

Slaying in Seattle

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

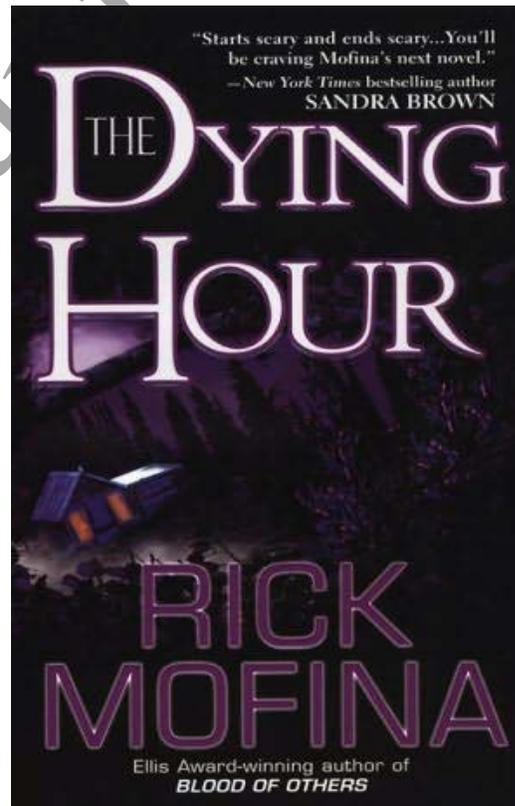
Publishing being the precarious business it is, it's always nice when an author breaks through into larger markets and begins to achieve wider acclaim. Such is the case with talented Canadian crime novelist Rick Mofina, who is this week's pick.

Rick Mofina

A surprising number of people seem to believe that creative writing is easy. It isn't. Gifted professionals sometimes make it look easy, yet the final product is almost always the outcome of an arduous and disciplined process, from initial conception to thorough research to carefully-crafted writing and on to meticulous editing.

Rick Mofina is a case in point. He began writing fiction in primary school and sold his first short story when he was only fifteen. He went on to freelance crime stories in such publications as *Reader's Digest*, *The New York Times*, and *The Moscow Times*. Turning his hand to journalism, he has reported from the U.S., Africa, the Caribbean, the Arctic, and Iraq's border with Kuwait. When he decided to specialize in crime fiction Mofina interviewed murderers on death row and the people who catch them, flew over Los Angeles with the LAPD, and patrolled the Arctic with the RCMP. The result of such attention to detail is crisp, gripping writing that smacks of authenticity and holds the reader firmly in its grasp. In 2000

Mofina was a finalist for the Crime Writers of Canada Arthur Ellis Award for Best First Novel for his work, *If Angels Fall*. The following year his novel *Cold Fear* made him a finalist for Best Novel; and in 2003 he won the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel, for his chilling tale, *Blood of Others*. To date he has half a million books in print—half of them in the U.S.—a truly impressive accomplishment for a Canadian author.



The Dying Hour
(Pinnacle Books/Kensington, 2005)

Following an argument with her boyfriend, Seattle college student Karen Harding jumps in her car and, ignoring a ferocious storm, heads for Vancouver to visit her sister. An accident on the highway ahead forces her to detour, and when her car breaks down on a desolate stretch of secondary road, Karen finds herself stranded. Things take a terrifying turn when a kindly stranger who stops to help her turns out to be a sadistic torturer and serial killer.

Intern reporter Jason Wade has been assigned the police beat at the *Seattle Mirror*. For Jason, journalism is a calling, not merely a job. He struggles to break out of his alcoholic father's blue-collar past, although he realizes that the odds are against him as he competes with five other interns—all fiercely competitive and better qualified than he is—for a full-time position at the newspaper. But driven both by his passion to

become a professional journalist and his desire to solve the mystery of Karen's disappearance, Jason puts his career – and his life – on the line.

A gripping tale

This is the first novel in a series to feature rookie crime reporter Jason Wade, and a fine debut it is. Mofina has created a fresh and engaging (if flawed) protagonist, and a compelling tale. He skillfully navigates between the two main plot lines, maintaining our interest in both. Not for the faint of heart, the violence is both graphic and gory; but nowhere is it gratuitous. The story is compellingly true-to-life, and if it is profoundly disturbing, that is simply a comment on our very troubled times. *The Dying Hour* should prove to be a true breakout novel, establishing Rick Mofina at the very top of his field.

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