of value apart from a videotape documenting a double murder that would put Costelli away for life. When a water-main break disables the security systems of the bank storing the videotape, Jackson and Weaver proceed with the heist of the title, which leads to complicated and unexpected consequences for all parties involved.

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From *Booklist*

Gulf War vets Lincoln Jackson and Rick Weaver fantasize about pulling off a big heist at a bank in the Chicago Loop. When a massive flood in the underground tunnel system disables the alarm systems, the boys spring into action. They target a safety-deposit box owned by a midlevel Mob soldier, but instead of a half-million in cash, they end up with chump change and a videotape showing the Chicago godfather bludgeoning two associates to death. What they don't know is that the *soldato* was leveraging the tape against a federal indictment. Soon the mobster and his lawyer are dead, an assassin has kidnapped Linc's girlfriend, and a cop is hot on their case. Once a marine, always a marine, so as far as Linc and Rick are concerned, it's "pass the Lord and praise the ammunition" as they prepare to exchange the tape for Linc's girlfriend. Black, a Chicago-area cop, knows lawyers, guns, and money very well. Comparisons to a younger Elmore Leonard have been made, but the no-nonsense style and Chicago setting may remind readers more of the late, much-missed Eugene Izzie. *Wes Lukowsky*

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FREEZE ME TENDER

(February 2006)

Five Star

“Part caper, part whodunit, part thriller, I think this is Black’s best work to date... If books were cars, this would be a Jaguar, smooth, sleek, and perfection. FREEZE ME, TENDER should be on everybody’s must read list.”

—Jon Jordan, *Crime Spree Magazine*

“... turns celebrity eccentricities into a story that’s interesting, fast and lots of fun. ...a great read.”

—Jim Born, author of *Walking Money* and *Shock Wave*

“...Not only an engrossing crime novel, but ... also a satire of music celebrities and the nature of fame ... had me smiling all the way through this page-turner.”

—Raymond Benson, author of *Sweetie's Diamonds* and former James Bond novelist.

From *The Chicago Sun-Times*

Michael A. Black, a sergeant with the Matteson Police Department, usually writes about cops, crooks and private eyes, drawing on his decades of experience as a police officer. His new novel, *Freeze Me, Tender* (342 pages, \$25.95), goes off in a completely different direction, and it's a wild one.

The story features at its heart the alleged death and possible reappearance of an overweight, jumpsuit-wearing, much-beloved singer known the world over as the King of Rock and Roll. Sound familiar? In this book he goes by the name of Colton Purcell.

Harry Bauer, a Chicago-based reporter, is determined to find out once and for all if the King still lives, so he plunges headfirst into an investigation that takes him from Memphis to Vegas and lands him smack in the middle of a Colton impersonator contest.

The story is all good fun, yet done with enough care not to be silly. In a book that would make Elmore Leonard proud, Black has created a wild and wacky adventure that represents a surprising but welcome new career direction.

—David Montgomery

A FINAL JUDGMENT

(October 2006)

Five Star

“Michael Black knows his stuff—the shadowy side streets of Chicago and those who lurk there. In *Ron Shade*, he's given readers a PI protagonist who's easy to like. *A FINAL JUDGMENT* combines the best of the genre with a Rocky-like tale that will have you on your feet and cheering. Swear to God, you'll love this book.”

—William Kent Krueger, author of the Cork O'Connor series

From *Kirkus Reviews*

A Chicago shamus and world-class kickboxer juggles a pair of intriguing cases and a chance at a title bout.

On the same morning, private-eye Ron Shade gets two very different job offers. Lawyer Rick Walters hires Shade to help with a civil case. Esteemed physician Todd M. Gooding has escaped conviction for the murder of his wife, Laura, largely because of renowned defense attorney Mason Gilbert's brilliance. Walters's preparation for a wrongful-death suit has been hampered by the suicide of his investigator John Tunney. Less congenially, Shade is asked by his cop pal George to help Lt. Bielmaster, whom Shade remembers without affection from his days on the force.

Bielmaster's daughter Grace has fallen for petty criminal Tim Knop, and Shade's task is to scare the kid off, within the law. He's lukewarm about the assignment, but the sight of Bielmaster ill in a hospital softens him. Shade's knee injury has slowed him down and caused a bit of a weight gain, but his busy schedule makes gym time an additional challenge, even though his trainer, Chappie, is determined to get him into fighting shape for a title bout. Tunney's suicide looks suspicious. Knop doesn't appear to be the thug Bielmaster imagines. And does Shade have a prayer against the Russian behemoth Sergei Seleznyov?

Black's smooth style makes Shade's third escapade (*Windy City Knights*, 2004, etc.) brisk and entertaining.

From *Publishers Weekly*

Despite a less than credible plot, Black's third novel (after 2004's *Windy City Knights*) to feature Chicago kickboxer Ron Shade, has its charms, not least a street-smart, likable hero. Shade, an ex-cop turned PI, reluctantly takes work from his least favorite kind of client, a lawyer, and from the police lieutenant who helped boot him off the force. Lieutenant Bielmaster wants Shade to keep a paroled ex-con away from Bielmaster's daughter, hinting that Shade might get reinstated in the PD in return. Defense attorney Rick Walters recruits Shade's help on a civil wrongful death suit, an attempt to get a measure of justice for a murdered woman whose husband was acquitted, possibly because of a corrupt judge. In his minimal downtime, Shade takes a crack at the world heavyweight kickboxing championship. He faces pretty fierce competition in the ring, but nothing as lethal as the attempts on his life that result from his involvement in the trial. (Oct.)

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From *Booklist*

Black, a police sergeant in Matteson, Illinois, delivers the cadence of cop speech, the virulence of cop politics, and the vagaries of the street as only a cop can. This is the third installment in Black's series about former Chicago cop and current private eye Ron Shade. This time out Shade takes on every cop's nemesis, a crackerjack defense attorney, when an old friend asks Shade to look into a wrongful death suit revolving around the killing of a North Shore woman by her husband, and his subsequent acquittal. And the Chicago Police Department lieutenant who was behind Shade's dismissal from the force asks Shade to look out for his daughter, who is being bothered by a sex offender. Black keeps the action humming, except in the subplot involving Shade's training for the kickboxing championship, which sometimes seems like recycled Robert B. Parker. Still, this is a crisp, fast-moving mystery. *Connie Fletcher*

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MELODY OF VENGEANCE

(January, 2007)

Echelon Press

“Black has created a pulp action hero right out of the forties. The characters come to life as if leaping off of an old movie serial screen. When you pick up this book, make sure you clear your schedule first. This is a perfect homage to the work of Walter B. Gibson, Lester Dent, and Henry W. Ralston. Reading this book was pure fun.”

~Jon Jordan, *Crimespree Magazine*

“In Doc Atlas, author Mike Black has created not just another Doc Savage clone but the best in modern pulp excitement that harkens back to the glory days of pulp adventure, but has real heart, soul, and meaning for today’s readers. You’re in for a real treat with this one”

~ Gary Lovisi, Edgar nominated writer and editor of *Hardboiled Magazine*

“In this action-packed thriller, adventurer Doc Atlas is up against a mob of killers, the mysterious masked vigilante The Wraith, and a hidden mastermind. This is a novel you won’t be able to put down!”

~ Tom Johnson, author of the Jur series and editor of *Pulp Fiction Magazine*

“Whether he’s twisting a tale of mystery or bringing pulp heroes to life, Michael A. Black’s flair for storytelling and his powerful prose win new readers every day. Pick this book up and you’ll become a Michael A. Black fan for life.”

~ Julie A. Hyzy, author of *Deadly Blessings* and *Deadly Interest*

“Michael A. Black writes with a talent and an energy that cannot be contained by any single genre. Whatever he takes aim at, he nails dead-on. Readers are sure to be clamoring for more of Doc Atlas.”

~ Wayne Dundee, author of the Joe Hannibal series.