



People Die

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JJ is a model employee. He does his work quietly and competently, and he keeps his nose clean. But JJ's job is murder for hire, and when the kind of company he works for undergoes restructuring, people don't get fired -- they get fired upon. So for the first time in his life, JJ is not just a predator; he's the prey, and he doesn't even know why. All he knows is that the people close to him are being killed, former allies are turning against him, and the only person offering help is the best friend of one of his victims. It's one of the golden rules -- never become involved with a target's friends or family, with the people who loved him. But JJ's running out of options, and, despite himself, he's drawn by the lure of passing through that door, from his side of death to theirs.

Much more than a straightforward hitman caper, "People Die" is a rare debut, combining tongue-in-cheek sensibility with heart-in-mouth suspense to provide killer entertainment.

People Die Details

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Author : Kevin Wignall

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From Reader Review People Die for online ebook

barbara jones says

I believe this was the first book by this author. I have read many of his other books before this one. I am glad that I did.

I found this book so slow. So boring. I cannot believe I even finished it. I expected more. I have bought another one of this author. I do hope it is better than this one. I do know that he has written some really good ones. Thank goodness. Otherwise he would be looking for another profession.

Mr Kenneth L Mullen says

Great Story

Another great story by Kevin with plenty off action and good strong characters. Lots of different locations and again an unexpected ending. Looking forward to reading more.

Brenda McHugh says

Good read

This is a well written, unique story. You'll find yourself going against the grain and actually liking a hired gunman. It's a fast paced easy to follow story with likeable characters. Only downside - I wish I knew what the future held for JJ and Jem. I'm about to download another book by this author which, for me, is a high recommendation!

Alan says

This was not the best book of his that I have read but it was still good. His books strike a responsive chord in me. I look forward to reading all that he has written.

johnmarkie1905 says

Superb read

I have read a few kevin wignall books and loved them all so I wasn't disappointed by this either story was brilliant lots of twists simply put a superb read 5 stars from me

Terence M says

Audiobook - 7:09 hours - Narrator: David John

Listened to: 5:00 hours; balance: 2.09 hours

This book had been highly praised by one reviewer in particular and I was so impressed by the review that I had purchased the Audible audiobook and downloaded it onto my iPhone within five minutes of reading the review.

This book simply dribbled along. I thought the key character "JJ" (Somebody Hoffman) was boring. At first I blamed the narrator, David John, but eventually I realised that the actual character was boring. When he kills, he does it quickly, efficiently, and with limited drama. Then he burbles along looking for his next would-be assassin and 'despatches' him coldly and calmly, and then the next and so on.

I have tried very hard to finish listening to it, but even with only two hours to go I have given up and awarded it a late-in-the-year DNF!

Richard says

Quite simply Kevin Wignall is in a class of his own.

I am so pleased that People Die has been made available for the first time outside the U.S.

That it has not previously been accessible, more so as it is his debut novel is almost unforgivable.

I simply devour anything he writes, my interest having been stirred by listening to him a few years ago at a U.K. book festival in Bristol.

His writing is economical, full of personality. Not a word misplaced, a sentence too long or a chapter over written. He tells dark stories that are accessible because he litters them with believable people. They maybe spies or hired assassins but they appear normal and in the main have basic human needs. It is this identification a reader can have within a story. It is not like empathy more like an acceptance of the events as they unfold. Not a cheering for the killers and players in their shady world but an understanding of them as the author opens the story all up.

People Die is a remarkable book. Pinch me it is more like a fifth or tenth novel of a writer who is comfortable within their discipline as a author.

It has a great deal of depth. A familiar plot of an organisation purging itself but is told in ways other books in this genre never aspire to or their writers would deem possible. JJ stumbles across a change in emphasis in his organisation where people don't get fired, people die. Where employees don't get the sack but a body bag.

.As a hired gun he has the skills to look after himself but the problem is who can he trust, how widespread is the downsizing going to be felt.

Familiar but told with a freshness but the uncertainty that JJ might not survive, maybe it is his time to die.

What is so special in reading Kevin's books is the ease of the relationship he has with his readers and this subject. There is no overkill, no glorifying of death and the justification for killing is ever made, beyond, it is a job and often it was them or me.

People Die has that other magic ingredient. It tells a story, the characters grow as they reflect and interact.

The book is brimming with ideas and nuances of this secret world of the dark arts. Many of them have been revisited by the author in subsequent works.

There is no apology here for violence and taking life, but we are offered an implied understanding as we read of JJ self awareness and personal insights as the plot develops.

The reader gets an experience that beats a day out at Alton Towers. That equals the most lavish banquet imagined and assimilates the story like a comfortable relaxing experience. Like the most pleasant of smells or the most romantic of dates.

Lisa says

This was a very dark and violent book yet original in that you think of a hit man as being cold, calculated and uncaring. This story is told from the viewpoint of the hitman, and despite the person he is you can see that there is still a heart in there somewhere.

Tony says

Wignall, Kevin. PEOPLE DIE. (2001). ****. After reading his second novel first, I thought it only right that I go back and read the first novel from this author. This one is the story of J.J. He is a model employee. He does his assigned tasks efficiently and quietly and has always pleased his employer. J.J.'s job is murder for hire. He contracts out to whoever needs his skills and gets the job done. In J.J.'s line of work, however, the restructuring or downsizing of his parent organization happens in a different way. Suddenly, people are trying to kill him, and he doesn't know who they are or why. Now he is not just a predator, he is also the prey. All he knows for sure is that people close to him are being killed, former allies are turning against him, and the only person offering help is the best friend of one of his former victims. More than a typical hitman caper, this novel is a Kafkaesque look at the world of killers with a tongue-in-cheek sensibility along with a heart-in-mouth suspense scenario. It was an excellent debut novel. Recommended.

Michael Cotignola says

I would have ranked this book with more stars if there wasn't the inappropriate relationship that developed between JJ and Jem, a man nearly thirty and a girl only sixteen. Not cool. Even though the author made the relationship a "close friendship," it started with something far less pure, and it was hard for me to read JJ's thoughts about Jem. They weren't graphic, but they were bad enough.

Larry says

On rereading, I bumped Wignall's first book up a star. The plot is a standard one among novels about hit men: what happens when the hit man is himself targeted. Lawrence Sanders and Tom Wood have made good use of that plot line. In this case, William Hoffman (AKA J.J.) is a non-ideological hired gun with a highly developed set of skills and a relatively low view of himself. How much moral self-esteem could a hit man have, after all? When his agent/broker, Viner, is killed, as well as anyone associated with him, J.J. goes on the run, and on the attack. He would have, anyway, but the torture and murder of his girlfriend, who had no idea what he does for a living, makes the matter even more personal. He works his way through several of those responsible, and ends up in Vermont to meet a CIA guy who is also on the run, but who has a close relationship with the family of a man J.J. hit a couple of years before in Russia. It is that man's death that has set the present situation in motion, but J.J. finds himself staying at the inn run by the man's perfectly nice family. (The fact that the hit was done to a man spending the night with a prostitute, whom J.J. didn't kill, makes J.J. wonder about how close the man was to his family.) As he is drawn into the life of the man's family, and as he begins to work closely with the CIA man, J.J.'s heart thaws a bit. It sounds trite, but it isn't, and there is a particularly good scene involving L.J., a really dangerous Russian magnate, and the man

behind the elimination of Viner's stable of hit men.

Zare says

Protagonists in Kevin Wignall's books are always pretty damaged people, either by events (like Conrad Hirst) or by their personality and nature (like JJ in this novel).

JJ is professional hitman working for the assassin network (for a lack of better term) that is hired by all sides - governments, criminal underground, basically whoever has the money. Everything works fine until by sheer accident JJ finds out that one of the intelligence agencies that his network works for began the cleanup of all witnesses (and all those linked to them) to one of the missions that took place a few years before.

JJ is a cold-blooded assassin and he steadily finds his way up the chain but in the process, he gets confronted with the results of his past actions.

A very interesting book. As one of the reviewers noted there is part where JJ develops a relationship with the teenage girl. What some found unsettling are JJ's thoughts at the beginning. My opinion is that JJ knows he is missing something, part of humanity he maybe never had (at one point he is surprised that people are ready to recognize him as a killer although he does not see himself as such) - call it empathy or guilt for killing so many - and he tries to find that in himself through relationship with this girl, by being simply a friend and staying in contact with someone who is outside his bloody trade (very much like attempts of the assassin in Kevin Wignall's other book *The Hunter's Prayer* to help a girl hunted by assassins).

Good thriller, highly recommended.

Stephen D says

Good first effort

I read this after reading *The Traitor's Story* and the development of the author is clear. Still, this is a worthwhile read with abundant character development.

Johnny says

The novel starts at such a breakneck pace that I never expected it to maintain the pace of the story. However, it hits the brakes so hard that I found it really jarring. When the story leaves a massive body count in Europe and heads to an idyllic New England inn, the tone changes with the pace, feeling like a completely different story.

Writing about hit men is difficult. In many ways, the hit man as written is the construct of fiction and the movies. So to bring something new to the genre and character, an exploration into the moral impact on the character or even a search for some form of redemption is often the path. *People Die* is satisfied with accepting the hit man as just a guy who is a hit man. That would be fine, but he also kills a number of innocents along the way (usually unnecessarily). Without those bodies having any impact, the character gets closer to a cartoon.

There's a little more telling than showing. And the assassin is so good at his job that, even though we know that people are out to kill him, there is never a point where we are concerned for his safety.

I think that makes the book sound worse than it is. It might have caught me in a more critical mindset than the book deserves. It is a quick, fun read. And the pace of the first half is a blast. I'm definitely going to pick up another one of Wignall's books.

Maddy says

When you're a hitman, one killing is pretty much the same as another. The method may vary, but essentially, you're going in, catching someone by surprise and sending them on to the great beyond. It's all in a day's work, actually, most of the time. But every once in a while, there's something unique about the kill, something that stays with you long after the event. That's what William "JJ" Hoffman discovers after assassinating David Bostridge while in Moscow. When he made the hit, Bostridge was in bed with a much younger woman. Normally, JJ would have offed her too. But there was something about her that stopped him from doing so. She looked at him with no fear, removed a package from under the bed and left with JJ doing absolutely nothing about it.

Even a few years later, that hit stays with JJ. The people around him are being killed, and he finds that he is a target too. His girlfriend is murdered; his former contact is slaughtered—all indications are that JJ is next. Trusting in a man who is also under the gun, he stays in a bed-and-breakfast in Vermont. And unlikely as it may seem, the inn is run by Bostridge's widow who lives there with her son and daughter. Of course, JJ cannot reveal that he killed her husband; but he finds that against all odds, he likes this family, that they are good and decent people and that they like him in return. He knows that he is breaking one of the cardinal rules of his profession by becoming involved with a victim's family.

As the book moves forward, JJ needs to determine why he is slated for elimination. Doing so involves him in some international intrigue, and he faces the likelihood that it may be his turn to die. All along the way, he murders anyone who poses a threat to him.

People Die is an excellent debut novel. As might be expected given the profession of its protagonist, there are a lot of murders. JJ doesn't usually think twice about killing people; in most cases, it's somewhat of a necessity and he experiences no remorse about what he does. What is unexpected is how Wignall delivers us into the mind of the assassin. Although written in third person, the narrative is written in a way that provides the reader entry into JJ's introspective mind.

I was a bit confused at the start of the book when various characters were discussed to whom I had not been introduced, but the book rapidly fell into place. There were several unexpected twists. The one thing that made the book stand out is the fact that JJ, in spite of being a stone cold killer, is not a psychopath. He actually does have a heart, and the reader hears his heartbeat running throughout the book. Excellent writing, dialog and pacing combine to make this book one you'll want to read, especially if you're a fan of noir.
