



Canyon Sacrifice

Scott Graham

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Canyon Sacrifice brings the rugged western landscape, the mysterious past of the ancient Anasazi Indians, and the Southwest's ongoing cultural fissures vividly to life. A deadly struggle against murderous kidnappers in Grand Canyon National Park forces archaeologist Chuck Bender to face up to his past as he realizes every parents' worst nightmare: a missing child.

A deadly struggle against murderous kidnappers in Grand Canyon National Park forces archaeologist Chuck Bender to face up to his secret past and his new and unfamiliar role as husband and father in this gripping mystery debut.

Canyon Sacrifice Details

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From Reader Review Canyon Sacrifice for online ebook

Alyssa says

This wasn't your typical murder mystery in a National Park, but rather, an active kidnapping. Chuck Bender, an independent archaeology contractor, is on his honeymoon in the Grand Canyon with his insta-family, when his oldest stepdaughter is kidnapped. Being familiar with the park - both geographically and historically (Anasazi structures and artifacts), he was targeted by the kidnapper for a number of reasons. It soon became clear the kidnapper wanted Chuck dead, and Chuck realized he was willing to do anything to save his new daughter. The story leads us through several areas of the park along the south rim, which is instantly interesting to anyone who has been there and can relate to the locations. And if you haven't been there, they are vividly described so you feel as if you had been there. There are also several plot twists to keep the reader engaged. This was a fun, quick read and I look forward to more in the series.

Lorraine McCleary says

I did not like the main character very much, very macho. Starts out with a fight and solar plexus punch to a guy throwing rocks at a squirrel in the Grand Canyon-a bit over the top. This is a man's fantasy; strong guy, archeologist who has a hidden Anasazi jack pot, and of course, a beautiful wife 13 years his junior... sigh. You have to give him a kudos for having a twist with the Navajo be the bad crazy guy. So so plot overall.

Tory Wagner says

While there are several great mystery series that feature national parks, this looks to be a great addition! The descriptions of the wilderness are vivid, inspiring the reader to want to visit. The mystery was well thought out with several twists and turns that kept the reader's interest. The main character, a recently married archeologist who surveys park lands prior to construction, is multi-dimensional who struggles with his solitary inclinations while beginning life with a new family. I am looking forward to the next in the series!

Karen K says

Debut novel, got engrossed quickly. A good first effort, will look for more by this author!

Mary Rosales says

Wow

Excellent and interesting read. This is the first book I've read by this author. It kept me on the edge of my seat. I'm looking forward to reading more of Scott Graham's books.

Julie says

Having just spent time in the Grand Canyon, the best part of this book was the mention of different areas of the park itself. While I enjoyed the brief mention of places I just visited, the super long descriptions became boring for me and distracted me from the story/mystery that was unfolding. The "who done it" aspect of the story left me wondering until the end who the kidnapper was and why. Everyone was a suspect and that did make me want to finish the book. :)

Ronald Roseborough says

A good mystery in the awesome setting of Grand Canyon National Park. Chuck Bender an independent contractor/archeologist is on a vacation, honeymoon, with his new family. He married a young woman, Janelle, who has two young girls and a troubled past. Chuck is trying to connect with the girls by showing them where he has worked and the exciting finds he has made to preserve the past. While contracting for the Park, Chuck has uncovered some remarkable finds left by the ancient Anasazi Indians who inhabited the region around the Grand Canyon. Chuck is having a tough time connecting with his new daughters, when things go very wrong. The oldest girl is kidnapped from their tent while the family sleeps. Janelle is distraught. She believes the girl has been kidnapped by her ex-boyfriend, a drug dealing thug who will stop at nothing to get back at Janelle for finding a new man. Kidnapping rapidly escalates as Chuck tries to get some of his old friends from the Park Rangers to assist in finding the girl. Ransom plans fall through as hot lead flies through the normally tranquil Park. Suspicion even turns on Chuck as he goes rogue in the attempt to rescue his daughter before she comes to harm. The setting is the star of this story. The detail's of this beautiful land are what sets this book apart. Although some might argue that the natural scene is spoiled by the intrusive nature of man, I would posit that man is indeed a part of nature and the National Park's attempts to accommodate visitors is a necessary part of balancing the need to preserve and our wish to interact with nature. Book provided for review by Torrey House Press and Shelf Awareness.

LeeAnn says

Good premise but writing could have used some editing and polish. Lots of repeated information/backstory and a main character who was all over the place emotionally. What bothered me the most was the who-dunit reveal. Despite lots of red herrings along the way, I was left wondering what happened to any clues that pointed in the direction things went. As a mystery reader who loves the search for those breadcrumbs a good writer drops along the way, the ending here had me going "huh?" If this is the start of a series I hope the writer ups his game on the next installment.

Paula Doncevic says

A child sacrifice in the canyon would bring back the ancient native people.

Set in the Grand Canyon, and surrounding tribal nations, a young girl is kidnapped from her family's motor home. Through a series of events, her step-father is the main suspect. As he traces his previous archeological worksites through the National Park, he works through a list of potential suspects to determine who he can trust, and how he can save his step-daughter from certain death.

David says

Review submitted to Suspense Magazine

Cathy Cole says

Canyon Sacrifice is going to make you see the Grand Canyon in a whole new way. Chuck Bender is the perfect guide, as he weaves strands of geology, park history, Native American culture, and archaeology into a good old action-packed page turner.

I loved how Graham put together all the canyon lore in a non-academic, non-preachy manner that tells readers just as much about the characters as it does the Grand Canyon itself. Chuck Bender is a fascinating main character. He's a loner who's been running his own archaeology business for years, so getting used to being part of a family is going to be a huge adjustment for him to begin with-- but to start things off with a kidnapping? As Bender races to save his daughter, he learns quite a bit about himself and what he thinks is most important in life.

Probably my favorite section in the book is Chuck's hike down into the canyon. It's a race against time that could very well kill him. The entire episode tells us a great deal about Bender the man, as well as the respect with which the Grand Canyon should be treated.

Graham also shows skill in plotting a mystery, and now that he has his main character well established, I'm really looking forward to the next books in this series. His secondary characters need to have a chance to shine, too.

If you're a reader who loves Nevada Barr or C.J. Box, chances are excellent that you'll enjoy this first National Park mystery. Give it a try.

Charlene D'Avanzo says

A truly riveting thriller. Scott's a master at weaving the smells, colors, and dangers of the western desert with one man's struggle to balance commitment and freedom. Part of Scott's National Park mystery series.

Steven Howes says

Although this book got off to a slow start for me, it turned out to be a very worthwhile read in the end. Chuck Bender is an archaeologist doing contract work for the National Park Service. Much of his work has centered around Grand Canyon National Park so he has a high level of familiarity with the area and has a history with many of the NPS employees. Although he has tended to be a loner throughout his adult life, he is now newly married with two young step-daughters.

While on a family outing at the South Rim, the oldest step-daughter mysteriously disappears from their camp trailer during the night with only a cryptic note saying "NO COPS" left behind. In trying to figure out who has his child, Chuck is confronted with elements of not only his past; but also that of his new wife and family.

All during his quest to find the kidnapper, the reader is treated to a good dose of local native American culture including life among the Anasazi and Navajo Indians. Those who have been to the South Rim area of Grand Canyon National Park will recognize many familiar sites such as El Tovar Lodge and Grand Canyon Railroad.

The author had my undivided attention as Chuck analyzes who may be responsible for the crime. Each of the complex scenarios would have made for a plausible yet unexpected ending.

Reginald Hollinger says

I really enjoyed this short and gripping story. It was made more fun by the fact that I have visited Grand Canyon at least four times in my life and enjoyed a two day stay at Maswik Lodge with my wife and children in the summer of 1992, during which an Arizona prison escapee attempted to abduct a family from the park, putting Maswik on semi-shutdown for a brief period of time. Here's the headline from the LA Times of that day, "Convict Eludes Grand Canyon Manhunt: Police roadblocks back up traffic at national park. The Arizona prison escapee has demonstrated extensive outdoor survival skills."

Nikii says

This book started off very slowly, and with a lot of navel-gazing by the primary protagonist (an archaeologist) on the subject of his new marriage. The last third of the book was interesting enough that I'm willing to give the sequel a try, but it will be starting out on thin ice with me.

The main issue for me was that both the protagonist and the other primary character (his wife) were, well...unlikable. The protagonist is insecure and stupidly impulsive, a bad combination when trying to shore up a relationship or outwit a kidnapper, much less both at once. His wife, meanwhile, is the sort of disgustingly stereotypical "fiery Latina" who slaps people when she's upset. By the end I was rooting for them to divorce and spend some serious time in therapy.
