



The Barbed-Wire Kiss

Wallace Strobby

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Long Branch, Asbury Park, Ocean Grove. The Jersey Shore ain't what it used to be, but ex-state trooper Harry Rane still calls it home. After his wife's death, Harry got careless, got shot, and he left the force. He's a changed man, leads a quiet life, except when it comes to helping his friends...

Now an old buddy of Harry's wants a big favor. He owes \$50,000 to a Jersey crime boss and needs Harry to get him more time to repay the loan. That sounds like a plan...except for the green-eyed, redheaded complication. The mobster's married to a gorgeous lady who once fell hard for Harry. And history is about to repeat itself.

Trying to help his friend pay off his debt but inexorably drawn to the girl, soon Harry is between a rock and a hard place. His chances of getting up and staying alive look to be about a million to one....

The Barbed-Wire Kiss Details

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From Reader Review The Barbed-Wire Kiss for online ebook

Sean says

Good book for a first novel. I typically like shorter, faster prose, but this book wasn't riddled with crime cliches and everything felt very realistic. Just enough time spent on description and characters, but not so much that I got bored.

Russell Atkinson says

This book was recommended to me on goodreads when I asked for recommendations of thrillers that weren't murder mysteries (not that I don't enjoy murder mysteries). This didn't really fit that description, since there are more than enough murders in this book, but the story line wasn't really about finding the murderer(s). It was an atmosphere-filled high tension drama set in less-than-savory New Jersey. The lead character, Harry Rane, is a rather burnt out ex-cop trying to help a friend get out from under a debt to a gangster. The dialog and atmosphere were excellent and the plot stayed mostly within the bounds of credibility, although that got strained a bit toward the end. The tension comes from wondering whether Harry and Bobby are going to get the debt squared away without suffering lethal payback. The plot was a tad on the trite side but I enjoyed reading it.

Cathy DuPont says

This is my second Wallace Stroby book and Wallace Stroby's first book.

And frankly, I didn't like it because the protag who was a retired from service as a state trooper (he had gotten shot) was just stupid. And I have this problem with stupid cops.

Apparently he left his decision making tool kit in the blood that was left on the ground where he was shot by a woman on a traffic stop. Unfortunately, he didn't follow procedures on the traffic stop itself which is one reason he was shot.

Can't deal with stupid in real life or in books so putting this one down and doubtful I'll pick back up. However, I can say that I did enjoy Stroby's writing. And I enjoyed his second book giving it four stars, so it wasn't his writing this time around, it was his storyline. It was so unbelievably stupid I could not deal with it since there are so many good books that want to be read.

His second book, Cold Shot to the Heart is very much worth a read.

Val says

An okay book. Truthfully, I would have given it 2-1/2 stars if it had been possible. It's just not particularly well-plotted and the ending doesn't ring true.

John Sheridan says

A book that grows on you and pulls you in deeper as you progress. Lead character Harry Rane is a widow and ex-cop that is not doing much until an old friend gets mixed up in a drug deal gone bad and needs to find 50 grand fast to stay alive. All straightforward until Harry bumps into the wife of the guy holding the debt and she's an ex- girlfriend that skipped town 20 years earlier. Things have a habit of spiralling out of control as the body count rises and Harry's ex-colleagues are none too happy with him. recommended.

Andrew Smith says

Harry Rane is an ex-State Trooper, New Jersey based. He's committed himself to helping out an old friend who's got himself into a difficult situation with a mobster. - and the mobster's wife is Harry's long lost love. A tangled web.

This is Stroby's first novel and, if truth be told, it's not as sure footed as his later work, and certainly not as finely crafted as his Crissa Stone books, or the excellent Gone til November. But it's fast paced and tough talking, with Harry scuttling around the coastal areas of NJ, trying to stay on top of the game, trying to right a wrong. Trying to stay alive.

This book begat a second title featuring Harry Rane book, The Heartbreak Lounge and that's worth catching too.

If you like your crime fiction hardboiled this is an author you should seek out. But be warned, once you've been bitten by the Wallace Stroby bug there's no known cure.

Nancy says

No frills thriller, picked it up from the lending library in work cafeteria. The writing is not remarkable, but it gets the job done. Basically a former cop reaches out to help out a friend in need, said friend having invested his money unwisely with unsavory types. Just when it seems they are clear of trouble, the trouble starts. These are recognizable character types, not as well drawn as in Mystic River, but no sudden unbelievable character transformations either. The writer generated just enough interest in them for me to make it to the end of this book.

Alecia says

This is Wallace Stroby's first book. As such, it shows the promise he fulfills in his later novels that I have read. It's interesting to me that he switched from a male protagonist in this book, to female in the later books I read.

Daniel Sevitt says

I went back to Stroy's first character after reading the Crissa Stone books. It's fairly standard noir stuff: injured ex-cop, withdrawn from society, gets re-energized by involving himself with criminals for what seem like noble reasons and ends up in over his head. As usual with these kinds of things there are a whole lot more dead bodies by the end than there probably would have been if he'd just minded his own business. Still, it was perfectly engaging and entertaining and I have the next Harry Rane already lined up.

Eric_W says

Harry Rane is in deep shit. His friend Bobby is in debt to the mob and Harry, former ex-state-cop, widower and old friend decides to help him get out of the obligation. Unfortunately things begin to go bad when Harry meets Catherine, Nick Fallon's wife, and former girl friend of Harry's. (It's a small NJ world, apparently.) The guy that Bobby had made the drug deal with turns up dead in the trunk of a car at the airport, and Fallon discovers Harry is making it with his wife. Whew.

Some bizarre reviews out there. One, on Amazon, said he liked the way Rane took several beatings, and another compared the book unfavorably to the Sopranos (a TV series) and a Bruce Springsteen song. I mean, WTF?

Compelling story even if Harry does occasionally act dumber than a post.

Paul says

Harry Rane is an ex-State Trooper, who two years ago lost his wife to Cancer. Shortly after this, he was shot in the stomach when he pulled over a speeding car. He's at a loose end, with no real plans for his future. When his buddy asks for his help, Harry jumps at the opportunity like a drowning man.

A life long buddy enlists Harry's help after an ill advised drug deal goes disastrously awry & Rane's friend not only loses his stake in the deal, but ends up owing the money ripped off to a loan shark, seemingly with mob connections.

There's some fine writing in this debut from Stroy, one of two featuring the exploits of Harry Kane. The second to feature the Rane character is .

Quote:

"He went back to the Mustang and drove north along the beach, past bandstands and boardwalks and amusement piers, one town fading into the next. He felt as if he were driving toward the moon, following its path in the sky. The night filled the car, bringing with it the smell or creosote from the piers, the tang of salt air. He wanted to drive forever, until there was nothing left but the road beneath him and the moon on the water."

Quote:

"Getting involved with this, it made me feel... younger, i guess. Thing is, after what's happened, i feel older than ever."

"You made a mistake. Put it behind you."

"Is it that easy? It's funny, almost. It's like you stumble along, never knowing just where it is you're going. Like you're ignorant of yourself, of what you're doing, of the life you're leading. Then suddenly you get this moment of clarity. The whole thing-your life, your past, everything-comes into focus. And you know something? It's those moments of clarity that put a gun in your hand."

An entertaining example of Contemporary Noir. Recommended. 4 stars.

Ross Cumming says

I've read a few Wallace Stroby novels and he is fast becoming one of my favourite crime writers, my only problem being is their limited availability and high price on Kindle here in Britain.

This is the first of a series of two Harry Rane novels and I also think this was Stroby's debut but you'd hardly think it due to the high quality of the writing. Harry is an ex-cop, living in New Jersey, who retired early after being shot and also due in part to the loss of his wife to cancer. He is approached by his ex High School buddy Bobby, who has got himself in hock to the tune of \$50 grand, to local crime boss Eddy Fallon, after a deal he invested in turned bad. Harry agrees to help Bobby and act as his go between but things soon turn bad when Harry gets involved with his one time girlfriend, Cristina, who now just happens to be Fallon's wife. Fallon is also in tow with the Brooklyn mob and an ex-cop colleague of Harry's is now an enforcer with them and is also on Harry's case.

Another great read and a real page turner of a novel. The story starts out quite low key but with each new layer of plot the tension just builds and builds until the final showdown. Harry is also a real cool customer and you never really know what he's thinking behind that poker face of his until he shows his hand. The story keeps you guessing right up to the end too as I wasn't sure if Harry was being played by Cristina too ? I've managed to get a hold of a paperback edition of 'The Heartbreak Lounge' and can't wait to see where Harry goes next.

Carol Jean says

Nice -- action-packed and noirish, with a lot of gang-related wishes for upward mobility that are really a bit funny. Very enjoyable.

Ed says

#1 in the Harry Rane series. Finalist 2004 Barry Award for Best First Novel.

Ex-NJ Trooper Harry Rane tries to help childhood friend, Bobby Fox. Fox, trying to turn a quick buck is suddenly \$50K in debt to Eddie Fallon, a local shady character, who might also be in over his head with his organized crime associates. When Harry gets involved he realizes Fallon's wife is his old girlfriend who he hasn't seen since she was 18 and pregnant with his child.

Stephen says

When Harry walked in the door, Bobby was sitting at the end of the bar, watching a redhead take off her clothes.

Harry Rane is an ex-cop living at the Jersey Shore. His old buddy, Bobby, is in deep to a local crime boss to the tune of fifty large. Bobby asks Harry to get him more time to repay the loan. Harry helps out and gets more than he bargained for; especially when he finds out the boss's wife is an ex-flame he hasn't seen in over a decade.

The Barbed-Wire Kiss is the first novel of Wallace Stroby. It had been on my to-read list for a while, but I didn't pick it up until I saw Stroby on an MWA panel in Chatham, NJ. Before becoming a novelist, Stroby was an editor at The Star-Ledger. His deep knowledge of New Jersey comes through. He captures the feel of the real Shore; the desperation of an area of the state whose survival rests on a few summer months, not the glitzy partytimes of the eponymous MTV show.

There are many scenes whose sights and sounds (and smells) jump right off the page. You'll hear seagulls overhead and feel the sand between your toes, but this ain't no summer picnic. *The Barbed-Wire Kiss* is hard-boiled to its core, full of the kind of down-on-their-luck losers and sleazy schemers that these stories were made for.

I'm definitely going to check out some more of Wallace Stroby's books.
