

Colin Campbell

Praise for Colin Campbell

“Very real. And Very good.” - *Lee Child*

The Resurrection Man Series

“A cop with a sharp eye, keen mind, and a lion’s heart.” - *Reed Farrel Coleman*

“Campbell writes smart, rollercoaster tales with unstoppable forward momentum and thrilling authenticity. The Resurrection Man series is a blast.” - *Nick Petrie*

“Grim and gritty and packed with action and crackling dialogue.” – *Kirkus Review (Jamaica Plain)*

“Action packed. Tough-as-nails. The pages fly like the bullets, fistfights and one-liners that make this one of my favourite books of the year. Top stuff!” – *Matt Hilton (Jamaica Plain)*

“Campbell’s wry maverick Grant never fails to entertain.” – *Kirkus Review (Montecito Heights)*

“Sets up immediately and maintains a breakneck pace throughout. Its smart structure and unrelenting suspense will please Lee Child fans.” – *Library Journal Review (Montecito Heights)*

“Harkens back to the gritty action series of the 70s and 80s, with a stylish noir voice.” – *Kirkus Reviews (Adobe Flats)*

“Crackerjack entertainment: taut, gritty and full of devilish twists.” – *Kirkus Reviews (Snake Pass)*

Shelter Cove

“Hard-hitting action and Grant’s dry wit make this a rollicking good time.” - *Library Journal Review (Snake Pass)*

"Campbell's BEACON HILL is a great tale of violence and intrigue, stretching across the Atlantic and back again. In it, Jim Grant proves he is the real deal." – *Reed Farrel Coleman (about Beacon Hill)*

“The Resurrection Man series is a blast, and BEACON HILL tops the list -- until the next one.” – *Nick Petrie (about Beacon Hill)*

UK Crime Novels

“This is police procedural close-up and personal. A strong debut with enough gritty realism to make your eyes water, and a few savage laughs along the way.” - *Reginald Hill (about Through The Ruins Of Midnight)*

“An excellent story well told. A mixture of The Choirboys meets Harry Bosch.” – *Michael Jecks (about Through The Ruins Of Midnight)*

“Campbell’s 30 years as a Yorkshire policeman infuse this unusual procedural with grim reality and the harsh humor that helps keep the coppers sane.” – *Kirkus Review (Blue Knight White Cross)*

“Every detail feels authentic, and Campbell’s dark, muscular prose suggests the best pulp writers of the ’50s.” – *Kirkus Review (Northern Ex)*

Also by Colin Campbell

Resurrection Man

Beacon Hill

Snake Pass

Adobe Flats

Montecito Heights

Jamaica Plain

Vince McNulty

Northern Ex

UK Crime

Blue Knight White Cross

Ballad Of The One Legged Man

Through The Ruins Of Midnight

Children

Gargoyles – Skylights And Roofscapes

Horror

Darkwater Towers

Shelter Cove

For my daughter, Ann
Love always

Colin Campbell

PART ONE

The Man With The White Bottom

“You talk funny. I think that’s why I like you.” – Holly
West

ONE

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TROUBLE COMES IN THREES. Always has and always will. If Cole Thornton had recognized that he might have avoided much of what was to come. If he'd realized that the car crash was the beginning of his personal trifecta he could have upped sticks and moved on before Shelter Cove became a killing jar instead of a safe haven. Of course hindsight is always 20/20, another undeniable truth, so Thornton didn't see the warning signs. He didn't up sticks. And the crash was just an accident. But before the crash there was the book. Hindsight would later go 20/20 that that's where it really all began.

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“YOU GOING TO USE that to beat miscreants into submission?”

“Miscreants?”

“Thieves and vagabonds.”

“You talk funny. I think that's why I like you.”

Cole Thornton talked funny because he wasn't from California. He wasn't from America at all. He was just

another ex-pat Brit making a living abroad, in this case running Rocky Coast Books, Shelter Cove's only bookstore, and enjoying the view across the common towards Rockaway Beach. This morning he was also enjoying the view of Holly West as she stood at the window with the sun forming a halo around her short-cropped hair. "Even so. You hit any troublemakers with that, you won't need your Taser."

"I never need my Taser."

"I'll bet you don't."

The hint of suggestiveness brought a smile to Holly's lips. The part time deputy was in uniform even though she wasn't due on shift until noon. Discussing handcuffs and physical restraints with a man with an English accent was always the highlight of her day. Managing the Arguello Boulevard Motel wasn't exactly her life's ambition and becoming a full time police officer wasn't an option. Budget cuts and a freeze on recruiting meant that being an auxiliary was as good as it was going to get. Having the Englishman seek out books she wanted to buy gave her the excuse to stop in for a chat.

History Of The Ocean Shore Railroad

The book this time was big enough to knock sense into anybody. She hefted it in both hands then took a playful swing, two-handed like a baseball player. She smiled at Cole then put the book on the counter. "How much I owe you?"

Cole moved behind the cash register and flicked open the cover. "Wasn't that hard to track down. Picked it up from a remainder supplier."

"Not for free."

"No."

"So how much?"

Cole felt uncomfortable. He'd known Holly for almost three years, just after he moved to Pacifica then settled in the south at Shelter Cove. He'd spent his first six months at her motel before he bought the bookstore and moved into the

apartment round the back. She was divorced. He was single. She loved Englishmen. He was English. They were a match made in heaven but he resisted the urge to pursue a relationship. He wasn't ready for a relationship. There was too much baggage in his closet. They were friendly but Holly wanted to be friendlier. Making her pay for the book felt like being a cheapskate.

She leaned on the counter. "You are running a business here aren't you?"

Cole stood back. "Sort of."

"Sort of yes or sort of no?"

Cole shrugged. "More like a hobby."

Holly tapped the book. "A redistribution of wealth kind of hobby?"

Cole shrugged again.

Holly gave him her best police officer stare. "Over here that'd make you a commie. You aren't a communist are you?"

Cole gave her a disarming smile. "That still a problem over here? You do know the wall came down years ago."

She braced her shoulders. "Not in California."

Cole held out his hands, wrists together. "Then you'd better arrest me."

Holly smiled. "Furry handcuffs?"

Cole waved a finger. "Naughty girl. I think I'd better charge for the book."

Holly looked disappointed. She took out her purse. "So how much I owe you?"

"Call it ten."

"That all? Maybe I should cook you dinner."

"You did cook me dinner. For six months."

"A long time ago."

Cole peeled off a sheet of wrapping paper from a dispenser and laid the book flat. The cover photo was of a sweeping railroad track coming round the headland. He'd seen similar

shots of steam trains on the North Yorkshire moors back home. Always a curved track. Always the sun coming over the back. Sometimes it seemed like the further he went the closer to home he became. He supposed most ex-pats felt that way.

Holly looked out of the window while Cole wrapped. As soon as he knew she wasn't looking he slowed down. He didn't want her to leave but he wasn't ready to ask her to stay. It was more of a catch 22 situation than the one he'd left back home. Some things you tried to ignore but those things never ignored you. Hence travelling halfway around the world to get away from them. He folded the paper in nice straight lines but his eyes wandered around the shop.

Rocky Coast Books was a throwback to the backstreet bookshops he used to frequent as a boy. Stripped pine bookshelves and carved wooden picture frames. He had sandpapered the wood himself and was pleased with the carpentry smell it gave the shop. The only smell as nice as planed wood was freshly baked bread but he was no great shakes at baking. Wood he could work with. There were wooden bowls scattered around the shop with carved wooden fruit shapes dipped in scented oils. The smell complimented the wood shavings. It made the place feel like a meditation retreat. He was particularly pleased with the doublewide shop window. It was big and bright and split in two by an ornate wooden support. It made the place look even older. Gave it an air of authenticity that not many places in America had. To him everything looked like it was built yesterday. There was no history before the old west. John Wayne was as far back as most people went.

Holly turned back and Cole picked up the pace. He folded the ends into neat triangles then dabbed a strip of Sellotape to hold them down. Not too much so that opening the parcel became a recruiting test. Not so little that it looked like he was

Shelter Cove

skimping. She nodded her approval. “You should run your own business.”

Cole slid the book across the counter. “I do run my own business.”

Holly gave him ten dollars. “No. You redistribute wealth. I don’t know how you make enough to keep the place open.”

Cole shrugged.

Holly left the book where it was. “He still trying to strong arm you into selling?”

“Arlo? He’s still leaning some.”

Holly tilted her head. “You on first name terms with Shelter Cove’s biggest landowner now?”

“Not exactly. I just like the name. Reminds me of Arlo Givens in that TV show, *Justified*.”

“The crooked father?”

“That’s the one.”

“You saying Arlo Rankoff’s a crook?”

“Wouldn’t be much of a stretch, would it?”

“Just because he’s bought most of the businesses west of Cabrillo Highway?”

Cole looked out of the window. A car drove past, slow and steady. There wasn’t much need for speed on San Pedro Avenue. There wasn’t much traffic. The network of streets round the back of the bookstore was quiet and residential. The Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market was the only other business still open and that was only because it was part of the Pedro Point Shopping Center just across the common. Too big for Rankoff to buy out. Not far enough west to encroach on the tract of land he now owned. Everything leading into the hills and across to the crescent of beach that gave Shelter Cove its name. Cole leaned on the cash register, a symbol of the last business standing, and turned back to Holly. “Somebody once said that business is simply theft by other means.”

Holly surprised him. “Don’t you mean; war is a continuation of politics by other means?”

Cole raised his eyebrows. “You heard that too?”

“Carl von Clausewitz. Yeah.”

“You must have too much time on your hands.”

“Time enough to cook you dinner.”

Cole ignored the suggestion. “Von Clausewitz huh?”

“Business and politics. Not exactly the same thing.”

“Not much of a stretch either though. And Von Rankoff’s definitely playing fast and loose with the rules of engagement.”

Holly folded her arms across her chest. Official stance. “So, back to my question. He still trying to strong arm you into selling?”

Cole repeated his answer. “He’s still leaning some.”

Holly let out a sigh. “And you still play fast and loose with your answers.”

Another car drove past the window going the other way, almost identical to the previous one. There wasn’t much variety beyond Shoreside Drive. Cole tracked it until it turned the corner towards the Pedro Point firehouse. The distraction gave him time to marshal his thoughts. “I’ve been leaned on before. It’s no big deal.”

That piqued Holly’s interest. “Who’d have thought being a bookseller could be so dangerous?”

“I haven’t always been a bookseller.”

“And you haven’t always answered my questions.”

Cole put on a stern face. “Am I being interrogated?”

Holly responded with a stern face of her own. “Interviewed. Interrogation is electric shocks and waterboarding.”

Cole’s stern face set a little harder. “Well I’ve been interrogated before.”

Holly’s stern face showed a hint of concern. “Electric shocks and waterboarding?”

Shelter Cove

Cole softened his expression. “Asked questions I didn’t want to answer.”

Holly looked embarrassed. “Am I being nose-y again?”

Cole felt bad about embarrassing her. He smiled and shook his head. “You’re showing an interest. Not the same thing.”

Holly held up her hands. “Invading your privacy. I do it all the time. Sorry.”

Cole took one of her hands in both of his. “Maybe I’ll tell you over dinner sometime.”

Holly brightened up. The car came back around the corner from the Pedro Point firehouse. The same car. Cole was sure of it now. He glanced at the car then turned back to Holly. “You’ve got history. Divorce and stuff. Things you don’t want to talk about. I’ve got history too. And I want to keep it in the past.”

He thought about that for a moment. Catch 22. Some things you tried to ignore but those things never ignored you. The act of trying to forget inevitably meant you remembered. He tried to put a positive spin on the rebuff. “I like it here. Arlo Von Rankoff isn’t going to move me on.” The car was going faster than before. Cole divided his attention between it and Holly. Mainly Holly. “I like the company too.” He slid the book across the counter. “You’re my best customer.”

She took it and smiled. “I’ve never been anyone’s best before.”

A squeal of tyres sounded outside. Cole glanced through the window. Holly followed his gaze. The car was going too fast and careered across the road as it lost control. It mounted the sidewalk at an angle, sun glinting off the windshield. Cole lunged across the cash register but Holly was out of reach. The car bounced up the curb at speed and left the ground, heading straight for the ornate wooden support of the doublewide window.