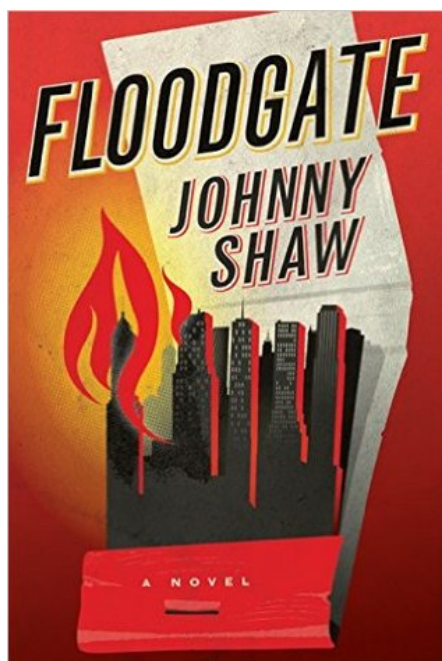




Floodgate

Johnny Shaw

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Andy Destra is a mostly honest cop in the most notoriously corrupt and crime-ridden city in America: Auction City. After discovering explosive information that reveals corruption within the highest levels of the police department, Andy is kicked off the force, framed, and disgraced, left to wage a lonely one-man crusade against conspiracies he can't prove.

Andy's investigation plunges him into a blackly comic maelstrom of one-armed gang members, slick pickpockets, criminal syndicates, hired mercenaries, escaped convicts, sewer dwellers, and one sinister ice cream truck. At the same time, he must contend with a mystery closer to home: the true identity of his parents, his most unshakeable obsession. Understanding their past may be the key to Auction City's future as it teeters on the brink of chaos.

If Andy can't solve this case, the Floodgate will fail...and his city will burn.

Floodgate Details

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Author : Johnny Shaw

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From Reader Review Floodgate for online ebook

Zoeytron says

The year is 1986. Auction City, a town gone rotten. Home to Faust's Inferno, Cleo's Liquors, Panda Massage, Camo & Ammo. Riots in the streets, burning and looting are commonplace. Rules? There are no rules here.

Forced out and framed, ex-cop Andy Destra is on a mission. He doesn't cotton to quitting and he has a very messy bone to pick with the powers that be in law enforcement. He's no boy scout, but he is a big fan of being prepared. To this end, he carries with him a roll of nickels a Swiss army knife, a lock pick set, and a bag of salted almonds.

Hang with Destra as he searches for answers amongst the crime and corruption. Steer clear of the Thorntons, big galoots who are too stupid to feel pain, and there is a big ol' nest of them. Keep your eyes peeled for hairy eyeballs and poltroons, skulkers and bullies, and an ice cream truck that plays its demented music as it makes its way through the mean streets.

In exchange for my review, Net Galley furnished this copy to me. Thank you.

Rory Costello says

Not my favorite Johnny Shaw work. It's got loads of imagination -- Shaw created an entire history in amazing detail -- and a lot of clever dialogue that inverts the usual action-movie lines and situations. Yet its strength -- all that detail -- is also its weakness. This is one incredibly busy plot: "Streets of Fire" plus a dash of "Big Trouble in Little China" with a soupcon of "The Time Machine." I think the story line could have been simplified, made less dense, and the reading experience would have been more enjoyable.

Kemper says

I received an advance copy of this from NetGalley.

Auction City is the kind of town that would keep Gotham City from being ranked #1 on one of those **Worst Places To Live In America** lists. It's a decaying cesspool of crime and corruption where an honest cop like Andy Destra gets framed, disgraced, and tossed off the police force after he digs a little too deeply into a case.

Unemployment doesn't keep Andy from launching a personal investigation and crusade against the deputy chief who got him fired, but his obsession with looking into Auction City's shady history has him teetering on the brink of being written off as a conspiracy theory whackadoo. When Andy sees a mysterious lady visiting the woman who raised him it sparks his curiosity and leads him to previously unsuspected layers of Auction City secrets that could get him killed.

I've been a big cheerleader for Johnny Shaw since I stumbled across his old Blood & Tacos* e-zines and had an ARC of his Dove Season dropped in my lap a few years back, and it's been a genuine pleasure to keep up with his career since then. He's got a knack of creating characters who are likable losers and putting them in

hilariously violent situations with plenty of laugh out loud moments. *Floodgate* continues that trend with Andy being a goof who finds himself in over his head and confronted with a stream of increasingly outlandish characters and situations.

That works pretty well, but I had a few problems with this one. The story seems a bit slow coming out of the gate, and it takes a while to get up and running. Andy is also a problematic protagonist who is supposed to be an ex-cop who knows the score in Auction City, and yet he seems almost painfully naïve and short-sighted at times. This whole story hinges on the idea that out of simple curiosity Andy starts chasing a trail despite being warned off in very scary ways and having his life threatened, and that just doesn't seem like enough motivation for this.

In addition to that there's also the contradiction that Andy is supposed to be the kind of guy who can patiently prowl old records and painstakingly build files on every nook and cranny of Auction City, yet he's so impatient that he can't sit on a stake-out for 20 minutes without getting bored and doing something he knows is stupid. Frankly, he comes across as kind of a dumb ass just running around with his hair on fire who then criticizes other for their lack of planning and research later in the book. (view spoiler)

That kind of characterization has worked in other Shaw books when his leads are supposed to be rednecks and morons, but this kind of story seems to demand a smart, cynical, and capable hero. It seems improbable that Andy could have lasted for ten minutes in Auction City, let alone have once been a cop there. I know this is primarily a comedy, but it just didn't seem like the kind of story where the main character could be that idiotic and impulsive.

Still, I loved the whole idea of this hellish city that makes Detroit seem like garden spot and the underlying history to the whole situation. There's a cool concept at the heart of this that could be a fun series, and Shaw puts some very funny bits into the chaos that ensues. However, I had a hard time getting past the basic stupidity of Andy that drives the entire plot.

** - Full disclosure. I once contributed an unpaid review to Blood & Tacos.*

K says

I enjoyed Johnny Shaw's series of "Jimmy Veeder Fiasco" books because of the impeccable characters he draws-- rednecks, crazies, and humorous villains and heroes alike. So it was with great anticipation that I began reading *Floodgate*, expecting similar antics. And I was rewarded for my efforts.

Well, sort of... See, *Floodgate* is a fiasco of a different color. No doubt written in Shaw's style, where characters on both sides of the story (good vs evil) are unique, interesting, and most of all, memorable. This book does begin somewhat slowly, traveling back and forth between 1929 and 1986, but connecting the two times with an important character and the formation of *Floodgate*, a rather secret conglomerate of misfits, cast-offs, and otherwise folks whom you'd rather avoid, especially in a dark alley. Except, these talented but strangely organized individuals actually act as a mediator of sorts, keeping the gangs, crooks, hoods, and the even more corrupt police force from destroying themselves and their city (Auction city- a place more corrupt, dangerous, and dirty than anything imaginable), and thereby preserving the profits inherent in all the various nefarious activities. Whew. Still with me?

Well, as with most Shaw novels, the craziness picks up right along with the pace, kind of like a train cresting a mountain and barreling downhill. This book might begin a bit slowly, but it's a fun blast to the finish line. As for characters, the ostensible protagonist is a former detective more adept at burrowing through reams of

files to uncover crimes and corruption than knocking down doors. In fact, he proves rather inept throughout most of the book-- not unlike Jimmy Veeder-- relying on instinct and sheer dumb luck, along with a host of friends with varying talents for killing and mayhem, to help him carry the day. But that's the beauty of these comedic stories. The crazy group of people all working toward a common goal against an evil array of baddies. It's nonsense, of course, but one shouldn't read this book if they are looking for a police procedural type story. It's silly at times, believable occasionally, and always humorous in the right places, just when you need a laugh.

So, a very solid book, if not a very, very strange one. Definitely defies easy categorization but worth reading nonetheless. Hope you enjoy it.

James Thane says

I've been a huge fan of Johnny Shaw's "Fiasco" novels featuring Jimmy Veeder and of his short stories starring Chingon, "The World's Deadliest Mexican," and so of course I was looking forward to his newest book, *Floodgate*, which has just been released. It's Shaw's most ambitious book yet, darker than his earlier efforts, more outrageous in parts, but also just as funny.

The book is set in the richly imagined Auction City, one of the darkest, dirtiest and most corrupt cities ever to appear in crime fiction, or in probably any other fiction for that matter. The name says it all--everything here has a price. For several generations a number of criminal gangs, the cops being only one among them, have held sway over the city, dividing the spoils and the citizens be damned. A secret group known as Floodgate has kept the peace for years, mediating between the various factions and reminding them to keep their eyes on the prize, namely the profits they all can reap if they don't screw the pooch by fighting each other.

The book begins on a day in 1929, when a huge riot, which became known as the Flood, virtually destroyed the city. But out of the ashes rose a new Auction City which was just as corrupt as the old one but which was usually at peace, thanks to the Floodgate. Fast forward to 1986, when practically the only honest cop in town, Andy Destra, has been framed and booted off the force after beginning an investigation that threatens to expose the corruption at the heart of the police force and, by extension, the city as a whole. Andy was left an orphan at birth and was raised by a woman he calls Champ. Like any normal person in such circumstances, he can't help but wonder about the parents who abandoned him.

Like a lot of Shaw's protagonists, Andy is a bit on the clueless side--a man who is easily buffeted by forces beyond his control and that he only faintly understands. But he is tenacious, and once he has a glimpse of the conspiracy that holds Auction City together, he's not about to give up, no matter the strength of the opposition.

The book toggles back and forth between that day in 1929 and 1986, and like the layers of an onion, the sordid secrets of Auction City are gradually laid bare. Poor Andy Destra is in mortal danger from the start, and only an alliance with the unlikeliest band of confederates that one can imagine is going to give him any chance of survival.

It's a great story, unlike any other I've read, and the deeper you get into the book the more gripping it becomes until you literally can't put it down. It's also nice to see here a nod to another of my favorite authors, Brace Godfrey. As I suggested above, with this book Shaw has set a new personal standard and really raised expectations with regard to what he might do next. For my own part, I can only say that I hope it won't take him very long. 4.5 stars for me.

Tim says

I received an advance copy of this book from NetGalley.

Johnny Shaw has taken a very different path in "Auction City" than on his previous books in the Jimmy Veeder Fiasco series. "Dove Season" and "Plaster City" are great, as is the stand-alone "Big Maria" all taking place on the border, which is appropriate being that he hails from the Calexico/Mexicali border.

"Auction City" takes place in an urban setting, and spans generations between the years 1929 to 1986 following the lead character Andy's journey into a secret world that goes back to the cataclysm that originated the secret alliance between factions of survivors that from that point up to the present (1986) who steer and control the city in a very behind the scenes existence.

I have to admit not rating this as highly as his previous books, although if it was written by someone else I would probably be more supportive of it. Authors often reach beyond what they've done in the past to expand and mature, and I can see Johnny Shaw doing that here. Hopefully this doesn't mean that his border stories won't continue, as he writes books in that vein better than anyone else could based on his life experience.

"Auction City" was enjoyable, in spite of the fact that Andy was somewhat confusing and inconsistent while displaying certain strengths that could be expanded on in future books in a series if that is something the author plans to continue.

Johnny Shaw remains one of my favorite authors, and I will be looking forward to the next book he writes, whatever the setting might be.

Joseph says

I generally stay away from contemporary fiction in my reading except when I need to clear my mind or give it a vacation from non-fiction and poetry... sort of a day off for my brain cells. I saw some reviews for Floodgate and that interested me. My fiction reading mind tends towards dark (Selby Jr), noir, or slightly twisted (J.G. Ballard). I also like the time period of the 1970s and 1980s. It is when I grew up and where I grew up.

Auction City is far worse than the worst part of Cleveland, where I grew up. The city itself was destroyed in violence and reborn in a slight less corrupt and slightly less violent area. Former honest cop Andy Destra is out to prove the chief of police is corrupt and end his career as he ended Andy's. Andy, however, finds there is much more going on and plenty of people who do not want Andy to continue on his personal investigation.

The story jumps back and forth in time and takes its time revealing its secrets. There are many 1970s and 1980s references in the story from *The Rockford Files* and *C.H.U.D.* to *Quiet Riot* and "Super Mario Brothers". Quite often I had that suspenseful feeling of being in a *Warriors* type movie throughout the book. The storyline is enough to keep the reader's interest then add in colorful characters, witty remarks, and suddenly you have a winning novel. I thoroughly enjoyed Floodgate. It took me back to the happy days of my youth buying pulpy paperbacks from a turnstile display rack at the local convenience store.

Benoit Lelièvre says

Not my first tango with Johnny Shaw, but definitely one of the most memorable. I loved how Shaw threw realism out the window here and wrote a thriller that took place inside the mind of a conspiracy theorist in alternate-reality America. If he positioned himself as a heir to Joe Lansdale's throne of pulp fiction, Shaw definitely challenges him here. Auction City is a tremendous creation and protagonist Andy Destra is a memorable underdog.

If I want to be nit-picky, I thought the book was a little long for what it is. It has a conventional thriller structure (half the book builds a mystery and half the book deals with the consequences of solving it) and you know, the solving part is so long and dramatic that it loses its dramatic effect because it keeps the pedal floored for so long. But read it. By any means read it. It's one of Johnny Shaw's best novels along with Dove Season.

Tom Mathews says

Johnny Shaw's newest novel is a journey into uncharted territory for the California-born author, best known for Big Maria and the Jimmy Veeder Fiasco novels, Dove Season and Plaster City. Unlike these books, which are set in Southern California's Imperial Valley, Floodgate is set in Auction City, an imaginary dystopian city where what passes for order is maintained by a loosely-knit coalition of criminal gangs and a corrupt police department. In many ways, Auction City reminded me of the free-wheeling city in David Wong's Futuristic Violence and Fancy Suits, minus the social media. If you take out Shaw's trademark sense of humor, it would be more reminiscent of Aleppo.

The story alternates between 1929, when social order first collapsed and 1986, when a series of assassinations reignited the violence that plagued the city. Andy Destra, the story's protagonist and, according to the book's cover, a mostly honest ex-cop, falls in with a gang of not-so-honest crook who nevertheless are fighting to maintain order in the 'most notoriously corrupt and crime-ridden city in America'. If it weren't for Shaw's deliciously cynical sense of humor, the story would quickly have devolved into a tedious maelstrom of shooting, stabbing, burning and bombing.

A special treat that the book offers is a series of fictional epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter that are included to give the reader a sense of just how crazy a burg Auction City is. An example is:

When our eyes met I was sure we had made a cDove Seasononnection. That we understood each other. I've always believed that eyes never lie. Maybe that only applies to humans.
-From apprentice zookeeper David Downing's statement after being asked why he entered the tiger cage at the Auction City Zoo. His injuries required three surgeries and more than one hundred stitches (1972).

Bottom line: I'm a big fan of Johnny Shaw and have previously enjoyed reading Big Maria and . While Floodgate has much of the humor I've come to expect from Shaw, the absence of a cohesive plot leaves me unable to rate this as highly as I would like to.

*Quotations are cited from an advanced reading copy and may not be the same as appears in the final published edition. The review was based on an advanced reading copy obtained at no cost from the publisher

in exchange for an unbiased review. While this does take any 'not worth what I paid for it' statements out of my review, it otherwise has no impact on the content of my review.

FYI: On a 5-point scale I assign stars based on my assessment of what the book needs in the way of improvements:

*5 Stars – Nothing at all. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

*4 Stars – It could stand for a few tweaks here and there but it's pretty good as it is.

*3 Stars – A solid C grade. Some serious rewriting would be needed in order for this book to be considered great or memorable.

*2 Stars – This book needs a lot of work. A good start would be to change the plot, the character development, the writing style and the ending.

*1 Star - The only thing that would improve this book is a good bonfire.

Dan Schwent says

Down and out ex-cop Andy Destra uncovers a decades old conspiracy that will shake Auction City to its core. Who really runs the city and how does it connect to how Andy was booted off the force?

I got this from Netgalley.

New Johnny Shaw books don't fall out of the sky every day and I jumped at this one the instant Shelby tipped me to it being on Netgalley and dropped what I was doing to read it.

However, things were off to a rocky start. I was discouraged for the first 10%. The plot moved slowly and gone was the trademark Johnny Shaw wit. My motivation flagged. My lady friend urged me to continue despite my misgivings, noting that I'm a crabby bastard when I don't get my reading time. As in most things, she was right. I stuck with it and things really took off.

Floodgate is the story of the people behind the curtain, the people that keep Auction City's various factions from killing one another and destroying the city. In a way, Auction City reminds me of a modern version of Deadwood and the people called Floodgate are Al Swearengen.

Andy Destra isn't too far from the usual Johnny Shaw leading man, a guy that many would consider a loser. However, he stands up for what he believes in despite being in way over his head. While I was bored by the book initially, Johnny Shaw really did a hefty amount of world building, with Rocco, The Flood, Kate, and the rest.

One of my favorite lines was "The last time he masturbated, he fantasized about a previous time he masturbated." Pure Shaw.

Anyway, the book was a slower build than Shaw's other work but had a bigger payoff in the form of the orgy of violence that was the last 30% of the book. While I wouldn't recommend this be anyone's first Johnny Shaw, it's still a solid book. Three out of five stars.

Originally rated a four, downgraded to a three after further reflection.

Rose says

Every city has secrets but Andy Destra soon learns that Auction City may have more than most. Andy is an ex-cop, kicked off the force as part of a cover-up. He knows there is corruption within the force and he's trying to bring justice, and probably a little vengeance, down on the culprits. What Andy doesn't know is how far down the rabbit hole goes. He soon finds out.

In a story told from two time periods, Shaw tells the tale of a city that may be corrupt but it's for mostly the right reasons. There is a web of connections dating back to 1929 that kept this city together when rioting broke out and the city almost burned to the ground. Unusual alliances were formed that are still in place today - unfortunately Andy stumbled into the middle of everything and almost got himself killed in the process.

As usual, Shaw has written an interesting story with characters so well done it almost felt you knew them yourself. This is truly an I-can't-put-it-down kind of book and enforces my original thoughts that Shaw needs to go on my list of authors who's books should automatically be bought as soon as they're published or else I'd be missing out on something really good.

Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for providing me a copy of this book for review.

AlcoholBooksCinema says

It has women who fight for real instead of just rolling around and making a mess of their hair style.

It did quite well in managing the line between action and comedy.

Got things rolling well in the beginning, setting the pace rightly with witty one liners for more of the same stuff through-out, precisely because this is the kind of a genre that dramatically needs something to come along and shake it up a bit.

Once in a while, the less you know about a book, the more you are likely to appreciate it. Let this be one of those times.

Of course, I got this from Netgalley.

Dlmrose says

3+

Scott says

I have read and enjoyed Johnny Shaw's work in the past, and was a big fan of his Blood and Tacos project. Floodgate is my favorite so far. It combines the fun and humor of Blood and Tacos with real darkness and builds a world that is bizarre and fantastical yet also believable.

It is a cliché to say "The city is a character" about a piece of art, but clichés exist for a reason. Auction City is a major character in Floodgate, and Johnny Shaw does a masterful job of world building to create it. The

corrupt metropolis is nearly dystopian, and reminds me of the feel of Basin City in Frank Miller's Sin City.

It would be easy for this setting to drag the story in to bleak hopelessness, but the colorful array of characters prevent that. In short, Andy Destra is an ex-cop fixated on bringing down the crooked cops that railroaded him off the job. Dismissed by everyone as a conspiracy nut, it turns out he was on the right track and the truth is even more kooky than his most outlandish theory. Now what?

There are plenty of fisticuffs and gun battles to go with the snappy verbal sparring and fast moving plot. Floodgate flies by and I was sorry to get to the end. Fans of thrillers of all types will love this one. 5 stars, highly recommended.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

When I saw this book I did not even take a minute to read the blurb. I just knew if Johnny Shaw wrote it that it would be mine! I did go into it expecting some of his previous works. Johnny Shaw then laughed; and then kicked my ass, because this book is nothing like his previous books that I've read. Dove Season, Big Maria and Plaster City are some of my favorite books ever. They feature interesting characters that are a tad bit on the redneck side.

My people.

Then I start this book and I whined. I admit that at first I hated this sucker. I kept reading.

Andy Destra is a cop that got kicked off the force for trying to be honest. In a town full of bad guys that just couldn't fly. He just can't stop digging though and it will end him up dead.

Auction City is a crime riddled place and it wants to stay that way. Then Andy stirs up a hornet's nest and a gang war is coming.

Andy finds out that he may have to straddle the fence between what he feels is wrong and right. Family ties pull at him and Auction City's sordid past comes to life all over again.

"You're looking for good guys and bad guys. We're the effective guys. If there's a problem, Floodgate has the power to fix it. .

I hate to be so vague about the book but dammit I want people to read this. To me it mixed in shades of the movie *Sin City* with old time Noir. Then threw in some characters that I couldn't look away from. Including a six foot bald, black woman that you would not want to get on the wrong side of.

The projectile rolled near Andy's feet. A can of soup. The woman had weaponized Campbell's Cream of Mushroom. Take that, Andy Warhol.

Several women in this book are the toughest characters.

In the movies the heroes won. In movies there were such things as heroes. Movies were full of shit.

For someone who hated this book in the beginning I had to eat my words. Now I can't get this book out of

my head. Damn you Johnny Shaw.

Booksource: Netgalley in exchange for review.

After my initial panic that I would not like this book and would one star it and be trolled by a certain reviewer and her boar because I made her get this one. I was relieved when Original smarter Dan liked it. So Boo-yah!
