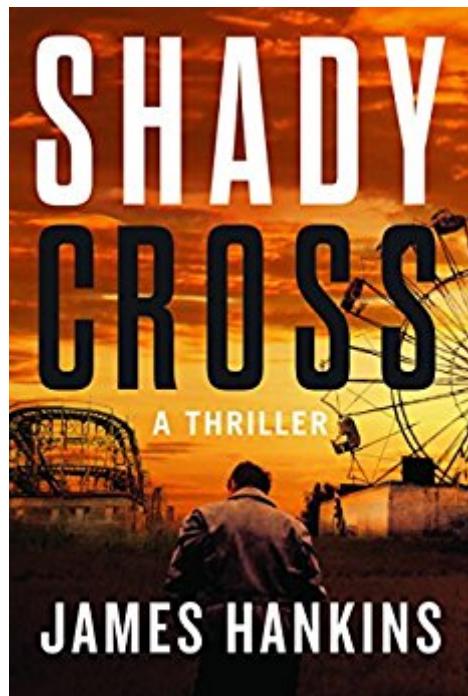


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Shady Cross



Synopsis

In one hand, small-time crook Stokes holds a backpack stuffed with someone else's money—three hundred and fifty thousand dollars of it. In the other hand, Stokes has a cell phone, which he found with the money. On the line, a little girl he doesn't know asks, "Daddy? Are you coming to get me? They say if you give them money they'll let you take me home." From bestselling author James Hankins comes a wrenching story of an unscrupulous man torn between his survival instincts and the plight of a true innocent. Faced with the choice, Stokes discovers his conscience might not be as corroded as he thought.

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Customer Reviews

Another well-crafted novel by James Hankins! I have enjoyed all his works. The main character in this story is a loser, a petty thief named Stokes, who initially inspires no positive appeal. But the reader is quickly drawn in when Stokes is reluctantly propelled on an unlikely path to redemption. The entire novel takes place in a period less than 24 hours. The feeling of tension is enhanced by repeated reminders about the passage of time. I have special admiration for the way the author

drew Stokes' character so completely through Stokes' ranting, ironic arguments with his own conscience and through the background glimpses into his past provided by the other characters he collides with on his journey. By the end, I understood Stokes, sympathized with him, and suffered his pain. I see a movie in the making! Great job!

Gripping. This story grips you around the neck with a couple of stomach punches thrown in. It's not for the faint of heart, but then again do you really want your life to tally of intellectual thinking to be the sum total of TV sit-coms on week-day evenings. Dive in to Stokes' life and hang on for the ride. Hankins, in Shady Cross, develops a despicable character that you are forced to live with. There is nothing redeemable or likeable about Stokes for a third of the book. In fact he is so unlikeable that I put the book down and almost didn't pick it up again. Sort of like Stokes throwing the phone in the bus station trash and turning to run away only to return to assuage his nascent conscience. I returned to my kindle to see the struggle through and wound up enjoying the ironic humor and cheering for the gathering strength and determination of our hero. I'm not one to talk you through the plot. I'm not going to spoil the ending. Instead, I send you to the store to buy this fourth great work by Hankins. Stick with it and in the end ask yourself whether you could add a little redemption to your own life and could yours be so pure?

"Shady Cross" took a while to grow on me, as the main character isn't really likeable...until he is. James Hankins did a masterful job of writing this novel, keeping me in suspense until the last pages. I read a lot of mysteries, and can usually figure out "whodunnit" no later than midway through the book. Not so with "Shady Cross", and unlike some novels where random plot devices come out of nowhere, this story made sense from beginning to end, without revealing too much. I enjoyed "Shady Cross" immensely! For maximum enjoyment, I strongly recommend that you avoid reading any reviews which detail the entire plot! (Why do people do that anyway? These reviews aren't supposed to be an American Lit class book report!)

His name is Stokes.....that's it, just Stokes. And he has choices to make. But he has options.....good or bad. Stokes also thinks, it is funny, how it changes, when the same things you wanted to do, become things you now have to do. Though kidnapping a cop, is not going to help make his life any easier. Now options have changed, and there are no good ones left. And getting your fingers broken, was not part of the plan. Oh By The Way.....Don't Trust Any One.

I have read all of Mr. Hankins books. This is his absolute best, in my opinion. What a great book! What a despicable...hero...villain, both? Even he doesn't think he's worth much, he knows what he is and he totally accepts his perception of himself. So deep in his belief of his unworthiness, he doesn't understand what the mother of his child sees in him, the capacity he holds. I won't go into plot points, other reviewers have done an excellent job of that, but wow, what an emotional ride. You need to read it for yourself and not lose any of the impact of experiencing this book. I went from being thoroughly disgusted by this guy as a fellow human being, to chuckling at his sarcastic mouth, to enthusiastically cheering him on in his quest to do the right thing for reasons even he doesn't know, to tears when he knows he's made it, he finally understands. Great writing, well defined characters...I can't think of one thing lacking and it keeps you involved at every turn. Good, good guys. Bad, bad guys. Good bad guys, and best of all, leading the pack is a bad, good guy. Convoluted, I know, but read Shady Cross and you'll see exactly what I mean. Stokes, glad you finally saw what your capacity was and what Jenny saw in you.

The plot is engaging. A career criminal, hitman, who had just gotten out of jail and rolled a drunk finds himself in the middle of an accident. The main character, Stokes, is driving his motorcycle. The driver of the other vehicle -- car -- is dead and there is a backpack with 350,000 dollars in it. That is the opener. There is always strings attached. It turns out there is a cellphone in the backpack which eventually starts ringing. Until it started ringing, Stokes had hopes of paying off debts to a town Shylock and having enough money to start a new life away from crime. The cellphone ringing leads to Stokes finding out that the car accident victim's daughter has been kidnapped and is being held for ransom. This is the fork in the road for Stokes: new life don't give a damn about anybody or help the young kidnap victim. It turns out that Stokes had abandoned his own daughter. He holds guilt over this. You can imagine which road he takes at the fork. Find out where it leads him by reading the book. I give this book good points for the plot and keeping the action moving. Stokes is an interesting character: a criminal with a conscience. The book tells it as it is and lets you develop your own moral interpretations. I gave it a four because the book is a little rough around the edges.

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