



# Forests of the Night

*James W. Hall*

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### **Forests of the Night** James W. Hall

*With the signature mix of brooding atmosphere, unforgettable villains, and mile-a-second action that readers can expect from his Thorn series, James W. Hall takes readers on an electrifying journey of suspense in Forests of the Night..*

Policewoman Charlotte Monroe has an ability that borders on psychic-to read people's faces and body language, sizing up their intentions and acting before they do. It's a real ability that the FBI is trying to teach to its agents. But Charlotte's a natural with God-given skills, and the Feds want her in the worst way, maybe even to the point of blackmail.

But Charlotte's gift fails to prepare her for the stranger who shows up on her doorstep with a chilling warning for her husband Parker, a mysterious note scrawled in Cherokee hieroglyphics: "You're next." The threat becomes more ominous as Charlotte and Parker discover the man is on the FBI Most Wanted list.

When Charlotte's deeply troubled teenage daughter runs away to join the charismatic outlaw, she follows the two of them into the spectral mists of the Great Smoky Mountains-and to the beating heart of a 150-year-old blood feud that will endanger everything she loves and challenge everything she believes.

### **Forests of the Night Details**

Date : Published November 29th 2005 by St. Martin's Paperbacks (first published December 15th 2004)

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Author : James W. Hall

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## From Reader Review Forests of the Night for online ebook

### Roger Scherping says

The story had a great premise, but I thought the author strung it out a little too long. He kept feeding it to us piece by piece, but in the end it really wasn't that complex of a premise.

Most of the book was made up of side stories: Charlotte's juvenile history, the conflicting occupations of Parker and Charlotte, Gracie's illness, movie scenes, Charlotte's innate ability to read emotions, etc. It felt as though they didn't really add much to the story.

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### Jennifer Collins says

Hall is at his best when writing about the Florida Keys and coastal waters, but even so, the setting of this work in the forests of North Carolina doesn't detract from his expert plotting and fascinating characters. With as many twists and just as much family lore as you'd expect from a Hall novel, this thriller lives up to some of his best works. The main protagonist Charlotte doesn't come close to being as much of a drive as his more well-known Thorn, but she also doesn't drag the novel down, which is all I can ask from one of his non-Thorn novels. And, truth be told, the lesser character Gracie is so strange and well-written (frighteningly believable) that we don't miss the sympathy we'd normally give to a primary protagonist. All in all, this is a well written and twisting adventure of a thriller, and well worth the while. Long-time fans of Hall might miss some of the norms of his earlier works, but they won't be too disappointed with this departure either. Absolutely recommended.

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### Erin Moore says

Mr. Hall writes a really deftly woven tapestry of many characters and histories, with very believable dialogue and plot pacing. Only had a couple of minor plausibility concerns.

I would have given it at least 4 stars, but for the fact that I found the daughter's character totally implausible. Not so much the fact that she had schizophrenia, but in the way she was depicted. I remember being a 16 year old girl very well, and I don't know any who thought or spoke the way she did. we were all very much more aware of ourselves. And I find it hard to believe that the voices in her head were Spielberg and Barbara Stanwyck. Does any 16 year old know who she is?

Also, the bad guys in the novel were so thoroughly evil that it was a bit unconvincing - this family has been killing people in the county for hundreds of years and no one has ever noticed?

The relationship and relationship arc between Charlotte and her husband very well-written and Charlotte a very likeable heroine.

All in all, would definitely recommend this book and look forward to more.

## Denise says

This book is a police thriller with some interesting details about the Cherokee people. At times I felt that the author stretched the premise of the main character's ability to read people a little thin for my tastes. I had trouble liking any of the characters or rooting for their success. So many times I felt irritated by the main character, her daughter, and her husband. I found no real concern for the more minor characters either. Others in our book club enjoyed the book much more than I did. That being said, I did learn some information I didn't know before.

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## Linda says

Whoa, this is a fast paced ride that doesn't quit until the last page. A natural psychic policewoman Charlotte Monroe is married to Parker an outstanding attorney, together they are raising their schizophrenic daughter. The FBI is after Charlotte to teach their agents her natural abilities to read people. If that doesn't grab you, stay tuned.

Life is good until a man shows up at their door with a warning, "you're next" he tells Parker Monroe. Then their daughter runs away. They set out from Miami to the Great Smokey Mountains to bring their daughter back. It's not long before they find themselves at the center of a centuries old Cherokee blood feud endangering everyone connected with a crime of long ago. Well worth your time.

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## Bookmarks Magazine says

Hall has long been a favorite of critics and fans alike. He creates page-turners, sure, but his books are much more than that: they offer multi-dimensional characters with rich inner lives. Hall has taught creative writing for the past 32 years at Florida International University, and perhaps this explains how he mastered the skills that have critics resoundingly praising his 13th book, *Forests of the Night*. Though the *Plain Dealer* thinks burgeoning (but not always fully developed) plot lines weigh down the book, critics otherwise universally laud the novel for its suspense, historical perspective, and the way in which Hall's characters both expand and surpass the crime genre.

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This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

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## Gary says

In recent years an increasing number of writers have been drawn to the tragic history of the Eastern Band of Cherokees Indians as a kind of literary vehicle. Although the plight of other Native American tribes equals (and often exceeds) the shame and pathos associated with the Cherokee Removal as a kind of historic parable – a tale that reveals the hypocrisy beneath the Great American Dream.

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James W. Hall, a successful writer of “crime fiction,” normally sets his suspenseful action tales on the Florida sun coast. Best known for his depiction of ruthless psychotics, Hall’s protagonists spend much of their time cruising bars and coastal inlets, alternately trolling for tarpons and ruthless drug dealers. Hall is at his best in familiar territory: sun, sand, sultry vixens, crisp dialogue and tequila in the Green Flash Bar. However, this time out, he opts for the foggy coves of the Great Smoky Mountains and a dark secret that originates with the death of T’sali, the Cherokee martyr.

Instead of Thorn, the aging beachboy, Hall’s protagonist is Charlotte Monroe, a dedicated Miami cop with a phenomenal gift for “reading faces” – the fleeting twitch or facial flicker that telegraphs a suspect’s intentions. Will he cower or attack? As a consequence, the FBI will resort to anything (including blackmail) to acquire Charlotte’s services in tracking down wanted criminals.

However, Charlotte’s life is complicated. She is married to Parker, a highly successful criminal lawyer (think Johnnie Cochran) who believes that everyone deserves a second chance, even if they are guilty. He is also a descendant of a noted Cherokee family. In addition, Parker and Charlotte have a schizophrenic teenage daughter, Gracey, who spends much of her time (when she is off her medication) discussing her future as an actress with Joan Crawford, Stephen Spielberg and Barbara Stanwyck.

Now, to this heady mix, Hall adds an explosive catalyst: a blond-headed Cherokee named Jacob Panther who is on the FBI’s “Most Wanted” list for murder and terrorist activities (blowing up banks), and who just happens to be

Parker’s son – the consequences of a youthful fling at a mountain retreat called Camp T’sali near Cherokee. When Jacob arrives in Miami with a lethal blowgun and a stolen truck, it appears that he has come to kill his father.

Instead he has come to (a) seek his legal advice, and (b) to warn him that his name is “on a list.” The eavesdropping Gracey learns that she has a half-brother. When Charlotte calls the police, Gracey warns Jacob and when he flees back to Cherokee, Gracey follows him, Charlotte and Parker follow Gracey and the chase is on!

The ensuing action may strain the credibility of some readers. It certainly strained mine. A lurid, fantastic story unwinds involving revenge and retribution. When Parker’s mother (who is a Ghigau or “Beloved Woman”) is murdered with a stone hatchet stolen from the Museum of the Cherokees, and the grieving son discovers a cryptic clue written in the Cherokee language (Sequoyah’s syllabery, no less!) the Monroe family descends on Cherokee with a gaggle of FBI agents in hot pursuit.

The investigation does not go well. The hallucinating Gracey ends up in a trailer with Lucy Panther (Jacob’s mother and her father’s old flame), while Parker and Charlotte check into the Holiday Inn. Cherokee seems to be a dreary place, filled with sullen people, doomed elders and sleazy craftshops. However, regardless of how stressful the search for Jacob becomes, the Miami duo has time to occasionally lift their eyes to the fog-shrouded Smokies and marvel at their beauty.

There is a visit to “Unto These Hills,” which is a disappointment, although Charlotte manages to shed a tear at T’sali’s execution. (Apparently, the author saw the pageant before it was “revamped” and T’sali’s martyrdom was edited out.) There is also a visit to a tribal nursing home to interview a tribal elder named Standing Dog, and a bizarre visit to a fanciful institution called Asheville Woman’s College where a mysterious guardian of the tribal rolls keeps the fateful “list” – the names of T’sali’s descendants who are marked for execution.

I won’t give away the final revelation about the assassins; however, I can’t resist mentioning the “killer poodles.” Yes, that’s right. White Poodles. They are a bit over-sized, of course, and have been trained to kill at a signal from their owner who just happens to be the Cherokee Police Chief, a white man and a really sick puppy in his own right ... with an Elvis hairdo. Believe me, this is all just too good to miss. Promise not to

laugh, now.

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### **Doris says**

I don't do too many 5-star reviews, but this book had history, albeit condensed for the most part into the prologue. The book is based on a true story of "the removal" also known as "The Trail of Tears", where one Cherokee man fought back. (Not to imply that others didn't, many did and lost their lives in brutal fashion.)

The story in this book picks up 150 years after the horror that Tsali and his family underwent, and is a riveting tale of loss, inbreeding, and old grievances.

The only downside to me is that the teenage daughter of our heroine is schizoid / schizophrenic, and her actions, although in character, don't always add to the story. However, in the end, her disability gives her actions credibility and enhances the reactions of those around her.

I wouldn't mind owning a copy of this so I could read it multiple times.

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### **Lois says**

Once upon a time I was very interested in Indian (Native American) politics. Maybe if I were still interested, I would have liked this story better.

As it was, the big hangup I had with it once I was done with it was, why couldn't the guy who turns up to warn the family be less crytic? I guess I missed that.

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### **LJ says**

FORESTS OF THE NIGHT (Suspense-North Carolina-Cont) – NR

Hall, James W. – Standalone

St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2004 - Paperback

Miami policewoman Charlotte Monroe has an extraordinary ability to read peoples faces; so much so that the FBI want her to join them. She also has a young daughter who is schizophrenic, and a husband who is a defense attorney who grew up learning Cherokee history. A boyhood affair with a Cherokee girl resulted in a son he never knew who is now on the FBI most wanted list. Charlotte, her husband and the FBI all travel to North Carolina when the son shows up and the daughter disappears,

\*\*\* I can make this short; it was awful. I did finish it, but I'm not certain why. There wasn't a single character about which I cared; the plot was just plain absurd and the ending silly. I kept reading to learn more about Charlotte's talent, which isn't employed in the story until the very end by which time I was no longer interested. It was incredibly bad.

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### **Joan says**

Two stars says it: Okay - nothing special. I have read other books by this author, and I kept reading this one hoping it would get more interesting.

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### **Mary Beth says**

I was excited to read this book b/c I heard there was a character with Fragile X Syndrome, a genetic disorder which affects my son. But was appalled by the portrayal of the young man with Fragile X - very different than anyone I know with Fragile X. I found that disrespectful and misleading to readers who don't know anyone with Fragile X.

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### **False says**

I'm reading all of Hall this summer. By the time I get to the last eighth of his books, I am crawling through mud wishing it was over. This indicts, for my reading habits anyway, that he needs stronger self-editing. I do think he gets bogged down in certain sections telling you too much and some strong snipping is in order. The learning curve in this Hall book is FBI face forensics, North Carolina mountains and Cherokees. I should have a personal interest in this book, but I loathed it. The bi-polar daughter was irritating as hell, as it goes with being around severely bi-polar people.

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### **Susan says**

Policewoman Charlotte Monroe has a husband with a past and a daughter with a mental illness and a special gift for reading people. They all come together in this story. Really not one of Hall's best. I've always liked his and while I did read this til the end, it was really just in hopes that it would get interesting. It didn't.

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### **Scout says**

I learned something about Cherokee Indians and also about schizophrenia from this crime novel. And then there were some truly nasty characters that were conceived in "the forests of the night."

Here's a quote:

"What she [Charlotte, the cop protagonist] absorbed in those lonesome hours in the forest near her home laid the groundwork for what minimal belief system she had. It was her conviction that on some level the human condition was forever rooted in that same unruly soil. A destiny based on dirt and blood and unceasing conflict. Try as we might to rise beyond the earth, lift our bodies into the faultless sky in airplanes and antiseptic high-rises, dress for the opera, pray to our civilized gods, pretend we've refined ourselves beyond those primal urges, still, the earth and its feral laws and endless skirmishes were rooted in our cell memory. As far as she was concerned, it was inescapable. Every corner of the world was as perilous and unpredictable as the forest floor. Our blood forever howled with its animal song."

