



The Terminals: Spark

Michael F. Stewart

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

The Terminals: Spark

Michael F. Stewart

The Terminals: Spark Michael F. Stewart

Sometimes the dead don't want to talk.

You need Terminals to make them.

Terminals solve crimes in this realm by investigating them in the next.

Lt. Col. Christine Kurzow, fresh from a failed suicide attempt after she cost 11 of her soldiers their lives, is recruited into the covert unit of Terminals as a handler. It's an easy sell. If she's really determined to die, it's a chance to give her death meaning.

But her first case—convincing a monk to chase Hillar the Killer into the afterlife to find the location of a missing bus and the children it carried—has her wondering how to make a dead psychopath talk.

Christine must follow the clues sent back by the shotgun-toting monk, who tracks Hillar through the seven deeps of hell, so she can find eleven kids before it's too late.

Maybe this time killing a man will give Christine a reason to live.

The Terminals: Spark Details

Date : Published April 14th 2014 by Non Sequitur Press (first published 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Michael F. Stewart

Format : Kindle Edition 270 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Horror, Mystery

 [Download The Terminals: Spark ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Terminals: Spark ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Terminals: Spark Michael F. Stewart

From Reader Review The Terminals: Spark for online ebook

Ceh131973 says

Wow! What a ride! I read this book in under twenty four hours. It was a great mix of mystery, sci-fi, and suspense. I love the character of Christine. She is the perfect antihero. I get tired of all the super optimistic characters sometimes a character that just is fed up with life works well. Charlie on the other hand seems to be the opposite but in truth they are very similar with demons of their own.

I would recommend [The Terminals] to almost anyone who likes a good read. Unfortunately due to some of the content I can not recommend it to my students since they are 12-14 yrs old. I would really like to see [Michael F. Stewart] continue on with this idea or similar concepts.

Jay says

Hmmm how so I start this review well maybe with this wonderful cover which I love this cover was done well and I'm glad the author chose it.

Getting to the book this is a great story idea reminds me of the movie RIPD but it's no comedy and the concept and goals are different. Terminals a way to get answers and solve crimes from beyond the veil for all those times the killer or terrorist dies or is taken down before we get all the answers we need.

So we send a terminal in, someone of the same religious group who is terminally ill and ready follow the criminal into to the after life to get answers.

The book begins with a suicidal army Colonel name Christine who is drowning in guilt over her last mission in which she got 11 members of her team killed and was badly scarred with burns on her face. Christine is in renal failure having tried to commit suicide by slitting her wrist and chugging a bottle of Tylenol. Christine wants to die and is refusing dialysis. She is then approached by the general and convinced to join the terminals team.

The book take a philosophical turn after Christine convinces the agnostic monk Charlie to chase Hillar the killer into hell.

There are some twist an turns as Charlie is tricked by Hillar and relays the wrong information to the team. And then has his communication device stolen. The plot continues on the philosophical / religious train as the search for the children's continues to fail and Charlie continues to traverse the 9 circles of hell like a modern day Dante trying to catch Hillar and keep him from reincarnating once again. Although the story is good I began to get bored by the all the philosophy and lack of action. As well as the attraction between Christine and Attila which just seemed forced I don't think it was written in very well. While the scene itself was written well it their getting together just didn't seem natural they did not have much attraction prior to that scene even though they seemed to be friends.

In the end Christine figures out the children's location and Charlie had to make a deal with Hillar and he reincarnates anyway the two of them as twins lol I think that will make a good story if there isn't to much philosophy shoved in it.

All in all it was a good book well written and a good read not quite my speed though because there were just

some parts that dragged on for me.

Star says

When we first meet Lt. Col. Christine Kurzow, she's recovering from a suicide attempt. When she is approached to join the Terminals program, she decides to join to maybe do some good through her death. Meanwhile, Hillar the Killer has taken a bus full of children and hidden them away for later tortures. When Hillar is killed by an overeager police officer, the Terminals are called in to communicate with Hillar and learn the location of the children. As Hillar is Gnostic, Christine must find another Gnostic and convince them to go Terminal to speak with Hillar in the afterlife. Will the Terminals find the children before it's too late?

THE TERMINALS: SPARK is the first book in The Terminals series. The characters and plot are well-developed in this gritty and complex book. There are many aspects of the book which will spark heated debate – the nature of the soul, potential for an afterlife (or afterlives), suicide, and if there is such a thing as a worthwhile death (dying for a good cause/reason). I loved the uniqueness of this world and the strong characters. THE TERMINALS: SPARK is a stand out book with a novel premise which was thoroughly enjoyable.

Dianne Ascroft says

The Terminals is a powerful, often chilling and thought provoking, novel. It's fantasy but it raises real ethical questions about euthanasia.

Although they don't lack humour, Stewart's adult books are much darker and deeper than the ones he writes for young adults. One of the themes he often explores in his adult novels is different concepts of the afterlife. As he did in 24 Bones, in this book the author weaves a compelling story around a little known set of religious beliefs and, using his ability to create almost tangible characters and settings, draws the reader into an unusual and frightening afterlife.

The story is fast paced, gripping and tense. It's not an easy read and I found the scenes where the children are held captive harrowing but, at the same time, I couldn't put the book down. There is a brief respite in several tender scenes where characters face turning points in their lives, often saying goodbye to their past or to each other. I was particularly touched by the monk Charlie's farewell to the monastery where he had spent his adult life. The book keeps the reader on edge until the end because when you think it's reached the climax there's still more. Everything seems to be resolved then another problem rears its head and you are gripped again. When it's all over there's still a couple unanswered questions, whetting the reader's interest for a sequel.

One of Stewart's fortes is his characters. They are complete: the reader sees, hears and smells them and empathises with their struggles. We know the psychic Attila by his coffee smell and the three elderly soldiers in the unit by their banter and never ending card game. The elderly soldiers are gutsy, funny and vulnerable. Readers admire their indomitable spirits and are moved by their frailty and vulnerability. The main character, Christine Kurzow isn't your usual army officer. She's tough, determined and suicidal. The reader roots for her as she fights to save a busload of kidnapped children and wonders until the end whether she will decide to live or die once her mission is completed. As Christine gets to know a couple other members of the unit, the psychic Attila and fellow female soldier Morph, we see the depth of their characters and are moved by the challenges they face. Stewart portrays all of this without verbose prose; often simple, well-chosen comments and actions by characters reveal all the reader needs to know.

The story flows between the two primary settings: a contemporary veteran's hospital's secret locked ward in the palliative care unit and the fantasy world of the Borborite afterlife. Like his characters, Stewart's settings are vivid and tangible. He is able to create believable contemporary and fantasy worlds with equal skill. The worlds are never comfortable and may make you squirm as you absorb the graphic detail but it's impossible not to get lost in them.

While cautioning that this book isn't for readers who are disturbed by gritty stories, *The Terminals* is a novel I would recommend to anyone who enjoys a gripping, thought provoking story.

I received a free copy of the ebook to review it as part of the blog tour but my review is my honest opinion of the book.

Shay VanZwoll says

If you found out that you were dying, would you volunteer for one last mission to help your Country?

Lieutenant Colonel Christine Kurzow lives in guilt every day. Eleven of the soldiers under her command died one day because she couldn't shoot a child... even though that child was a suicide bomber. Determined that their deaths are her fault, Christine attempts suicide. Luckily she is found before her dies. Not only would having a female Lieutenant Colonel suicide be a giant PR disaster, but a secretive branch of the army has a mission for her... if only she'll accept.

Christine finds herself as part of the Terminals, working as a handler to find terminally ill people (military or not) who are willing to die to save the lives of others. In this case, the live of eleven children who have been kidnapped. The kidnapper himself was shot by the police, but they need to find the children... and only someone dead and willing to speak with a medium can hunt down the killer in the afterlife and send the information make to the police.

This is an extremely interesting book that touches on a lot of subjects that most authors leave alone, including how different religions view an afterlife as well as assisted suicide. After Christine finds out that some of the records may have been falsified to "find" the correct Terminal and that some people are only there because their family was threatened, Christine has to decide what needs to be done to save the children as well as keep her own honor intact.

I was satisfied with the ending of the story and would love to read additional novels in this series. There is plenty of character development and a great plot in this first novel, so I'm excited to see what the author can do to expand on the storyline. This book receives 4 stars instead of 5 because there was too much explaining about what the department is... now that we know how the department works, I'm hoping the author can expand more on the characters and their work and relationships to each other, friendly or not.

Abi Doughty says

This is a crime novel with a difference, mixing together crime, the paranormal and some philosophy. Suicidal army colonel is recruited to a top secret unit so that she can live a bit longer and die for a reason. The terminals can hunt killers beyond the grave and send back crucial information, but it is a very shady business. Who decides who the terminals are? It seems very convenient for the general that experts in certain fields are diagnosed with terminal illnesses mere days before he would be needing them. With killers being pursued after death to find information on possible survivors and their location, time is running out, especially as unbeknown to anyone else, the serial killer had a partner who is holding the children prisoners.

This book is well worth a read and I'd certainly be interested if there were other books involving the terminals. It is very dark though, so if you don't like graphic descriptions of violence then it may not be for you, however, they weren't gratuitous and were important to the story.

Amie's Book Reviews says

An eBook copy of THE TERMINALS: SPARK by Michael F. Stewart was provided to me free of charge through www.librarything.com in exchange for an honest review.

Lt. Colonel Christine Kurzow had made a mistake. One she couldn't forgive herself for. That mistake led to the death of many soldiers under her command.

Her guilt & remorse led her to attempt suicide.

Her suicide attempt fails and she is taken to New York and enlisted in a super secret army program known as The Terminals.

"Causa moriendi est causa vivendi." This is the code The Terminals live by. Basically, it means, "Dying for a reason is a good reason to keep living."

The Terminals are soldiers who are terminally ill, but who are holding off dying until given their mission. Once chosen for a mission, they are euthanized while in the presence of a medium. Their spirit then completes their mission in the afterlife and reports back the intelligence they were seeking to the medium. This allows the army to act on what they learned and prevent further deaths. For instance, a cult leader dies after instructing his followers to commit mass suicide at a set time. But, no one but the cult members know when that will be. A Terminal meets the cult leader in the afterlife and learns that the mass suicide is set to happen at the next solar eclipse. The Army can now pass on that information to the FBI and they can hopefully stop it from happening.

Meanwhile, a serial killer named Hillar The Killer is killed before telling anyone where he has hidden the bus load of children that he abducted.

The Terminals hope that they can send someone into the Afterlife to find Hillar and to retrieve the location of the children before they die of starvation or dehydration. Time is running out.

Throw in lots of twists and turns, and some wild goose chases as well as a suicidal army Colonel who is actually a good person at heart and you have a thrill ride of a read.

This book is being touted as Young Adult fiction, however I believe it's audience will actually be older. The themes of this book are very mature and the intricacies of different religions and their afterlives are very interesting. There is violence and even some sex, so this is definitely NOT for younger children. I would recommend a minimum age of 16 as the target audience.

That being said, this book was excellent. The story was fast paced and kept me reading long after I should have gone to sleep for the night.

The lead character is portrayed as a reluctant hero. She does not see herself as a hero and in fact blames herself for the deaths of her squad members. She is intensely realistic and though flawed is a good person who genuinely tries to "do the right thing" at all times. Her inner pain, turmoil, guilt and remorse make her

seem all the more real. The author has done a terrific job in creating a character that everyone can relate to in at least some small way.

It is refreshing to read a book that takes into account that the world is not black and white and neither are the choices people make.

I highly recommend this book and am eagerly awaiting the next book in the series.

I rate this book as 5 out of 5 stars.

Kim says

Another book that I requested to review from NetGalley, I was really wondering how the author was going to pull off the story without a lot of over-the-top antics. From the moment I began the book, it was clear that the author took the telling of this story seriously. I admit, I ended up liking this story a lot more than I initially thought I would. A great surprise, I really am looking forward to other books in the Terminal series as well as checking out some of the author's other works.

As I mentioned, the beginning chapter of the book got right into the action and why the main character, Christine, found herself in a hospital of sorts. Not all of her motives for her actions were made clear at the outset, but her thought process and beliefs were laid bare. It was easy to measure her feelings about herself from them. Despite her nearly constant desire to die, she was a complicated character with a sharp mind that interacted harshly with the other characters. I liked that not all of the other characters were staunchly good or bad. They each held secrets that made them the way they were and it made the story more interesting, in my opinion.

Under the guise of a secret unit which has to answer only to the top level, there were many avenues open for the story to explore. The characters were able to play fast and loose with the laws of the land as they went about their missions due to the freedom they were afforded by the secret status. Having the ability to move outside the law didn't always play in the unit's favor. In fact, on more than one occasion, it worked against them with tragic results and added more fuel to the fiery desire for death that Christine carried with her. Throw in some ghosts, different afterlives and a psychic and you got yourself a plate full of possibilities.

Speaking of the afterlives, I was impressed by the author's explanations of the different versions featured in the book and the exploration of each. I was able to understand many of the tenets of the different faiths he explored in the books without feeling as though the information was being dumbed down or important information was being left out. The visitations were often used to advance the story and they easily kept the story moving at a steady pace. With so many faiths to choose from, I believe the author has so many paths to walk down. The only question will be which one to explore next.

Despite my early worries, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was a departure from other books that mixed the paranormal and serial killers in that it brought up so many things to think about. Whether it was a person's right to die, the weight of a soldier's death upon a commander's soul or the almost fanatical desire to ensure a lasting legacy, the author presented a definite thrill ride of a book. Looking for book with action, adventure, heart and soul, then this is the book for you!

Nev Murray says

This review of *The Terminals: Spark* by Michael F. Stewart is the result of a copy sent to Ginger Nuts of Horror in exchange for an honest review.

Everyone who has a Kindle has books on it that they buy and don't read for months or years. Right? I bought this book in July of last year and although I meant to read it never seemed to get around to it. When it came up for review at Ginger Nuts I thought I would finally give it a go. Why the hell did I leave it so long! Another lesson learnt.

Lt Col. Christine Kurzow is lying in a military hospital in the desert, recovering after a failed suicide attempt. She lost 11 soldiers in her unit 2 weeks prior and it was clearly her fault. She can't live with the guilt. She gets a visit from a mysterious General who begs her not to kill herself but come help him. She is now going to die anyway from the damage to her body and he wants her to join his "special" unit, The Terminals. The Terminals are a group of terminally ill people who volunteer to die early and with the help of a psychic connecting with them on "the other side", provide information back to the living to help save lives and stop catastrophes from happening. In the interest of National Security of course.

Christine's first mission is to handle a monk who is sent to the other side to chase down Hillar the Killer, a serial killer who was killed before he could reveal the whereabouts of 11 children he was holding hostage. She must firstly battle her own beliefs to convince herself the messages being sent back are true. When things start to go wrong, it's not just herself she needs to convince, and who can she really trust?

So, try to put this story into a genre. OK. It's a supernatural crime thriller with mountains of horror and philosophical elements that will make you question not only your own beliefs but those of every single person, religion and belief system in the world today. Phew. Aside from the mismatch of genres within this story, it's such a good read.

Christine is an atheist so how can she possibly subscribe to dealing with people in the afterlife when she doesn't believe in it? This is her first hurdle. She also has to deal with an apparently psychotic General in charge of everything she is involved in. She initially is sceptical about Attila, the psychic as well but soon learns to trust him more than others.

As well as being a bloody good read, this book examines many differing opinions on religion and which is right or wrong. Each time someone is sent to the other side they must have the same beliefs as the person they are hunting. We have an Egyptian, a Muslim and a gnostic all dying to try and save someone in the living world. Michael Stewart comes up with some interesting ideas as to what each faith might find at the other side.

In terms of the story it has a bit of everything. From the outset you have Christine trying to deal with her internal turmoil at not wanting to live. You have the mental General who is obviously doing things according to his own agenda and 11 children slowly fading as time goes by. It's mainly a thriller in my opinion but when it focuses on the person who is on "the other side", they do go through some horrifying scenes, full of plenty of blood and gore. When it focuses on the children as well it can be quite harrowing watching them suffer at the hands of the serial killers accomplice. Psychological horror is the name of the game for big periods as well.

All in all this is a very good read. I was pleasantly surprised with the direction it took and the way Michael Stewart keeps you glued to the story, always keeping your fingers crossed that what is about to happen is the right thing. It's well paced with characters that are very believable and well placed in the story. Some site bill this as part 1. I do hope there is more. It could prove to be a very interesting series.

Giving a 3.5ish edging towards 4.

- See more at: <http://gingernutsofhorror.com/4/post/...>

Joseph says

I was given this book free through LibraryThing Member Giveaways in exchange for an honest review.

This story can fit into a myriad of genres, such as Horror, fantasy/Sci-Fi, YA, Supernatural thriller etc. The premise is original, where a secret military squad, answering directly to the President, is responsible for solving crimes in the here and now, by conversing with the dead. The way this is done, is by using a combination of terminally ill military personnel, and sending them on a final mission into the afterlife, in search of people who died with important information, and having them relay that information to the resident seer (A gambling Gypsy who converses with the dead through a crystal door knob), before entering the final stage of their journey into afterlife.

The main arc in *The Terminals: Spark*, is the relentless, bloody search for a serial killer who died without revealing where he had hidden a busload of kidnapped children. Hillar the Killer, the serial killer in question, was also a Gnostic, and in order to find him, the "Terminal" or Euth being sent, must also be a Gnostic, or at least be an expert in Gnostic afterlife beliefs. An interesting storyline to be sure, but also extremely dark, and not for the weak of heart, especially those upset by stories of kidnapped children being tortured and killed.

Michael F. Stewart combines sobering violence, with ironic psychological commentary dealing with suicide, murder, government secrecy, spiritualism and morality. The language is colorful, and at times is downright amusing, such as the sentence "the general's office stank like someone had left a used colostomy bag on a radiator to cook." This is not a feel-good, happy ending type of book, but if you like your horror-thrillers dark, quick paced and thought-provoking, I would highly suggest jumping on board for the ride.

The last page of the epilogue will straighten your spine, and if you are like me, will make you yearn for volume 2 of the *Terminals* series.

Read review on my blog the Thugbrarian review @ www.thugbrarianreview.wordpress.com

Lisette says

Ever since she witnessed the deaths of her colleagues, Christine Kurzow has yearned for death. She's tried to take her life many times, but each instance has failed her. Her current try was almost successful, but the attempt was thwarted at the last minute. She now finds herself recovering from the ordeal, aching for the moment when she can finally end things all-together.

When an unexpected request lands in her lap, Christine isn't sure about what to make of it. According to what she's been told, she has the chance of saving lives in the midst of such tragedies, but she's not sure how such a thing is possible. Most especially when those recruited for this cause are almost on Death's doorstep to begin within. Still, the thought of achieving the very goal she was recruited for is tempting. So much so, that's she's willing to give things a try before she slinks to the other side, once and for all.

Determined to do the best she can, Christine immerses herself in the task at hand. In her mind, by encouraging others to die for a good cause, she'll be able to gain the freedom she's sought for some time now.

Granted, getting people to comply isn't that easy, but at least things give her the needed momentum to do what's necessary, for the time being. She has a job to complete, and she'll do whatever is necessary to make sure things fall into place.

As time continues to dwindle, and the location of the missing kids is still unknown, Christine soon realizes just how difficult things have become. Not only for herself, mind you, but for those giving their lives to right wrongs committed by others. Deep inside, she's no longer sure as to what is right or wrong. She's stepped across an invisible line, taking her in a direction she never expected to take. Part of her wonders if things will actually go as planned. Will she be able to find her own brand of redemption once everything is said and done?

A thought-provoking story, Michael spins a tale that will definitely draw you out of your comfort zone the farther along in reading you get. He takes the theme of using death as an advantage in order to gain information from those who have already crossed over. Information that's to be used for the greater good, supposedly. I think he's done a remarkable job with the beginning of this series. It's certainly piqued my interest, and I look forward to more of it in the future.

So, I Read This Book Today says

“The question of afterlife disappears, when we start to recognize the fact that we did not exist before our birth and the same will happen after death.” ? Sipendr

“I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.” ? Mark Twain

Joshua Bruns said that the trouble with quotes about death is that 99.999 percent of them are made by people who are still alive. So, I'm part of the 0.001 percent. – Captain Kade “Morph” Harmina, US Army Terminal

If you knew that you were going to die soon, that your death would have no meaning other than pain – your own and that of your loved ones – would you be willing to sacrifice what little comfortable time you might have remaining in order to save the lives of others? *Causa moriendi est causa vivendi. Dying for a reason is a good reason to keep living.*

But what happens after death occurs? Does religion really have the answers? Or is it both more and less than what the human mind may conceive? If the afterlife is real, does our energy simply sustain what our mind conceives, fading into oblivion as the currants of life expire?

Questions upon questions, with no answers in sight. Well, until you are dead, and then will those questions actually be answered? Or is the concept of an afterlife merely a conceit, a naïve attempt to ease the terrors of the unknown?

Michael F. Stewart has written a horrifying book in *The Terminals Episode 1: Spark*. Oh, don't get me wrong – I mean horrifying in the best possible definition of literary excellence. This is a spine-chilling novel, full of disturbing layers of both the physical and metaphysical. The story reached down inside my mind and jerked at the lids of all the mentally hardened boxes it contains, the memories inherent in a mind tormented by PTSD. the dark terrors at the edges of death, only to return, kicking and screaming, into the agony of life once more.

When Lieutenant Colonel Christine Kurzow awakens in a hot, dusty field hospital in the burning desert of

Iraq, the first words she hears are those of General F. Aaron: *Dying for a reason is a good reason to live, Colonel.* A strange comment, and one that opens the door to a perverted, powerful, and deeply disturbing book that reaches into the mind, distorting science, religion, belief, and the basic tenants of the human concept of the afterlife.

Kurzow is crippled by guilt after the loss of eleven of those under her command – a loss that could have been prevented if she had taken one shot – a shot which would have killed a child, but saved her team. A rising star in the Army hierarchy, Kurzow's misjudgment, and subsequent suicide attempt, is a public relations nightmare for the Army, one that is quickly swept under the rug. No punishment attached, rather a Medal of Honor awarded by the military machine. No punishment from her peers, but a deadly degree of self-punishment in the form of a sharp blade, and a massive number of pills. Now, she is pulled back from the brink and pushed into a secret military unit. A unit that accomplishes the impossible – communication with the dead. The only problem? One must die that many may live.

What is most terrifying about Stewart's tale is just how clearly I could see in my mind's eye everything that was happening, in grotesque detail. And how horrific the religious visions of the afterlife really are. For, the method the group uses to track down the killers and terrorists in the afterlife is based on religious beliefs – the sharing of the Terminal's beliefs with those of the person they seek in the afterlife.

Can Christine gain her redemption by her own death? She will be given the chance – but before she can reach for salvation, she must handle the euthanizing of the Gnostic monk, Charlie. For Charlie is an expert on Hillar the Killer, a psychopathic mass murderer with a minimum of eighty kills under his belt. Charlie not only shares Hillar's religion, but also understands the depths of Hillar's psychopathy. Charlie must find Hillar in the afterlife – the lives of eleven kidnapped children depend upon him. And when an incompetent, glory hound cop blunders what should have been a simple shot, killing the killer, Charlie the monk must die in order to save them.

Can Christine convince the monk that he must die in order to save the children? And can Charlie track Hillar through the brutalities of the Gnostic deep – and then pull the needed information from a creature of pure evil? Finally, can Christine, an Atheist, truly work through a system that relies upon meshing the religious beliefs of the Terminal and their prey?

"Though one believes in nothing, there are moments in life when one accepts the religion of the temple nearest at hand." ? Victor Hugo

More questions - of religion and faith, of the good of the many over the good of the one. Of honor and pride, patriotism and heroism. And even greater questions of morality and ethics and an even simpler question – are the Terminals really terminal, or is there something truly evil in the works – an evil promulgated upon the innocent by a selfish, sociopathic coward with a god complex?

"Where questions of religion are concerned, people are guilty of every possible sort of dishonesty and intellectual misdemeanor." ? Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion (The Standard Edition)*

Morph says it best. *"Listen, don't fixate so much on death. It doesn't matter. When we are alive, we are not dead, and when we are dead, we are no longer alive. There is no in-between. No dying. It is the dying that most people fear."* Of course, when she made that statement, she was already dead.

I received *The Terminals Episode 1: Spark* from Netgalley.com in return for a realistic review. If I could give the book ten stars, I certainly would. It has nothing to do with whether or not I received the book for free and everything to do with the fact that this one of the best books I have read in recent memory. I can hardly wait for the next Episode and will drop everything to read it to see if it lives up to its stunning début.

Lydia says

When it comes to scary books - stories of horror and gore - I'm most certainly not your girl! And I'm damn proud to say so!

But I'm also proud to say that despite my cowardice, I manage to read wonderful books that are simply gonsend gifts to humanity - books that are so scary, my freaked out self from two years ago wouldn't even touch them with a ten-foot pole. And *The Terminals: Spark* was one of those.

When a psycho who has abducted eleven kids dies unexpectedly, everything seems lost - there's no way the police can find where Hillar the Killer had hidden the children before his brains got shot out of his head. Or is there? The Terminals beg to differ. A special military unit, these people specialize in interrogating the dead in the afterlife. Its agents are either on their way there, or eager to kick the bucket, anyway. Looking for some kind of redemption and honorable death, Christine Kurzow becomes a handler and future Terminal. Her first case is Hillar, and with Attila the medium, Dr. Deeth, and the General who recruited her on her side, Christine will try her hardest to bring the kids back. But will they make it in time? Or will their many differences and Christine's own suicidal ways prove to be too much?

While the book started in a rather confused way - and it took me a while to get where this was going - the pace and the interest soon picked up to keep me hooked. There were definitely many chapters that were pure terror for me, and I came too close for comfort to losing my lunch or dinner sometimes, but I made it to the end of the story seemingly unscathed - and with the bile held down, thank God! Yes, I'm not going to lie, many parts were violent and disgusting. (by the way, the author did warn me, but masochistic ol' me never seems to listen)

There were scenes where kids were tortured and treated awfully. Oh, and don't let my flowery words misguide you. I don't mean they were just beaten around or got bullied by their kidnapers. I mean the real deal. One that had to do with needles, and sewing, and creepy lullaby songs while this whole thing was taking place.

And surprisingly, that's what made it better. See, Mr. Stewart had warned me. But what I read was far worse than what he briefly described in his email. It was downright terrifying, and can cause the nightmares of a lifetime. Because in his story, he didn't sugarcoat things. He told them as they were. He didn't cut down on the violence for the reader's sake. And that, people, THAT showed how much respect he holds for his readers. He doesn't keep us sheltered, he doesn't try to just give us a nice story with action and suspense - maybe throw a little horror in the mix - and be done with it. No, instead he lays the events in a rude but oh-so-brilliant way, bursts our bubble, and gives us the scene raw and uncensored - the way it should be. That... that, my darlings, had me loving this book so much - despite the fact I lost my sleep, despite the fact I cried and sobbed, scared that "monsters" like the ones he described could very well and truly exist in our world, despite the many times I told myself "ok, one more line, and I'm closing the file, I can't take anymore of this". In the end, that "one more line" somehow became a little magical word called "END". I was so engrossed, I didn't even realize I had reached the end of the story!

If you're looking for a book to take you beyond what you have ever experienced as scary and violent, this is the one for you. Believe you me, meeting Christine and the rest of Mr. Stewart's cast may seem like a bad

idea at first, but you will come to see it is the best decision you ever took!

****I was given a review copy from a LibraryThing Member Giveaway in exchange for an honest review. The opinion stated in this review is solely mine, and no compensation was given or taken to alter it.****

Read this and other reviews at: <http://cupcakesandpopcorn.wordpress.com/>

Bruce Gargoyle says

Full review at <http://thebookshelfgargoyle.wordpress...>

I received a digital copy of this book for review from the publisher via netgalley.

Ten Second Synopsis:

Suicidal Lt. Colonel is coerced into dying for a cause. No criminal will be able to rest easy in their grave/urn/unspecified corpse repository with the Terminals on the case.

This book was a surprising read for me - it was far darker than I expected it to be, but that could just be because I'm not used to the level of violence and pain and murdering and eyeballs that is common to contemporary crime thrillers. It was also way more complex than I thought it would be, given the blurb. This is mostly a gritty, complex novel that has lots of layers. There's lots of action and violence, there's a bit of philosophy and religious debate, there's ethical conundrums a-plenty, there's romance (well, sex), crotchety old bastards with dubious moral standards, gods and hells and pain and suffering, and there's eyeballs. Did I mention the eyeballs? They're important.

The Terminals stood out for me most because the premise is so different. The coupling of paranormal with what is essentially a murder mystery through world-building rather than through giving a character a particular power or gift is something that I haven't come across before. The paranormal aspect of the book allows for a whole range of ethical and spiritual musing, but this doesn't detract from the action or the pace of the plot. It's like a wonderful, thought-provoking addition to your average crime novel. For those who read a lot of either crime or paranormal books, I think this will provide plenty of new fodder for the collective imagination.

One of the best aspects of the book is the way the author shifts the perspectives with each chapter so that the reader really gets a good chance to take in as much of both the paranormal and crime elements as possible. It breaks up the book nicely and allows time for the reader to decompress between reveals so as not to suffer from plot twist overload. It also provides a nice balance between the spiritual/paranormal and mundane action, so as to avoid becoming too much of one or the other.

Overall this book has a great new twist on your standard crime novel and I think it will appeal greatly to readers of crime fiction who are looking for something different that will leave them with something to think about long after the crime has been solved.

Faith Flaherty says

"The Terminals" by Michael F. Stewart is the subject of this book review. I don't know where to begin. You wouldn't believe it. You won't believe it. I have never read anything like this before. Dante's Inferno comes to mind—maybe. But Stewart's gnostic hell is more graphic than Dante's. If you have a weak stomach then this book is not for you.

In fact, nobody should eat or munch on any goodies while reading "The Terminals." Your stomach is guaranteed to turn. That's not saying that the story isn't good, because it is. I was hooked and kept on reading, in spite of my IBS.

The story revolves around Col. Christine Kurzow, who feels responsible for her troops who were blown up in Afghanistan. She's suicidal. Actually, all the characters in this novel are suicidal, hence the title, "The Terminals". These people who are going to die are referred to as Terminals. (I'm trying very hard not to give out spoilers.) The Terminals descend into death to solve crimes.

If you don't understand, good. Read the book. I can't explain it. Like the "Lovin Spoonful" say, "It'd be like trying to explain Rock n' Roll."

Christine becomes a handler of Charles Hackman, a monk who specializes in the gnostic religion. Charles' assignment is to find Hillar the Killer in gnostic hell. Hillar is psycho and had kidnapped a school bus full of kids, then he was killed before he could reveal where he hid the kids. Charles communicates the clues he's garnered from Hillar (easier said than done) and Christine tries to locate the kids before they die.

Even dead, Hillar is psycho. His clues are worthless. What else can I tell you? It's not a happy ending; not an unhappy ending. It's real. "Ha!" "Did I just say that?"

"The Terminals" is not like Michael F. Stewart's Assured Destruction series. I've read those and liked them. I like "The Terminals", too, but this is nothing like Assured Destruction. In fact, it's like nothing I've ever read before. The descriptive action is grotesque. It's disgusting. It's nauseating.

"Oh, wait." It is hell, isn't it?

I received a free e-copy of "The Terminals" by Michael F. Stewart, from Tribute Books. No other compensation was received and my review is my honest evaluation.
