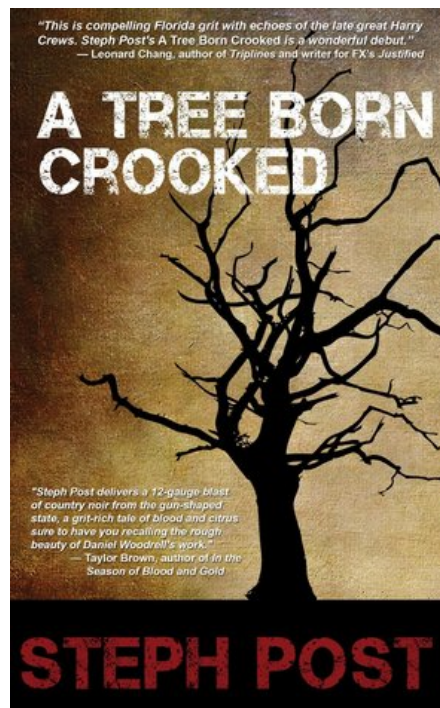




A Tree Born Crooked

Steph Post

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James Hart, with a tough-as-nails exterior and an aching emptiness inside, does not want to go home.

Yet when James receives a postcard from his mother, Birdie Mae, informing him of his father's death, he bites the bullet and returns to the rural and stagnant town of Crystal Springs, Florida, a place where dreams are born to die. James is too late for Orville's funeral, but just in time to become ensnared in the deadly repercussions of his younger brother Rabbit's life of petty crime.

When Rabbit is double crossed by his cousin in a robbery-turned-murder, James and a local bartender, the unsettling and alluring Marlena Bell, must come up with a plan to save Rabbit's skin. A whirlwind road trip across the desolate Florida panhandle ensues as James tries to stay one step ahead of the vengeful Alligator Mafia and keep his brother alive. With bullets in the air and the ghosts of heartache, betrayal and unspeakable rage haunting him at every turn, James must decide just how much he is willing to risk to protect his family and find a way home.

A Tree Born Crooked Details

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Author : Steph Post

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From Reader Review A Tree Born Crooked for online ebook

SUSAN **Nevertheless,she persisted** says

Review to come,when I am done shoveling mounds of snow.

Jason Pettus says

A random friendship add at Twitter a few months ago by noir author Steph Post inspired me to pick up her first novel, 2014's *A Tree Born Crooked*; and I didn't find it too bad, albeit in a "basic cable television show about trashy but clever Elmore Leonard-esque characters in a small rural town" kind of way, and indeed I think it's telling that the front cover features a praising blurb from one of the staff writers of the Elmore Leonard basic cable show *Justified*. I mean, I like *Justified*, don't get me wrong; but I like it in a way that usually involves me only sort of half-paying attention while it plays in the background of my apartment as I do chores; and while that's fine for a weekly TV show, I tend to want more out of a novel I'm specifically sitting down and giving all my attention to while I'm reading it, which unfortunately this book does not deliver on. It's intriguing enough that I'm going to be picking up her next book as well, the brand-new *Lightwood* that just came out last month; but this debut novel was unfortunately only on the good side of so-so, a book that feels more like a calling-card project for getting Post a job at the FX network.

Ryan says

This book makes me homesick!

I'm not from Florida, but somehow the characters and descriptions make me feel nostalgic in a twisted sort of way. I like how the story is not sugar coated, it feels very real and edgy. This book is a great example of how family, no matter how screwed up, will always be family, and can drag people back home who thought they had escaped. If you're into Grit Lit, give this a try. Its exactly what I thought that the unseen parts of Florida could be like. There's no amusement parks or picturesque sunsets here, only troubled individuals doing whatever it takes for family, addiction, money, and love. I think you'll be impressed.

Laura Ellen says

So much nasty fun, but you need a dark sense of humor to get it. Rich prose that reads fast--Steph can write FIGHTS, both verbal and physical, so that each page whizzes by. This novel is packed with atmosphere and danger, and at the center a "family" story about trying to save your brother's stupid ass from swamp thugs. Lay in the cigs, beer, and nyquil to play the ATBC drinking game . . .

Anthony Breznican says

A Tree Born Crooked is Like a double-shot of fine bourbon -- it grabs you in the back of the throat and only makes you crave more the more you consume. Steph Post's simmering crime saga is one of those relentless

pulse-pounders of a tale that shows survival and salvation rarely go hand-in-hand.

This is an assured thriller by a woman who truly knows her way around modern noir style. This book has all the familiar elements -- a reluctant hero, a femme fatale, and loose cannon sidekick, and an ominous, shadowy group of predatory crooks and creeps -- but Post delivers the formula with her own twists and deviations to make it both satisfy expectations and offer something fresh and surprising.

In a story about ruthlessness, Post also manages to convey a lot of heart. You care about these characters on the fringe, and fear for them as they face off against forces far less sympathetic.

Ryan says

Steph Post could well be Florida's answer to Indiana's Frank Bill.

Charlie Smith says

Original and complete review can be read at my blog, HERE WE ARE GOING, here:
<http://herewearegoing.wordpress.com/2...>

I understand that Florida qualifies geographically as a Southern state, however, its native literature is its own unique sub-genre of sun-bleached, swamp-soaked, hard luck, macho-plated, ravaged soul tragedies about the good gone bad and the bad gone crazy and all of it gone wrong, again and again, until dreams and hopes dissolve into an impossible to breathe, overheated, blazing haze of desuetude.

Such is the milieu in which Steph Post sets her tale. When it began, the book's energy reminded me of John Sandford and Harlan Coben, leaving me to suspect that the 36-year-old anti-hero, James Hart, would be introduced in this volume as Prodigal Son of depressed Crystal Springs, and spend another few novels dragged reluctantly down into explorations of the sad town's sadder underbelly. I was not surprised then when the novel's final sentence opened that door.

Steph Post has bravely created a cast of characters, none of whom one would want to cross, or, perhaps, even, meet. They do not - for the most part - generate a great deal of empathy, as it seems they repeatedly make ill-considered decisions and hurt one another with little consideration of the damage they might be doing. They are magnets for hard luck and trouble, and as James, his brother, Rabbit, and the real brains of the trio, Marlena, bolt through the backwoods of Florida - pursued and pursuing - nothing much good happens. As they uncover layers of treachery and duplicity, they are also forced to confront their own and each others' dishonesty and self-deception. Trust and happy endings - or middles - are in short supply while disappointments assuaged by drugs and drink and cigarette butts litter the scenes.

A Tree Born Crooked is saturated with the stink of desiccated dreams and desires, sodden with guilt and the keening ache of lives despairing and emptied. Steph Post is an author to watch.

I requested and was sent an advance review copy of A Tree Born Crooked by the author, Steph Post. I write

about books because I love reading, love writers, love words, and, in most cases, I buy my copies of books. I am not remunerated for my blog, don't sell ad space, and in no way profit (believe me) so what I write, I mean. I am not a book reviewer, I am a book appreciator.

Al Kratz says

Just was going through my 2015 reads and realized I hadn't put anything in here for review. I enjoyed this book a lot. Reminded of Woodrell and maybe even Harry Crews somewhat although in both of these cases told obviously without the male dominant perspective those authors use. The female characters in here have more weight and are more real and central to the story. Looking forward to her next novel as well.

Elgon Williams says

Most people born in small towns like Crystal Springs, Florida figure it out before they get out of school. They are going to die there, too, unless they run away like James tried to do. Living around people who knew way too much about him and always did, they seemed more like candidates for the next Jerry Springer Show. But his small town ways are still with him no matter how far he has tried to stray.

James wanted to pursue his dream of becoming a pilot. With a little less than a thousand bucks his dad dug up (buried in the yard in an old mason jar) to see him on his way he set out. But his dreams really didn't pan out. He fell in with the same kind of bad element from which he was running away, ending up on the wrong side of the law. When he saw people around him dying or being hauled off to prison, he tried running away from that, too. Working on cars instead of stealing them seemed better for just getting by.

Then, he receives a post card from his mother telling him his father has died and he needs to come home.

Despite the years away, Crystal Springs hasn't changed much. Small towns never do. People he went to school with have remained trapped in their circumstances, not knowing anything better. They have settled in to a sort of pathetic routine. Although he doesn't want to stay in his hometown any more than he did the day he left, he gets drawn into a messy situation involving his younger brother, Rabbit, a cousin, Delmore and Waylon, a bar owner and father of a girl named Marlena. James but he barely recalls the latter, yet, the better he gets to know her the more he thinks that she might be a reason for him never to leave again.

Steph Post delivers a slice of American southern rural and small town life with a chainsaw. It is both accurate and as far from an idyllic, Norman Rockwell depiction of rural America as imaginable. In the harsh light of the bright Florida sun and the darkest nights a few miles from nowhere we learn what the real people of Crystal Springs are like. Transported in a beat-up, rusted, 70's vintage pick-up with faded baby blue paint, we are driven to a place most outsiders just pass by as they head down the Interstate for something better to do in a bigger city.

What makes Post's novel compelling is something akin to why we stand transfixed watching a train wreck in progress, or why we listen to gossip even though we might never think of spreading such vile speculations ourselves. This inspection of the human condition is a microcosm of our world. In some way we all may relate to these lives that we might otherwise overlook or just pretend such people don't exist.

Steph Post is a highly skilled storyteller who has fashioned a fictional setting for her book that you'll swear is some place you've driven through on your way to somewhere better. Her characters are as real as that aunt

and uncle that everyone else in the family would prefer to ignore, or that family living in the trailer park - the ones who have relatives in prison, others on parole and several others that are always up to no good.

Based on a For Review Copy.

Betsy Talbot says

An unexpected surprise for me. This is a gritty story with several unlikeable characters in a world totally unfamiliar to me...and I still loved it. Such an intense, immediate story of finding your way back in an imperfect world. The writer is so good I could almost smell and touch this story. She's definitely one to watch.

Richard says

Steph Post's debut novel is a solid piece of southern crime focusing on a solitary mechanic who travels back home to Crystal Springs, Florida after his mom sends him a postcard with news that his father blew himself up in a tangerine grove. James gets there too late for his dad's funeral, but just in time to try to help his younger brother Rabbit get out of some trouble with the Alligator Mafia following one of Rabbit's latest schemes.

It's southern grit that's less about James and company blasting away with guns and more about him coming to terms with the strained relationship with his family and the self-imposed exile from his childhood home (although the gun blasting scenes are pretty well written). James is a man that's shut himself away emotionally due to his regret of his criminal past and his failure to follow his dreams, but his trip back home forces him to confront it all.

Post's work here feels similar to Walter Mosley's, in the sincere and tactful way that she allows sensitivity, sentiment, and anxiety to find its way into her tough hero. I love the way she portrayed his attraction to Marlena, the local bar owner, and I love that she avoided the usual played-out, courtship tropes that you see in many novels these days.

They traded demons and devils as the electricity and the atmosphere brawled above them, the fistfight in the sky mirroring the struggle their hearts were playing out, blow by blow.

I enjoyed this and wanted to get to it before reading Steph's second novel, Lightwood, which comes out next month.

Nicole Ledford says

So I'm going to start off by saying I WANT A SEQUEL! Post writes such memorable characters who you either love or want to strangle! Growing up in south Florida I felt she nailed the characters and mood of the Central Florida I-75 corridor. I've seen Delmore's trailer and have several Birdie Mae's in my family. I would love to read more about Marlena and find out what James was up to before the post card arrived. Way to go!

Christine Gabriel says

Steph Post hits a home run with this book! The characters are well developed and the story line moves smoothly. It kept me in my seat and I didn't want to move until I finished it. I really loved this book and can't wait to see what Post comes up with next!

You've earned a new fan and I'm excited for your next book release!

Lisa says

Post's work is elegant in its simplicity, capturing a stark and intrinsic humanity, a sense of beauty and solemnity. Loved it. Highly recommend.

Steve says

My wife says people don't change. She also knows it's just luck which side of the tracks you're born on. Steph Post's marvelous new book " A Tree Born Crooked" must have been what she had in mind. When James Hart is called back home to Crystal Springs, Florida upon the death of his father, he finds he must reenter a world of trouble to bail his brother Rabbit out of a robbery gone awry. It's not a choice it's being the man he was born to be. Post's writing depicting Hart's plight is perfect enabling the cast to jump off the page. For a wonderful ride through the underbelly of the law, don't pass this book up. Excellent!
