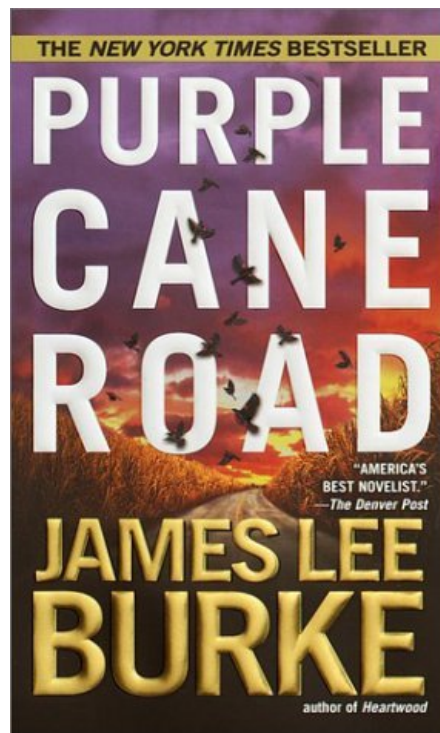




Purple Cane Road

James Lee Burke

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Dave Robicheaux has spent his life confronting the age-old adage that the sins of the father pass onto the son. But what has his mother's legacy left him? Dead to him since youth, Mae Guillory has been shuttered away in the deep recesses of Dave's mind. He's lived with the fact that he would never really know what happened to the woman who left him to the devices of his whiskey-driven father. But deep down, he still feels the loss of his mother and knows the infinite series of disappointments in her life could not have come to a good end.

While helping out an old friend, Dave is stunned when a pimp looks at him sideways and asks him if he is Mae Guillory's boy, the whore a bunch of cops murdered 30 years ago. The pimp goes on to insinuate that the cops who dumped her body in the bayou were on the take and continue to thrive in the New Orleans area.

Dave's search for his mother's killers leads him to the darker places in his past and solving this case teaches him what it means to be his mother's son. *Purple Cane Road* has the dimensions of a classic-passion, murder, and nearly heartbreaking poignancy-wrapped in a wonderfully executed plot that surprises from start to finish.

Purple Cane Road Details

Date : Published May 8th 2001 by Dell (first published 2000)

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Author : James Lee Burke

Format : Paperback 387 pages

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From Reader Review Purple Cane Road for online ebook

Greg says

When this book first came out in 2001, I bought a copy through a book club. I never read it. I remember trying to, and I remember dragging it around through several moves to different states, but I just couldn't get it to it. A few months ago, I picked up Swan Peak at a library book sale for a buck and thought I would try Burke again. I very much liked Swan Peak (a four star review), so I bought my second copy of Purple Cane Road. This time, I enjoyed it, and finished it within a few days. To me, Purple Cane Road seems to be darker than Swan Peak (which seemed a bit light as both regular lead characters were vacationing in the mountains, natch). Now, I do like dark fiction/thrillers, so after Purple Cane Road I bought a copy of Burke's Crusader's Cross (five star review!) which I think is fantastic. Now, oddly enough, I'm a huge James Lee Burke fan! I've purchased "Burning Angel" and "Jolie Blon's Bounce" and they are sitting on my bookshelf now. I know I'm going to read everything Burke has written, and since I'm a voracious reader, I'm going to have to parcel these out. (Like I do with Agatha Christie, my very favorite writer, as I've read 50+ of her books, and have another 20 or so on my bookshelf, waiting to be read! So now my favorite authors are Anne Rice, James Lee Burke, Agatha Christie, Patricia Highsmith, Wilbur Smith, and Bartle Bull. But I've discovered recently Micheal Gregorio and Louis Bayard, so lots of books to read!)

Fredrick Danysh says

A young woman who murdered her sexual abuser is sitting on Louisiana's death row. Dave Robicheaux tries to help her cause and at the same time track down his mother's killers. Throw in a killer who fixates on Dave's daughter and you have a suspenseful read.

Sandi says

One of the better books in the series with Dave's past, once again, being the main driver of the plot.

Eric_W says

Burke, one of my favorite writers, has an extraordinary gift for the use of similes. He can evoke the atmosphere and scenery that sets him way above other writers in the mystery genre. Despite the brutality, violence and corruption, the story intrigues, and Burke continues to develop the character of Dave Robichaeux, ex- New Orleans cop and now homicide detective for the New Iberia Sheriff's department. The integration of the past and its influence on the present is a recurring theme in Burke's books. Dave is trying to help Letty Labiche, a woman on death row for having murdered the man who had repeatedly molested her and her sister. That he was a cop meant the girls had little sympathy from the department. During his search for exculpatory evidence, Dave stumbles across Zipper Clum, a New Orleans lowlife who provides Dave with information that provideshim with leads related to the death of Dave's mother many years before. Dave, whose memories of his mother, Mae, are bittersweet, becomes obsessed with finding her murderers, cops in the pay of a local crime family, as it turns out. The investigation becomes messy, as the Labiche case becomes intertwined with his search for his mother's killers. Jim Gable, the political liaison in the governor's office with the New Orleans police department whom Dave has reason to dislike more than most, becomes

implicated as does the attorney general, a woman Dave learns had connections with Labiche's parents. In the meantime, a hit man, Johnny Remeta, has taken a liking to Alifair, Dave's daughter. Johnny, too, is involved in the whole sordid mess that resolves into a climax revealing the truth of Mae's murder. Similes can often be overdone, in fact, a recent book I finished by Stuart Woods, Choke, eschewed them completely. Burke indulges in them quite successfully, and they bring a vividness to the ambiance that is quite startling; the scent of musty leaves, a fetid swamp and dank bar cascade the reader's senses. His latest book, *White Dove in the Morning*, which I purchased and am reading as an e-book, takes place during the Civil War; historical fiction is not his usual milieu, but this is excellent.

Thelma says

I like the writing style of James Lee Burke. He can really paint a picture with words and he has a way of turning a phrase that is simple yet stylish. Another novel in his Dave "Streak" Robicheaux series, this book just left me drained. Dave continually makes bad choices, at the cost of his family and friends, and even just reading about it wrings me out. Burke paints a beautiful picture -- unfortunately it's a picture of *Paradise Lost*. I'm not sure I'll want to read another Robicheaux novel until I've read a few somethings lighter to cleanse my mental palate.

stan says

Once again the doyen of American story telling has a smash hit. The same flawed characters play a big part in this excellent drama. I loved it. I would have given this a 5Star rating BUT ! the end came at you too soon.

Jennifer says

I love Burke! There is such fluidity to his writing. There is a sadness and poetry in the way he describes everything in Louisiana, through the eyes of Robicheaux, yet it's his home and it's where his love lives, and you get the sense that no other place in the world would have these people, they are that depraved and unique.

Jim says

You know Dave Robicheaux is having a bad day when Cleve Purcell asks Dave "Tell me, Streak, if I quit the juice and start going to meetings, can I enjoy the kind of serenity you do?"

Fans of Dave Robicheaux know that he is a complex character and that he has had his share of problems in life. His father died when he was young, his mother had abandoned him and his father, he is a Vietnam veteran who has bouts of PTSD, and he is a recovering alcoholic. In past novels we knew little about his mother other than that she ran away with another man. In this outing another layer of the onion is peeled away and we learn more about his mother and what happened to her.

Dave and his friend; former partner; and now private investigator, Clete Purcel are looking for Zipper Clum, a pimp who may have information that could spare the life of death-row inmate, Letty Labiche. When they find him, Zipper makes some startling statements. *"Robicheaux, your mama's name was Mae.... Wait, it was Guillory before she married. That was the name she went by ... Mae Guillory. But she was your mama. She dealt cards and still hooked a little bit. Behind a club in Lafourche Parish. This was maybe 1966 or '67. They held her down in a mud puddle. They drowned her"*. Zipper's claim hits Dave in the gut. Haunted by her desertion and her death more than thirty-five years ago he will go to any length to bring her killers to justice. But just how far will he go? Will he cross the line?

As usual James Lee Burke brings a colorful cast of characters into the story. There is the governor, Belmont Pugh, a piano-playing; hard drinking; womanizer, and Johnny Remeta a hit man who starts getting close to Dave's daughter Alafair. Alafair is growing up and is now a teenager and sometimes rebellious. Old friends are back, including Clete Purcell who more often than not is like a train wreck. Dave's serenity and sobriety are put to the test in this story. A rebellious teenager, a friend whose life often appears to be out of control, a New Orleans Police Department's liaison with city hall, Jim Gable, with apparent connections to both Letty Labiche and Mae Guillory and who also happens to be an ex-lover of Dave's wife, Bootsie, and the claims that his mother was a prostitute and murdered. Dave will have to remember to take it one day at a time and to turn it over to his Higher Power.

Larry Bassett says

I think the last time I read a Dave Robichaux book I swore I would never read another one. But this one must've been on sale or my memory must've failed me. My issue with Dave is simple: wall-to-wall violence.

This whole book is about Dave's search for the identity of the killers of his mother. And his intention to extract revenge. Not to ruin the story for you but he is successful. He has a wife who questions his often resorting to violence. He has a teenage daughter Who is stocked by one of the many killers in the book. He has a buddy a serious drinking buddy Who is even substantially more violent than he is.

Dave Robichaux does think about his violence and does think about his drinking. But there is no indication that things will be any different in the next book in this series. One surprising event is that the current sheriff Dave's boss comments that he hopes Dave will succeed him when he soon retires as the sheriff. The sheriff is motivated to say this when Dave tells him he had the bad guy in his rifle site but couldn't kill him. This Sterling quality seemed to win over the sheriff to think that Dave had the qualities to be a leading law enforcement officer.

Plenty of action. Questionable morality. Never move to Louisiana!

Wendy says

Purple Cane Road

Oh wow.....this is the best book ever. Out of all the books in the Dave Robicheaux series this is my favorite one yet. James Lee Burke is an absolute genius and the best writer that I have ever had the pleasure to read. Amazing!

Kristen says

In James Lee Burke's Purple Cane Road, the 11th installment in the Dave Robicheaux serial mystery series, this dark mystery will leave you chilled from start to finish. For Dave Robicheaux, all his life he wondered about what happened to his mother when she mysteriously died years ago. When a pimp had come to him and asked him if he was Mae Guillory's boy, he revealed a bombshell to Dave on what he knew about her strange death. And that had brought him back to the past when he revisited memories on Purple Cane Road where he lived there as a young boy. Now, while he searched for the truth for his mother's killer, he had dealt with the upcoming execution of Letty Labouche, someone who had killed a lawyer in cold blood, and how he attempted to get her off the hook to no avail. He also dealt with a former con stalking his daughter, crooked cops and politicians, and his partner's running into his fair share of trouble with the law. It was now up to Dave to set things right and pick up those stray pieces in his life to get some closure and justice with a shocking ending.

Jeri says

Police detective Dave Robicheaux learns about the murder of his mother - who had deserted him years ago but he did not know until recently that she apparently had been killed outside of a New Orleans nightclub by two cops - 35 years before. He's determined to find her killers...as the story unfolds he learns lots of secrets and finally the truth. Was a bit too typical mystery for me; although I loved the fact it was Louisiana based.

Robicheaux first hears it from a pimp eager to trade information for his life: Mae Guillory was murdered outside a New Orleans nightclub by two cops. Dave Robicheaux was just a boy when his mother ran out on him and his whiskey-driven father.

From Edgar Award-winner James Lee Burke comes this emotional powerhouse of a novel ... in which everyman hero Dave Robicheaux confronts the secrets of his long-forgotten past in a shattering tale of revenge, murder, and a mother's haunting legacy....

Robicheaux first hears it from a pimp eager to trade information for his life: Mae Guillory was murdered outside a New Orleans nightclub by two cops. Dave Robicheaux was just a boy when his mother ran out on him and his whiskey-driven father.

Now Robicheaux is a man, still haunted by her desertion and her death. More than thirty-five years after Mae Guillory died, her son will go to any length to bring her killers to justice. And as he moves closer to what happened that long-ago night, the Louisiana cop crosses lines of color and class to find the place where secrets of his past lie buried ... and where all roads lead to revenge -- but only one road leads to the truth....

John Stonehouse says

If you want to spend a little time in another place, another world, few writers can take you there like James Lee Burke. But probably his greatest asset is his lyrical, poetic language. This book, set in southern Louisiana simply drips with atmosphere. It's dark, moody and complicated, like all JLB's books. The story that drives the narrative is perhaps good, rather than great. But what sets him apart from other crime writers is the humanity in his deeply flawed characters. There are no happy endings. Nothing ever works out just fine. The good guys sometimes seem not much better than the bad guys. But the fact that they keep trying

seems somehow more uplifting than any number of more straightforward thrillers.

Aditya says

Let me just start off by saying the writing is sublime. Someone can have issues with the violence, the characters with varying degree of ethical bankruptcy (I don't with either) but if one finds nothing to like about the writing here, they won't ever discover good fiction even if it knocks on their door with a read me tag attached to it. It is as vivid as an oil-painting and as moving as an orchestra. The dialogue complements the writing at every point. The narrative is grim and devoid of smiles but the dialogue compensates with wit. Most of the characters are illiterate lowlifes whose words might lack sophistication but the dialogue is never short of wisdom.

Robicheaux finds out that his mother who deserted him was killed by a bunch of corrupt cops as she was a material witness against them. I felt the plot line was in works for some time because Robicheaux's attitude had become ambivalent about his mother in the last couple of books rather than the outright antagonism that he displayed towards her at the start of the series. The last book *Sunset Limited*, was actually named after a memory of his mother. There is a secondary plot about a black woman being on the death row for killing a man who had it coming. It ends more poignantly than the main story.

Robicheaux himself is more interesting than he had ever been since *In the Electric Mist* with Confederate Dead, he is a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. The suggestion that his mother was a prostitute had melted away the maturity and the restraint of the past few books. He is in a conflict between cynicism and compassion, a race between retribution and redemption. Violence beckons him like a siren but he has the cautionary tale of Purcell beside him to see where those impulses lead to. Purcell who has been a wrecking ball in the past few books with absurd impunity is also brought crashing down here.

Purple Cane Road continues the series' tradition of excellent villains. Police administrator Jim Gable is insidious and serpentine. Robicheaux hates him as he both hides information about his mother's death and has a past with his wife. Gable is the kind of man who looks into another's eye, tells him about how much he respects him, grabs both his hands in a vigorous handshake so that his accomplice can stab the other guy in the back and then comes out of it smelling of roses. There is also a hitman who mistakes himself as a vigilante and develops a fixation on Robicheaux's daughter.

My main problem with the story was how neatly the case of Robicheaux's mother's killers was closed. The late twist dealing with one of the perpetrators was shocking and entirely logical but from a character standpoint it lets Robicheaux off the hook from the confrontation that was being built throughout the narrative. Some subplots like Purcell being in love with one of the main players is repeated from previous books but it wasn't an issue for me.

A very well written book that is even bleak by Robicheaux standards is equally emotional and thrilling. The convenient ending stops it from being perfect but the consistency after 11 books begs the question whether this is the best crime series of all. In my opinion it had crossed *LA Quartet* but just lags behind *Marlowe*. Rating - 4/5.

Cathy DuPont says

How can James Lee Burke get any better? I have no idea to that question.

In this series, number 11, Dave Robicheaux wraps up some loose ends. Those loose ends have been woven throughout the series which I've been reading in order for a few years.

Funny to me is when I've read other books in a series (counted 15 different series I'm reading) I always feel like I've "come home" when I begin reading Burke.

In my first review of the Dave Robicheaux series, I was totally ignorant of the fact that Burke is known for his lyrical writing of Louisiana, Cajun country, where Dave is home based. As time went on, I found out that I wasn't the only one who admired that in his writing. Knowledge of his lyrical writing was in fact well known. (I'm a late bloomer, obviously, of Burke's writing.)

Purple Cane Road was published in 2000 and there are 20 books thus far in the series, the last one, *Light of the World* published just this past July.

Now I'm one book more than half way through. If I didn't have so many series on my plate, I could zip through the remaining nine books and be finished with the series. However, I'm one of those readers who enjoys savoring what is in the future, the books I haven't read.

So, no, I'm not zipping through them but am looking forward to the next Dave Robicheaux and wondering how Burke is going to handle the growing up of Alf and his relationship with Bootsie which is now in a good place.

Thinking back on book one in the series, *The Neon Rain*, I recall the first argument fight Dave got into at a motel, kicking some serious ass. And I also remember the reason. I would have kicked some ass myself if I had been in the same place. Dave had a good reason is what I'm saying. But then I thought to myself, OMG, this guy is awesome! Since that time Dave has aged right along with us and now uses his head asking questions, rather than his fists. When I can recall the first introduction to a character, now years ago, to me it means the character is one of be remembered. That's Dave Robicheaux.

Finding this wonderful series has brought me so many hours of pleasure, and I look forward to seeing Dave age with the rest of us.

Colin Mitchell says

For me there is not a lot to be said for this story. Lots of double dealing, crooked cops and politicians. And a black woman on death row having killed a man who abused her and her sister and had been caught grooming another young girl. Meanwhile Dave Robicheaux is looking for the cops that murdered his mother.

Far too much gratuitous violence and the characters have become a little army without regulation and both Dave and Cletus Purcell should be in prison.

Yigal Zur says

i love reading his thrillers. i think he is one of the most talented one. as a wroter i enjoy following his work

Christos Yiannakenas says

?να ?μορφο αστυνομικ? μυθιστ?ρημα, που π?νω απ' ?λα δ?νει β?ση στα πρ?σωπα και τους χαρακτ?ρες. ?λη η πλοκ? περιστρ?φεται γ?ρω απ? τον αστυνομικ? Ντ?ιβ Ρομπισ? και την προσπ?θεια του να πι?σει τον φονι? της μ?νας του. Στην πορε?α π?φτει π?νω σε ?ναν πληρωμ?νο δολοφ?νο, πολλο?ς διεφθαρμ?νους μπ?τσους, μια κακοποιημ?νη θανατοποιν?τησα και την αδερφ? της. ?λα αυτ? συνθ?τουν ?να ?κρως ψυχαγωγικ? μωσα?κ?, το οπο?ο κρατ?ει αμ?ωτο το ενδιαφ?ρον του αναγν?στη. Το κλ?μα της Λουιζι?να ε?ναι ιδανικ?, μια και ε?ναι αρκετ? σκοτειν? και ταυτ?χρονα γοητευτικ? σαν φ?ντο μιας αστυνομικ?ς περιπ?τειας. Δεν του λε?πει η δρ?ση, ?μως η χρ?ση της ε?ναι ?ση χρει?ζεται για να μην καταλ?ξει υπερβολικ?. ?μως σε σημει?α ο συγγραφ?ας μπερδε?ει με την τερ?στια ιστορ?α και τις περιγραφ?ς του, πρ?γμα που ?κανε την αν?γωση κ?πως δ?σκολη σε σημει?α. Στο σ?νολο, ?μως, πρ?κειται για ?να αστυνομικ? βιβλ?ο που απ?λαυσα και θα πρ?τεινα σε ?σους θ?λουν να διαβ?σουν κ?τι που να μην ε?ναι πολ? βαρ? (τ?σο απ?ψει βιαι?τητας, ?σο και απ?ψει θ?ματος).

Luca Lesi says

L'età mi ha portato pochi vantaggi, ma uno di essi è un certo grado di umiltà, sufficiente quantomeno a non sentirmi più costretto a fare l'inventario di me stesso e a cedere quel terribile fardello a un Potere Superiore.

Un altro bel libro di James Lee Burke, scritto nel 2000 e undicesimo della serie di Dave Robicheaux. Un indagine sull'omicidio di Carmouche , boia di New Orleans e violentatore di due ragazzine, un indagine per scagionare Letty, una delle ragazzine, un indagine su due poliziotti corrotti, un indagine dalla quale spunta il nome di Mae, madre di Dave.

Mia madre era praticamente analfabeta e probabilmente non era sicura di quale fosse il contenuto di gran parte degli articoli che aveva conservato. Né era stata in grado di fare annotazioni sull'album per spiegare ciò che quegli articoli significavano per lei. Ma io sapevo chi era lei. L'aveva detto ai suoi assassini prima di morire. Il suo nome era Mae Robicheaux. E io ero suo figlio.

Hemingway ha detto che rincorrere il passato è un brutto modo di vivere la propria vita.

Qui il passato diventa presente e bene e male si confondono, splendido il personaggio dello psicopatico Remeta, splendide come sempre le ambientazioni e quella capacità di rendere il clima che attraversa il bayout parte di noi che leggiamo.

Il radioregistratore stava suonando Sing, Sing, Sing di Louie Prima ,un bevitore sente molte eco, quando torna a casa. Come un sasso che cade in un pozzo asciutto ma molto tempo fa ho imparato che a meno che il tuo biglietto non sia stato timbrato nell'Orto di Getsemani, non dovresti giudicare coloro che hanno la ventura di visitarlo.

Eppure tutti abbiamo almeno una sera della nostra vita che vorremmo seppellire sotto una tonnellata di terra in mezzo a un bosco. E poi, tanto per essere sicuri, dar fuoco al bosco.

Ma non la perdita, la perdita va trattata come la morte. Affligge tutti, e non bisogna permetterle di dominare la tua esistenza.

Un altro romanzo da leggere.

Lewis Weinstein says

As I think about this book, the words "too much" come to mind. Too much plot. Too much description of people and places. Too much disconnect between the story and the emotions. And way too much gratuitous violence.

Here's an example of an overdone description of minor characters ...

>> In the shade his skin had the bloodless discoloration that an albino's might if he bathed in blue ink. He wore steel picks on the fingers of his right hand and the sawed-off, machine-buffed neck of a glass bottle on the index finger of his left. He slid the bottle neck up and down the strings of the guitar and sang, "I'm going where the water tastes like cherry wine, 'cause the Georgia water tastes like turpentine." A mulatto or Indian woman who was shaped like a duck, with Hottentot buttocks and elephantine legs, was hanging wash in back. She turned and looked at me with the flat stare of a frying pan, then spit in the weeds and walked heavily to the privy and went inside and closed the door behind her by fitting a hand through a hole in a board. <<

Yet there is some great writing as well. Two examples ...

<< Then Belmont discovered the carnival world of Louisiana politics, in the way a mental patient might wander into a theme park for the insane and realize that life held more promise than he had ever dreamed. <<

<< "Everybody's got at least one night in his life that he wants to carry on a shovel to a deep hole in a woods and bury under a ton of dirt." <<

Bottom line is that I don't like Robicheaux very much, and don't find him very compelling as a character. Put that together with a plot with more violence than good detecting, with surprises that lead to "so what" rather than "wow," and the best I can give this is 2**.