



## Detective

*Parnell Hall*

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## Detective Parnell Hall

This debut entry in the author's mystery series features actor-turned private investigator Stanley Hastings. Poor Stanley! In a word, his pursuits end in FAILURE. So when Martin Albrecht comes to him with a case for a real detective, Stanley turns him away. Unfortunately, Stanley's damned path leads to his finding Albrecht dead. Well now he's been challenged, so he has to take the case; maybe Stanley will finally prove that he's a real detective. To solve this case Stanley must descend into the modern-day inferno that consists of drugs and mob operations. Will he come out of it alive... A first novel from Parnell Hall, playwright and screenwriter, and actor, introduces erstwhile detective Stanley Hastings who, while engaged in phony detective work in aid of an insurance swindle, stumbles into his first real case. This is the author's first novel and the initial book in his now lengthy series featuring this Manhattan-based detective, a most unusual private eye. When an almost client turns up dead, this PI goes into an underworld of coke and kicks among the Big Boys of Miami and New York, taking the kind of risks that can get a guy real dead - real fast.

## Detective Details

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Author : Parnell Hall

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## From Reader Review Detective for online ebook

### **J.F. says**

The author has a very witty take on the world. The main character's self-deprecation is humorous and well crafted, even when he's copping to some not-strictly-PC attitudes.

I love the fact that it's a series of umpteen novels (I consume a lot of Kindle books on my weekly airline trips). I've read around 8 of them so far and haven't gotten tired of the familiar characters (or the author's wit).

At first, it was slightly off-putting that, given the time-frame, no one had cellphones and various professionals were always looking for a payphone, but then I got into the spirit of life in NYC in the early 90's (guessing here) and now I think it's a hoot.

I've ordered a few Kindle editions ahead and continue to look forward to the next mess the main character is going to find himself in.

P.S. all the Kindle editions are at \$2.99, which isn't the cheapest around, but does enable me to comfortably keep going with the series.

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### **Keith says**

The fact I read it was a total fluke (I got it in a book exchange in a MWR in Iraq the last day I was there). It totally hooked me and I read it in a couple of hours. It's a very hard book to find so I consider myself lucky to have read it once. It was fantastic! I came back and ebayed a copy right away. The only bad thing about this series is they stopped publishing it and finding all the books is difficult, I can't say if reading them in order is really important since I've only read the first one, but I bet if you read any of them before the first one you just won't get the right feel for the character at all.

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### **Tom Bradley says**

I purchased this book to get a feel for different writers and their styles, particularly in the mystery/detective genre. In addition, the cover art lured me in, as well as the fact it was the first in author Parnell Hall's series about a reluctant gumshoe named Stanley Hastings.

The novel introduces us to Hastings, a licensed private detective who for some reason continually reminds us he does not consider himself a real private detective. I'm not sure why the author beat this drum throughout Hastings' first-person narrative, unless it was to underscore Hastings' blatantly acute inferiority complex. A writer and former actor, Hasting now works for an ambulance-chasing law firm; the scenes describing this aspect of his PI career are well done, as the reader gains an insight into what it's like for the ground troops in the personal injury wars to meet with clients and follow-up on their claims. From that standpoint, Hastings' career choice seems rather monotonous, even though he has a loving wife and a young child to distract him. Until he meets a man who wishes to report a murder: his own.

At this point, I expected the novel to take off and keep me riveted. And while it was interesting and Hastings

eventually does put the pieces together to determine whodunit, it seemed as if the author dragged things out a bit too much—with the aforementioned descriptions of his day-to-day work interfering with what could have been a crackling story.

Ultimately, while readable, this novel didn't quite live up to my hopes and expectations. Perhaps subsequent Stanley Hastings adventures do, so I plan to read more of Mr. Hall's work to see how his creation progresses as a private eye who doesn't quite believe he's a private eye. Maybe one day he will convince himself he is one.

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### **Kristal says**

This was fun! Definitely a first novel, but with real potential. We'll see if Mr. Hall lives up to it...

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### **Dorothy says**

Failed actor, failed writer Stanley Hastings finds himself inexplicably in a role that he never anticipated playing or writing about - private detective. But the truth is, he isn't a REAL private detective, even though he possesses a license that says he is and an office with "Private Detective" on the door. What he really is is an ambulance chaser for a lawyer who specializes in personal injury lawsuits. Stanley goes out to interview the potential client and signs them up to be represented by his boss. He is really the most pathetic excuse for a P.I.

But Martin Albrecht doesn't know that when he sees Stanley's office with its "Private Detective" sign. He walks in and tries to hire Stanley for a real case in which he would serve as a bodyguard because Mr. Albrecht believes someone is trying to kill him. Stanley turns him away, but, sadly, Albrecht's suspicions were spot on. The next day Stanley reads in the newspaper that Albrecht has been murdered.

Guilt over the fact that he had refused to help the murdered man leads Stanley to resolve that he will, in fact, be a real detective - at least long enough to solve the mystery of his would-be client's murder. Little does he know that his investigation will lead him into the world of drug deals and mob operations in Miami and New York, a world that he is completely unprepared to navigate.

Still, even though he admits to being a coward, Stanley doggedly pursues his prey and begins to learn on the job what it is like to be a detective. Maybe this is a role he can play after all.

This 1988 publication was the first in what is now a long series of Stanley Hastings mysteries by Parnell Hall and it has some of the weaknesses of many first novels. The plot meanders around a bit, and we learn far too much about navigating the streets and highways of New York City and New Jersey. Stanley's wife and five-year-old son are tangential characters who seem like ghosts. The focus is all on Stanley, which is okay except that it doesn't really allow for much development of the other characters, some of whom we are simply told about but never actually meet.

The tone of the book is light and humorous. Stanley reminds us on several occasions that he is no Sam Spade. He doesn't own a gun. In fact, guns make him very uncomfortable.

Although he's something of a goofball, Stanley is a likable enough sort of guy and the story shows promise. I

think it will probably be worth following to see where the series takes him.

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### **Brian O'Leary says**

I read them out of order, but I suggest you read this one first, if you like it, the rest are pretty much the same formula and you will enjoy them all

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### **Alan Mills says**

This is the first in a series, featuring Stanley Hastings. In theory, he's a licensed New York City private detective, but in reality, he's an ambulance chaser. He gets calls from the lawyer he works with (Richard, a high volume advertiser on TV personal injury lawyer), and Stanley's job is to sign up the clients, take a basic history, and get pictures of the defective stairs, crack in the sidewalk, etc. that caused the injury. Stanley doesn't feel very good for himself, and thinks he is "really" a writer (terrible cliché!).

But then out of the blue someone wants to hire him for a "real" case--to find out who is trying to kill him. Stanley turns him down flat, but the next morning, the guy ends up dead. Of course--another cliché--Stanley is driven to figure out what happened to his prospective client.

From this set up, Parnell Hall does a really good job of developing a plot, giving Stanley some depth, and keeping the action going. In the end, bad guys get caught, and Stanley learns something about himself. Definitely will be reading the next in the series.

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### **Jeri says**

3.5 stars. I loved Stanley Hastings' style. A P.I. who never does any investigating (he signs up accident victims for an ambulance chasing lawyer), no one could be more surprised when someone walks in off the street wanting to hire his services. When the prospective client turns up dead after being turned away, our hero decides to become a real P.I. and bring the villains to justice. How he does it is a marvel, and how he describes- it is wonderful.

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### **Kat says**

it was really good, i followed the whole thing, even with the disney names he gave for people

a man came to his detective agency , but he was really only working for the lawyer on slip and falls. the guy wanted him to help him find the guy thats going to try and kill him and went thru the whole drug and gambling story. he didnt want to get involved

he later reads in teh paper the guy gets killed like he said

so he feels bad and embarks on a quest to find the people who did it and have them pay

he did find the people, got some coke in the process (which he tried which surprised me) and set them up so the police were involved and eventually arrested them. he did manage to save one guy from being killed and knocked the bad guy out with a sap in the bathroom of a restaurant

he got a costume of a phone man and used that to get in the house and plant bugs. i was surprised he knew how to get up the pole and cut the phone line.

all of this he managed to hide from his wife (which also surprised me). he racked up a huge cc bill which she thought someone stole as he never told her he flew to fl

im starting to read the series in order now

im really enjoying them

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### **Esri Allbritten says**

First in one of Parnell Hall's series, this book takes a little bit of time to get off the ground, and there's a couple of scenes that deal too much with highways, but it's still a fun noir-ish mystery with a Bonus points for letting us in on what it's like to round up clients for an ambulance-chasing attorney.

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### **Jenny Rose says**

Stanley Hastings is more a gopher than a real detective, until Albrecht Martin walks in with a story. Hastings convinces Martin to change names in the story so that Hastings doesn't really know what's going on and therefore doesn't have to feel responsible for not helping. But when Martin turns up dead, Hastings feels guilty anyway and stumbles into being a detective, literally.

Hall's style drew me in and I couldn't let go. While the flashbacks can sometimes be confusing and sometimes Hastings is a bit crude, he is still a fascinating character.

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### **Irene says**

A bit outdated (prior to cell phones) but still fun. Wanted to start this series at the beginning. Will probably zip through a few as "filler" in between longer or more serious reads for diversion. Humorous predicaments, enough plot twist but not too deep or gory.

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### **Col says**

Synopsis/blurb.....

This debut entry in the author's mystery series features actor-turned private investigator Stanley Hastings. Poor Stanley! In a word, his pursuits end in FAILURE. So when Martin Albrecht comes to him with a case for a real detective, Stanley turns him away. Unfortunately, Stanley's damned path leads to his finding

Albrecht dead. Well now he's been challenged, so he has to take the case; maybe Stanley will finally prove that he's a real detective. To solve this case Stanley must descend into the modern-day inferno that consists of drugs and mob operations. Will he come out of it alive... A first novel from Parnell Hall, playwright and screenwriter, and actor, introduces erstwhile detective Stanley Hastings who, while engaged in phony detective work in aid of an insurance swindle, stumbles into his first real case. This is the author's first novel and the initial book in his now lengthy series featuring this Manhattan-based detective, a most unusual private eye. When an almost client turns up dead, this PI goes into an underworld of coke and kicks among the Big Boys of Miami and New York, taking the kind of risks that can get a guy real dead - real fast.

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My take.....

Read last December and really enjoyed. If I had more time and money and less existing books on the TBR pile I'd happily Hoover up the entire 25-odd long series.

A few scrambled thoughts, which hardly do the book justice.....

Our man Stanley Hastings during the course of the novel, proves himself to be a real detective having had no notion of being one at the start. He's more of an ambulance chaser, signing up victims of accidents so that his company can sue for damages.

A man mistakes Hastings for a real detective and wants his help. He's a gambler and in over his head. Victim of some crooked games, he's now moving drugs for the mob, only he's been shaving the loads and is in bigger trouble than before. Hastings gives him the bum's rush, but when the man is murdered soon after, he feels compelled to look into things.

I really liked how the story unfolded, Hastings going from A to B to C, all the while counting the pennies and pretending to his wife and employer that he is just going about his daily business. Money is tight in the Hastings household and every dollar counts.

Great writing.....

".....I couldn't fight my way out of a paper bag. The most dangerous thing I do is go into some pretty undesirable neighborhoods to interview prospective clients. I don't like it. I always feel as if I have a sign saying "mug me" on my back. Actually, I've never had a problem. People who see me going into slums and housing projects figure I'm either a cop or I'm out of my mind, and they leave me alone. That's what I do. And that's all I do. You're the first person who's ever asked me to do anything else."

I stopped talking. He looked at me. He'd been looking at me the whole time I was talking, and his expression didn't change when I stopped. He just kept looking at me. It was hard to read his expression. He looked a little like a steer must when it's just been hit over the head with a sledgehammer at the slaughterhouse. Incredulous. Disbelieving. But something else, too. He blinked his eyes. His lips moved, but nothing came out. Then he said, almost in awe, "You're useless." He shook his head. "Jesus Christ, you're absolutely useless, aren't you."

He got to his feet as if in a daze and started for the door, still shaking his head. "Useless," he muttered. He opened the door and went out. The door closed behind him.

A book with a bit of everything - story, pace, character, setting, drugs, the mob, humour. A tick in every box.

Hall presents Hastings with an intriguing dilemma at the end of the book, a real sea-change moment which could alter the course of his life for ever - a car crash moment. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry at his

choice.

A light read, but the ending haunted me for ages afterwards.

5 from 5

Parnell Hall also has another 20 book long series to his name - Puzzle Lady.

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Source - purchased copy

Format - kindle

<https://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2017/0...>

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### **Gabi Coatsworth says**

It's a debut novel, and it shows. The idea for the main character is a good one, but the writing was uneven, and there were stretches that could have used a better editor. I don't think I'll be reading any more of these.

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### **Wendelah1 says**

This is a fun, fast-paced, thoroughly engrossing detective novel, the first in a series, and if I am not mistaken, the first published novel by Parnell Hall. The detective in the title is Stanley Hastings, an unemployed actor/writer who moonlights as a private investigator for an ambulance-chasing lawyer. As he makes clear right from the beginning, Stanley is not a movie-style detective. He doesn't even own a gun, at least not at the beginning of this series. Stanley Hastings is just a nice guy who gets in over his head. For no reason other than that he's one of the good guys, Stanley feels responsible when a potential client he's turned down is subsequently murdered; in fact, he feels so torn up by not helping this guy that he decides to try to do the right thing and get the responsible party put in jail. These are bad, bad guys Stanley's up against, and he has no idea what's he's doing most of the time, but despite his best efforts, he succeeds. I have no idea if the rest of this series is as much fun as "Detective" but I do plan to find out.

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