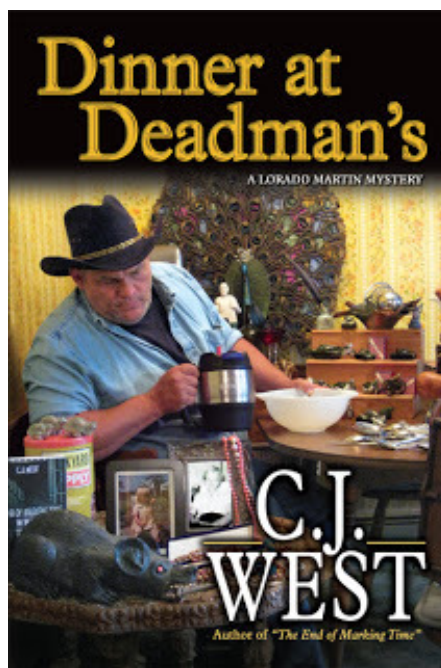




Dinner at Deadman's

C.J. West

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Dinner at Deadman's C.J. West

Lorado Martin has loved junk since his grandparents took him bottle digging in the backwoods of New England when he was a boy. The search for antiques and collectibles led him to a unique hobby: digging through the estates of the newly deceased, arranging the sale of goods for the heirs, and keeping the leftovers for himself. To make a living he builds and maintains housing for recovering addicts and along the way he's employed a number of his clients. The men wrestle with the siren call of drugs and teach Lorado about the difficult struggle to stay clean one day at a time. When these two worlds come together, Lorado learns that not every elderly person dies of natural causes and that some estates are sold to benefit a killer. His latest project hits close to home. A woman he's known since childhood haunts him from a fresh grave. Her grandson, an affable addict who has fallen off the wagon, stands to inherit a considerable sum whether he deserves it or not.

Dinner at Deadman's Details

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Author : C.J. West

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From Reader Review Dinner at Deadman's for online ebook

Al says

Although Dinner at Deadman's is a mystery, with all the components of a good one — plenty of viable suspects and a storyline that keeps you guessing as the clues are uncovered — what stood out for me were the characters. All of them are, in a word, characters. The major characters all have their own unique personalities and quirks that shine through and make them real. It appears that this might be the first of a series and, if my guess is right, it bodes well.

The protagonist, Lorado Martin, might be the quirkiest of them all. Lorado is a mountain of a man (which is a nice way of saying he's both tall and could stand to lose a few pounds) who everyone recognizes from his trademark cowboy hat which wouldn't set him apart in Fort Worth, but sure does in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Reading Dinner at Deadman's on the heels of a contentious political season in the U.S. in which I spent way too much time pigeonholing everyone as liberal or conservative, Lorado seemed to be suffering from bipolar political disorder. His major source of income — refurbishing rundown buildings in marginal areas of town, financed by government grants, which are used for subsidized public housing, halfway houses, and other services for society's downtrodden — shows his do-gooder liberal side. That he does this by hiring hopefully reformed drug addicts, even though that ends up making him less money, only reinforces that perception. However, his more conservative side views his do-gooding as a lost cause, helping people who he often sees as society's moochers and takers. This struggle within Lorado's mind, which is something he's well aware of, adds depth to his character and also makes him a touch unpredictable, which I think is a good thing in a mystery. Hopefully we'll see more books with Lorado in the future.

****Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. ****

Laurie says

This book was such a surprisingly delightful find with its fresh mix of unusual story line and big bear of well-off contractor with a talent for getting into trouble while dispensing well-deserved justice –Lorado Martin style – to the bad guys. The mystery is tantalizing, laid out masterfully so that by the end all the little pieces line up magically to a completely satisfying ending.

Did I mention that I love Lorado's "take charge" personality? He's a funny guy, too. Always willing to help a friend; he's also been around the block enough times to know when he's being fed a line. I got a kick out of the ways he would step up to correct problems.

This is a story that caught me off guard. I zipped through it because I became so invested in the tale and the characters that I did not want to come up from the mesmerizing enchantment cast over me. This is a mystery that abounds with humor, excitement, and believable characters. It transported me; giving me a glimpse of lives totally alien from my own; ensnared me into sympathizing with and relating to a fringe society of people. I read to be entertained and this book surely delivered in that arena, but there is so much else here to consider, too.

Reviewed by Laurie-J

Sheri says

Dinner at Deadman's (Lorado Martin Mysteries) by CJ West

Lorado Martin collects junk. He makes most of his money on estate sales, selling the recently deceased items. He also maintains housing for recovering addicts, and some of them even work for him.

When an addict he has known since childhood is due to inherit a large sum of money from his grandmothers death Lorado wants to help. Things are not turning out the best for his friend and Lorado is set to straighten things out. He is determined to find out what happened to his friends grandmother.

Fast paced page turning murder mystery. I have been a long time fan of C.J. West and Dinner at Deadman's (Lorado Martin Mysteries) did not disappoint. I highly recommend to murder/mystery lovers. I also recommend his other books as well.

Victoria Brinius says

I LOVED this book. I wish that I could give it more then 5 stars. My hubby and I watch all of these trutv shows "pickers" etc about how people have money in their houses. I never thought about what happens to people's stuff that is left behind! I have also been a fan of estate sales and tag sales forever. I love going to get used books and I loved that all of this was in this book. I can not wait to read more! Besides reading about all that stuff there was a clever mystery with a twists that left me wondering who? The end answered all my questions and I also laughed at the author's humor.

Lorado is a jack of all trades. But he is an estate sale "coordinator" by day. He gets paid to clear out houses and arrange their estates to make the most money for the benefactors. He soon finds out that not everyone died in peace!. Lorado also gives what he can't make money on to his friend Angel that runs a low income store. Lorado sometimes takes on state buildings and sells copper etc. He then uses his skills as a carpenter to rebuild these dilapidated buildings and turn them into group homes, etc.

Lorado soon realizes that he is his own defense in the bad parts of town.

Lorado takes on "Newb" who is the benefactor from his current house estate sale. When Lorado suspects foul play, he turns to Newb and his other employee, both are past drug/alcohol users. Not to mention Findley, an ex convict with a vendetta against Lorado.

The front cover is an actual picture of the author's brother, and some of the pictured finds are actually finds from the author's past. I thought that was awesome. I love when covers have meaning.

I got a copy of this book to review, however all opinions are my own.

Gina Fava says

My Review: A traditional who-dun-it mystery, Dinner at Deadman's revolves around a burly, family-man junk dealer with an affinity for aiding recovering addicts. Lorado Martin is an atypical, intriguing character with whom anyone would want to sit back and have a beer and some laughs before jumping into his car to take down the local riff-raff that's messing with his family or his junk.

The other characters are also well-thought out, but it's mostly his wife, Roxie, and his brother, Chris, who always have Lorado's back, that kept me wanting to come back for more.

Great local flavor seeps from the pages of the story. I felt like I was traipsing the neighborhoods of the Massachusetts South Shore tracking murder suspects right there with Lorado; it left me wondering if the underbelly of society might be closer to home than I once thought.

I must admit that I guessed the identity of the murderer early on, but the perfectly paced suspense, the hearty helpings of humor, and the affability of the main character kept me reading until the end. The journey was worth it.

I'd recommend this novel to anyone looking to sink their teeth into a juicy mystery with an unusual, yet solid premise, based around an unlikely hero that one just can't help rooting for.

My Rating: It's worth a hill of beans, 4 out of 5 FAVA beans to be exact.

Cathy says

I really enjoyed the style of CJ West's writing. It was as though Laredo, the main character, was sitting and telling me the story in person, with broken sentences as if recalling his thoughts and memories. He was a bit of an oddball with a huge heart. The vivid character descriptions gripped me before the actual mystery. It took me a while before it was clear what the book was about, but it was so interesting anyway, it didn't matter. I was just lost in it. I thoroughly enjoyed it from beginning to end.

I received my copy through a Goodreads giveaway.

Fran says

Dinner at Deadman's: CJ West

Some novels start off with a good old- fashioned murder. Others begin with a prologue and then flashback to something in the character's life. But, this one is truly unique, filled with humor from the beginning and a heartfelt and down to the core serious stomachache that not only does the main character endure but the reader too. From the moment we get to know Lorado Martin we can tell he definitely has a serious mind of his own, hates doctors, doesn't want to waste time with co-pays, loves antiques, helping the elderly and cannot resist junk and junk food. Just what caused his massive stomach explosion? After you read chapter 2, I am sure you just might figure it out because the doctor in this story is seriously stumped.

Staying in the hospital was not an option for him as one phone call caused him to insist on being discharged. Bloods drawn, this time his pants where they should be on him and not around his knees, he leaves the hospital to Deadman's. Maintaining housing for addicts was how he made a living but when some kids start stealing his copper wires, running his equipment and breaking his new locks and running three shifts at the hospital day and night. But, what happens next was serious as the man who is helping him and called him to rush out of the hospital was now lying at the foot of a staircase covered in blood. Hitting his friend for his toolbox as Lorado tries to make sense of everything with the police. Working on the renovation of St. John's Hospital was the project that would be halted now that ten thousand dollars worth of equipment was either ruined or stolen by the drug addicts in the neighborhood that attacked his helper.

In order to have an income Lorado does estate sales as he takes the reader on an interesting tour of Mrs. Newbury's home, allows us to find out what great things going to be tagged and put on sale and the fun of understanding what it entails. I just wish I would be there to rummage through the house, find some great bargains and enjoy the sale. Then, someone breaks in and tries to steal some of the items but just who it is and why explains one of the main plots of this book. His workers are reformed or trying to be reformed addicts and they sometimes, Newb, fall off more than just a small wagon. But, there is much more as Loreda realizes that the food poisoning was intentional and the brick thrown at his windshield another warning. So, who wanted him dead and why? That remains to be seen and what about Newb who stands to inherit quite a bit from her estate.

As we get to learn more about Lorado we meet his younger brother Chris, learn that he's a writer and helps him out in his business at times. But, when the two team up to take down the man who stole his tools, it is priceless. But, when the same group tries to steal his tools again the solution, although quite unique and creative does not seem to fit with what Lorado's true cause, which is to rehabilitate these young kids, but for some reason this group needed what you might say more than tough love. When you read what he does it will let you know that he is definitely someone you don't want to mess with and much more.

Throughout the novel you hear the voice of the main character, understand his frustrations and realize that he's trying to help so many who have spent so much time addicted to drugs. Rehab is one thing, getting them to commit to work and show up is another as you hear their stories, listen to their inner thoughts and realize that not everyone wants to be saved. As Lorado moves one step closer to completing his renovation project things fall several steps back when his warehouse is vandalized and his son is attacked. Just who is behind these attacks and why remains to be seen as the suspects are many, the police at times looking in the wrong direction and the end result might not be what anyone expects.

Working at detox was another way he gave back and tried to help. Making sure he did surveillance on Findley who lived as the author relates in one of Lorado's house in a sober program. Three kids and girlfriends who he made sure had tons of heroin to keep them strung out and pumped up, he hated Lorado for getting him sent to jail. This is one young man who lost control over his life too many times and when push comes to shove he would do anything to get back at Lorado. Every time he takes one step ahead it seems that there are some who want him to take several back. Close friends on hand, one named Angel in particular, trying to explain what has occurred but will he believe him? Who tried to poison him? Who spiked his drink with drugs and worse? How would a laxative get into his system if he did not take one? Why did Angel think there was someone else behind what was happening?

There are so many issues that the author brings to light in this novel. Drug abuse, alcohol, friendship, understanding and even more teaching kids and adults the harmful effects of any addiction. Mrs. Newbury's estate sale brought in money for so many but her grandson would profit the most. So, when Lorado listened to her message what about them seemed odd? Newb was her grandson, Cynthia his ex-wife who was ready and willing to pick him up and save him from himself and his young son Nicholas yet something about Mrs. Newberry's death was off too. Who was watching her that day? Where was Cynthia? What about calling social security to report her death? Who wanted those checks?

Drugs, prostitution, revenge, meetings to try and help these people and some that would never learn are all part of this intricate plot. The author takes the reader inside the world of young women who sell their bodies in order to take care of their families and live. Some do it for money and others out of fear. This book brings to light so many issues as you hear the voices, the stories, the heartfelt tragedies and the sadness endured by so many as they allow us to hear their stories. Added in this story is the real life charity Gifts to Five which is run by Jim Stevens and is a real organization that you can check out and learn more about. <http://www.giftstogive.org/> (I joined the site and so should you.) Learning about what they do, how they help children is truly amazing and the charity does so much to help kids and parents.

When Loreda goes through some of Mrs. Newberry things and finds a letter, checks out some more information what he realizes changes the complexion of her death and much more. Just who killed her and why? Who would profit from her death? When will Findley back off and leave him alone and why is everyone trying to rub him out? Who beat up his son and what does he do to defend him? Bullying is wrong and strong arming even worse as we learn more about the young women who get paid for their services, the drug users that cannot give it up and the mystery behind Mrs. Newberry's death. Just how do all of the pieces fit together and who really killed this poor woman and why you just won't believe? An ending that will send Lorado in search of a killer, hunted by drug dealers and hopefully not killed before all is said and done. Author CJ West keeps the reader guessing until the very end and then you won't figure it out. So many clever twists, turns and definitely major surprises as Lorado tries to stay several steps way ahead of everyone that wants to get him. Who really poisoned him? Who tried to get him whacked? Be careful when you have dinner at Deadman's: Check the expiration date when you open the box. Better yet: Don't eat or you might wind up the same way as he did. One fast paced novel. One interesting main character whose voice you hear throughout the novel and whose loyalty to his family and friends allows the reader to hope that the author brings him back for more. I would love to see him solve a murder with his brother Chris or maybe Chris will write his first novel, a murder and who knows what will happen next. You never know what you can find in an estate sale that just might allow you to cash in. Read this novel and find out what Lorado finds and just how one estate sale turned into a murder.

Fran Lewis: Reviewer

Gigi Ann says

This is the first time I've read a book by this author, C.J. West. I have to say right off, this is a book that is way out of my "reading comfort zone". I think it is a book that men would enjoy reading in their "Man-Cave" corner of the world. But for me there was just too much testosterone tossed around in the story for me...Men fighting, ribs broken, heads cracked open, spray painting...you'll have to read the book to find out who got sprayed painted and why. I pretty much figured out who killed the little old lady, half way through the book, but I always like mysteries for that reason, to see if I can figure who did it before the book ends...

This book was given to me by the author, C.J. West for this book tour, and an honest review. Thanks Mr. West for a few days of "Man-Cave" reading, it was a bumpy ride, but I survived... ;)

Joellen Wood says

Another great book by CJ West, only this one is a little more personal. Shows some insight to CJ and his brother Loreda who is the big brother. Big Brother is just that 230 pounds of muscle, funny, caring, and a junk addict. He does estate sales (I can relate) and helps out drug rehab kids and tries to turn their life around. This time when helping a friend who's grandmother dies, it gets close to home and doesn't see the

real killer right away. Their are times when his help gets him into big trouble and hurt, and always calls on little bro to help. They both can get into trouble if given the right reason, which could be anytime. The humor in this one story could be anyone and we could all be looking for that one treasure that could help us out.

A delightful book to read, * I look forward to more of CJ West !!

Wendy Hines says

I read Wests' book, The End of Marking Time, and really enjoyed it. So, I was excited to read one of his books again, but with a different premise. Lorado is a big hulking man, who is toughie with his trademark cowboy yet, yet a softie inside. He likes trinkets and he makes his living with them. He goes through those that have passed away's belongings and does estate sells, pocketing some money and sometimes putting something a little 'nicer' away for himself.

He employs those that have had a problem with drug addiction, who are on the mend. He likes to give second chances. But when his latest client is found to be not dead by natural causes, Lorado has to take a closer look at his employees and the bric-a-brac that has his name on it - when he hasn't met the lady before!

With believable and eccentric characters, a solid, twisting plot and stellar writing, Dinner at Deadman's is a great whodunit that is almost impossible to put down. Although Lorado gets off to a few false starts, he eventually gets on the right track and brought this reader right along side him. I look forward to reading what West writes next!

Teena in Toronto says

Lorado is a big man ... 320 pounds. He lives with his girlfriend of 17 years, Roxie, and their teenage son, Jake, and his 100 pound dog, Beta. His house, basement and storage unit are filled with junk, which drives Roxie crazy.

One of the ways he makes his living is organizing estate sales for heirs (he gets 30% of all sales). That's what he's doing when the book starts ... Mary Newbury has just died. He also rebuilds and maintains housing for recovering addicts and hires some of of them. One of his hires is Mrs. Newbury's grandson, Newb.

There is a lot going on in this book. When a series of mysterious things happen to him (he gets poisoned, a brick smashes the window of his car, his son gets beat up), Lorado assumes it is the local drug dealer getting even with him for something he didn't do. Plus he's got to deal with local punks breaking into one of the sites he is renovating and stealing his supplies to get money for drugs. And finally he starts to suspect that Newb might have murdered his grandmother for drug money (he was her only beneficiary). There is always something going on and it goes in lots of different directions (but it all makes sense).

This is the first book I've read by this author and I really enjoyed it. I liked the writing style ... it was fast paced and kept me interested. It is a bit sarcastic at times which was fun. The actions and language is mature most of the time.

I'll be looking for other books by this author and I hope that this is the first in the series featuring Lorado and his friends and family.

Blog review post: <http://www.teenaintoronto.com/2012/12...>

Beth Cutwright says

I enjoyed Dinner at Deadman's. The opening scene depicts our main character, a treasure collector, Loredó Martin, sleeping in the pink covered bed of Mrs Newbury, deceased. He had eaten some cereal from the kitchen and became deathly ill and thus begins a history of who Loredó Smith is, what he does for work and to help his community, who his family is, who his employees are and a late revelation that Mrs Newbury, may not have died of old age as everyone assumed. And the search is on for her alleged killer. Several folks land on Loredó's radar as potential poisoners, but he eventually narrows it down to the actual perpetrator.

The story was intriguing and began slowly, but smoothly so you got a great feel for everyone's role in the storytelling. There was a closeness between brothers, friends and family as well as animosity between those who weren't friends, those who dealt in drugs and prostitution. And it was all very realistic. I could relate in particular to the cops who were not too intent on helping Loredó out with the vandalism and thievery he faced from the local punks. I could also relate to Loredó's image in the community. My husband is a big guy and not too many people try to push him around, whether that assumption is made correctly or incorrectly.

As murder mysteries go, I liked this book quite a bit and felt it was definitely worth the read. Thank you CJ it was unique and a good read!

Toni Osborne says

I have been a fan of C.J. West since his first book "Sin and Vengeance". His stories are intriguing, diverse in many ways and have some of the most interesting of characters. The opening scene in "Dinner at Deadman's" depicts the main character, Lorado Martin, as a treasure collector organizing estate sales for a 30% cut and maintaining and renovating subsidized housing for recovering addicts where some are employed as daily workers. There are no shortage of action and mysterious happening from getting poisoned, vandalism, beaten up, mixed up with local punks and drug dealers. When he suspects Newb of murdering his grandmother for drug money the mystery takes several rabbit trails, keeps us guessing till gradually the clues are uncovered. In all, the novel is entertaining and is an enjoyable who-dun-it mystery.

Linda B says

Picker, junker, hoarder, whatever they call them these days, Lorado Martin's hobby is collectibles and antiques. When someone dies, he arranges for the estate sales, adds to his own collection, and makes a little money off of the sales. He makes his living building and maintaining homes for recovering addicts. He also employs some of these same addicts and helps them with their fight to stay clean. The death of one elderly woman from one of his sales haunts him, especially when he finds a note hidden in one of her belongings – with his name on it.

Dinner at Deadman's is an intriguing mystery that unfolds slowly to introduce each character and their role in the story. I appreciated the fact that although these characters were working to improve their community, they were also realistic people with major flaws.

There were several things I really liked about this book. The mystery takes several rabbit trails as Lorado misinterprets events that take place. The author details the physical and psychological permanent damage from drugs that has take place in these recovering addicts. I also found interesting Lorado's mixed feelings in helping these broken people, but also seeing them as takers in society compared to his father's work ethic. That part of the book really stood out to me.

I did have two issues that were difficult for me. First, all of the women in the book are pretty much defined by their breast size. Then there was the beginning of the book. It was not a pleasant start. The overly descriptive bodily function was difficult to get through, but if you can get through that first chapter, you will find a satisfying mystery with interesting characters.

Steve Capell says

While reading this amazing novel I found myself many times reminiscing about the trips that my family would take to the local flea market. I found these excursions to be fun while scavenging around the tables that displayed the junk and misfits that the various owners were willing to depart with for my money. I'm sure you've all heard the saying that one man's junk is another man's treasure. This book is centered around a junk dealer named Lorado. Lorado makes a living by selling people junk ... or in other words - treasures! Lorado also has a passion too not only find buyers for junk, but also to hire some of societies misfits such as recovering drug addicts. He feels that by giving these recovering addicts one more chance they too can fit back into society just like the junk he sells. Lorado finds himself in the middle of a mysterious murder and also finds out that someone is trying to kill him. He now has some real problems to contend with and at the same time keep his junk business alive and in front of the next customer.

I found this novel to be especially fast-paced and at the same time filled with hilarity and down to earth, living, breathing, characters. C.J. West weaves a mystery with copper wire, cracked ribs, drugs, prostitution, friends, enemies, and soldiers that will have to wait another day to be sold. Does this sounds interesting and intriguing? I assure you this novel will not disappoint. One final comment -- I will never again go to a flea market, garage sale, or rummage sale without thinking about Lorado. If your looking for your next treasure you will find it in this amazing novel.
