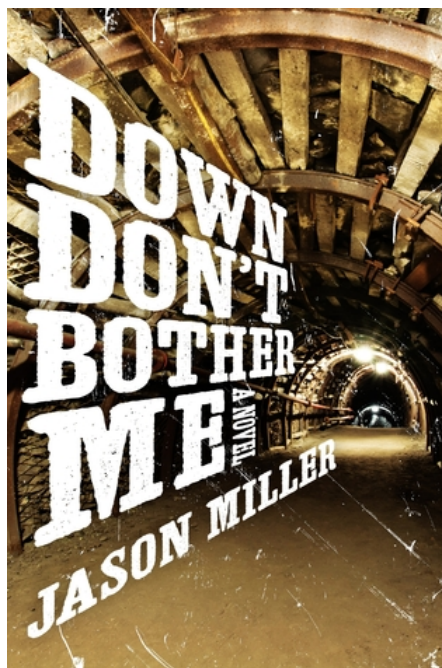




Down Don't Bother Me

Jason Miller

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A hugely entertaining debut—the first novel in a wickedly funny gothic mystery series set in the withering landscape of the southern Illinois coal country known as “little Egypt”—that blends the wry humor of Kevin Wilson, the dark violence of Urban Waite, and the electric atmosphere of Greg Iles.

In the depths of the Knight Hawk, one of the last working collieries in downstate Illinois, the body of a reporter is found, his mini-recorder tied around his neck and a notepad stuffed in his mouth.

The Knight Hawk’s owner, Matthew Luster, isn’t happy. He wants answers—and he doesn’t want the cops or any more press poking into his business. To protect himself and the operation, he turns to Slim, a mine employee with a reputation for “bloodhounding”—finding lost souls when the police can’t or won’t. Luster needs Slim to locate a missing photographer named Beckett, a close associate of the victim . . . who just happens to be his son-in-law.

A hard-working single father barely making ends meet, Slim accepts the job—after Luster offers him a guaranteed pension and job security for life. But when you make a deal with the devil, you’re going to get burned . . . and now Slim is all too close to the flames. Circumstances have lead him into the grimy underworld of Little Egypt, Illinois—a Babel’s Tower of rednecks, rubes, freaks, tweakers, gun nuts, and aging hippies-and it quickly becomes clear that he’s much more involved in the murder than an innocent man should be.

Down Don't Bother Me marks the emergence of a wildly assured mystery novelist, and of a series set in the fresh and brutal landscape of southern Illinois.

Down Don't Bother Me Details

Date : Published March 24th 2015 by Bourbon Street Books

ISBN : 9780062362193

Author : Jason Miller

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Crime, Action



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From Reader Review Down Don't Bother Me for online ebook

Sherrie says

I was excited to win a finished copy of Down Don't Bother Me through the Goodreads Giveaway Program. This book was the ideal blend of compelling mystery, action and humor. There were quite a few times I found myself laughing out loud while reading this book. Slim, the single father to twelve year old Anci, is working a back breaking, low paying job in the Knight Hawk Mine when they found reporter, Dwayne May's body in the depths of the mine. Matthew Luster, the owner of the mine, is not pleased to have the attention of the cops and media that this discovery will mean. Wanting to get ahead of the problem he recruits Slim to work the case with the promise of a guaranteed job and pension as long as Luster owns the mine. The plot line goes full throttle at this point and doesn't slow down until the end. Slim is a likable character with guts and a wicked sense of humor. I loved that even though he was rough and burly he was also a great parent who had a wonderful relationship with his daughter. One my favorite parts of the book was the nicknames, Ham Body, Jump Down and my personal favorite Big Sexy. The nicknames coupled with the dead pan humor make for a winning combination. Down Don't Bother Me is an exceptional debut novel and I'm hoping the beginning of a top notch mystery series.

Sandy Klocinski says

This is a grand first novel for Jason Miller

Rex Anderson says

This guy is the worst decent writer I've read in recent memory, not counting the author of "We refuse the right to reserve service for anyone." and "No pulled up pants, no service. No shit." signs making the rounds of quality restaurants in these here parts. "Insufferable!" would be the jacket quote I'd offer him if he decides to ask, which, judging from his other literary choices, I don't rule out.

I called him a "decent" writer because he is. He's a good story teller, he establishes a great sense of place, his pacing is bearable, and he's got a great imagination. But somewhere during high school this guy got fixated. Maybe this is all a simple mistake. Maybe he's categorized in "juvenile fiction" and I somehow missed it, or his categorizer was busier than the county fair's taffy wrapper trying to text on the job and sticky-fingered this one in the wrong place. Or maybe Harper Collins' editors were at a young author's convention that weekend and his manuscript was stamped "approved" by someone's 12-year old daughter impersonating an adult while their parent was jawing at the cooler about the latest unsolved murder.

I could happily forgive him his Schwarzeneggerish sense of humor if he simply knew where it belonged. After all, what bored reader doesn't love a 12-year old with the imaginative rambunctiousness of a Belmont Stakes 2-year old high stepping his way to the starting gate, or a narrator with a penchant for reaching out the back window of a speeding truck and fishing around in the tailwind for a loose metaphor swirling about in his pickup bed? The problem here isn't his talent: it's his indiscriminate application of his talent. *Who stops him?* No one, apparently, because I just paid for, (discounted, to be sure) and read, his Harper Collins-published novel.

One of the first efforts a writer *ought* to make, either on his or her own or at the insistence of writers groups,

editors, or their mother, is to make one's characters believable. And in order to do that, one has to make them different from each other, else you really only have one character with many different names. This Miller guy sure was dozing each time that little journalistic lesson got handed out. Every character in his novel speaks just like the protagonist's 12-year old daughter, who speaks just like her father, and her father's girlfriend, and the mine-owner, and the mine-owner's thugs, and the meth dealer, and the sheriff...

Much is made of Mr. Miller's narrative style: "hugely entertaining", "wickedly funny", etc. And rightfully so. Some of his descriptions are delightful. But it's as if he's discovered a few licks on the electric guitar, then goes and plays the drums with the electric guitar, the piano with the electric guitar, he sings with the electric guitar, and instead of writing verses and choruses, he constructs songs consisting mostly of solos on, oh hell yeah, the electric guitar.

Here's a bit of Slim's repartee with the client who hires him as an informal P.I., early on in the book:

"Dooley Bug? Yeah, him I know," I said.

"You worked with him once."

"More than once. Dooley-Bug's been in the mines a long time."

"True that. So long he owes Underground Jesus a nickel."

And here's a slice from Slim and a guy he just met moments before, a housing subdivision security guard:

"I can tell from your tone you don't like him," I said.

"He chuckled. "He ain't on my holiday shopping list, no. You might think you've met a sonofabitch in your time, but let me tell you, you ain't. That old man is so bad, they'll have to come up with a new definition of the term just so ordinary bad men won't get all full of false piety."

"That's pretty good," I said.

As an indicator that no editor from Harper Collins has Miller's cellphone number, here's a sample from the brief preview provided for his *next* book in the series, of an interaction between Slim and the owner of an animal rescue clinic:

"That sucks." [says Slim].

"It throws sucks off a barstool and steps on its neck, but that's what it is. At least for now. What brings you this way, Slim?"

Not *everyone* possesses, even in Little Egypt, a Dennis-Millerish ability to snatch insightful and potent metaphors out of the air like stray AR-15 rounds at a public housing picnic. That's why these verbal gymnastics are usually impressive rather than irritating: they're rare. Seeing them passed out like plasticware at St. Jude's long table on Sunday noon takes all the fun out of being special.

At first it's great, then by page two it's grating, and by chapter two it's fascinating how the author can be equal parts obtuse and brilliant and still manage to do something as rational as write a decent novel. Most people with an OS as buggy as Miller's end up with unkempt facial hair, a sweeping and studied disdain, and a burner cellphone running a cash register somewhere along an interstate highway. Ah well. That's more work for me.

Further nits to pick: how many kisses can be planted on the top of a 12-year old's head before she starts developing a bald spot or worse? Well, for at least one more novel, according also to the sample provided of his next book. Looks like everyone who ever meets this kid can't resist smooching her fontanel after engaging her in jovial banter, rejoinders, repartee, and intellectual one-upsmanship. Jayzee in an ore cart punching a mule already!

Who stops him? I don't know. I wish *somebody* would, at least long enough to teach him some character development basics before giving him back his keyboard. He'd be a much better, perhaps even *good* writer, because of it, and I for one would have less Miller to kick around.

Vontel says

Great book! Taking place in coal mining country in Illinois, there are some interesting presentations about the environment, sociological as well as ecological, that don't come across as polemic but are revealed as the murder mystery unfolds. They are potent.

Slim is a reluctant sleuth, a coal miner and single dad to a 12 year old daughter. I look forward to more in this series.

Excellent review from a Nashville paper available via Internet search, just know there is more than one Jason Miller. This one lives in Nashville, at least when this book was published earlier in 2015.

Matt Brady says

this reads like it was written by someone who grew up in coal country but then moved away to become a shitty comedy writer who tries to impress people with how tough he is by saying "i grew up in coal country", as if he was raylan givens if raylan givens had hydrocephaly. after finishing it i asked for my money back and amazon instantly complied, saying "we dont blame you really. so sorry about this." i forgave them and asked "do you think i could beat this author in a fight?" greg amazon, the boss of amazon promptly replied "buddy, your disabled father who cant even walk could beat this guy in a fight. once again i apologize for selling you this book. here have an extra hundred bucks on us."

Ed says

Slim is coal miner in southern Illinois and a reluctant detective. The mine owner recruits Slim to find his missing son in law with the promise of a secure pension. As we are all disgustingly aware, pension benefits have been universally diminished by greedy corporations so a better job in the mine and vested pension benefits were an offer Slim could not refuse. The assignment becomes increasingly complex and deadly as multiple bad guys with mixed hidden motives focus Slim, his friend Jeep Mabry, his teenage daughter Anci and girlfriend Peggy in the cross-hairs. Without detailing the plot, this "country noir" mystery is like a blast of cool air on a humid summer night. Slim is a wickedly funny protagonist as written by an author with a sharp sense of humor and a talent for writing witty analogy's. That and the originality of the coal mining locale make this debut novel highly entertaining 5 star crime fiction. I'm on board for what I hope will be a long running series.

Moshe Mikanovsky says

Just decided this book is not for me. Maybe in another time or life, but right now, nothing in it pulled me in to connect. Didn't understand any of the character or their motivations, and couldn't care less for the missing person/murder mysteries... Maybe in another lifetime.

Heather Cook says

Down Don't Bother Me is an incredibly well crafted novel.

It started a little slow for me, but I like that Miller took the time to establish his characters so when the story really ramped up you were invested in everyone, even the antagonists. I liked the twists - some I had an inkling of and some nearly knocked me outta my chair - and when it was done i was able to think think back to different exchanges between characters that made certain outcomes all the more clear.

Favorite scenes include: (view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

Stephen Simpson says

I'm not a fan of mysteries in general, but the author's style makes up for a lot of the genre's typical shortcomings.

Sarah says

I'm impressed! I wanted to read this adult mystery novel after reading a review of it--the setting is coal country in southern Illinois. So I recognized a lot of place names--Crab Orchard, Carbondale, and all the tiny little podunk towns around there.

Slim is a coal miner--it's in his blood since his estranged dad was one of the scariest coal union leaders around. But he's always been a bit of a finder, too, so he's asked to find out where a man is. Everything is tied to the mines, their corrupt owners, and the people who work in them. I loved finding out more about the mines, but, whoa, I don't think I want to hang around the people too much. Scary stuff. There's a lot of western revenge killing going on in this book, and not much police justice. I sure hope this kind of thing doesn't go on down there in real life? I hope? I mean, I always knew southern Illinois was a good place to hide dead bodies, but yikes....

I did laugh at times while reading this--Slim is a lot like Walt Longmire. Quick witted conversation is always a plus!

Madeline says

As a So Ill native I bought this book curious to see how the author would portray the region (also I love a good mystery/thriller/crime novel as much as anyone else). I was really impressed with his picture of southern Illinois and also how well the setting worked with the characters in the book. They were full of Midwestern grit and witty dialogue. A lot of the offhand remarks and personalities of the characters made them seem like people I would easily expect to meet driving through the area. It's a brutally honest slice of withering small town America and I love it. The book was well written, easy to read, and very hard to put down. I read through it in 2 days without even meaning to. I read all the time and never leave reviews but I

wanted to say how happy I am to see a promising author tell a thrilling story about the kind of people I've been around all my life. Nothing in this book seemed implausibly and I was left guessing at outcomes the whole way through. I'll certainly be reading whatever he writes next regardless of where its set.

Jon Fincher says

Very noirish - if you like the hard-boiled smart talking detective novel, you'll like this. If you're from southern Illinois, you might not like the characterizations of some denizens, but if you're like me - a damn Yankee who lived there a piece - you can get past it. It's very comparable to the Hard Case books from Dan Simmons - very homogenous, very easy to read, well paced, and very enjoyable

One big issue someone else mentioned that I also saw - everyone sounds the same. All the characters are hard-boiled smart-alecking people, even the protagonist's tween daughter. I can forgive this for two reasons. First, this isn't high literature - it's a romp. It's a mystery-thriller meant to be enjoyable, not analyzed for character development and deep thematic content. Second, the point of view is 1st person limited- the protagonist is telling the story, so it kinda makes sense that everyone sounds the same.

I'm looking forward to the next book in this universe. As a former resident of the area, this is only the second time I've seen any entertainment set there (the movie "Poor White Trash" was also set in southern Illinois). And as a fan of noir detective stories, how can I resist?

Donna says

This was probably 3 or 3.5 stars, but I'll give it 1 more star because of its uniqueness. There were several things that set this apart from other books of this type.

I liked the MC. For being an investigator/crime solver, he wasn't ex-military, he wasn't a hunk of a man, he wasn't a cad, he wasn't even an investigator and his name was Slim. He was very down to earth in a "folksy" kind of way. The sense of humor was on the dark side, which works for me.

The story was interesting and well paced. There were some good plot twists. Overall, it was a little more violent than I like. I also don't get the title of this book. When I finished the book, I thought maybe I missed something because I still didn't get it. If you know, let me know.

Luanne Ollivier says

Now in addition to having an eBook and a physical book always on the go, I also have an audio book queued up as well - sometimes to help me fall asleep.

Well, there was no way I was falling asleep listening to Jason Miller's debut novel Down Don't Bother Me. In fact - I stayed up much later than I had planned!

Miller's protagonist is Slim, an Illinois coal miner with a propensity for finding people. It's not a job for Slim, but he's helped out folks before. But this time, he doesn't have much of a choice. A reporter is found dead in the mine - and the photographer working with him is missing. Luster, the mine owner, wants to run his own

search for the photographer - who just happens to be his son-in-law. Well, Slim is a single father, so when Luster dangles a pension as a carrot, Slim takes the job.

Now, I'm sure the written book will Miller many fans. But - the audio version was fantastic! The reader was Johnny Heller - one of my favourites. He has a low, gravely, worn voice that completely embodied the mental image I had of Slim. Heller's interpretation of Miller's story was perfect rhythm, cadence and tone.

The setting is just as great. Slim makes his home in Little Egypt - one of the last colliery towns in Illinois. Its down and dirty, populated by a wild variety of characters - methheads, environmental activists, gangs and everyday folks just trying to make a go of it.

I'm going to applaud the supporting cast as well. Slim's daughter Anci is a firecracker - smart and wise to the ugliness of the world even at twelve. I enjoyed the relationship between Slim and his girlfriend Peggy - the give and take, the yes or no. Every protagonist needs a sidekick and Slim has a good one with Jeep - a big, strong guy who is like a brother to Slim. But, the standout of course, is Slim - he's rough around the edges, but smart, caring and a guy you'd want to have in your corner. He's a lead character you can't help but get behind and cheer for.

What sets off these relationships, and indeed the whole book, is Miller's dialogue and descriptions. Miller's prose are folksy, real, gritty, and so addictive to listen to. I don't think I would have enjoyed the written book as well. The audio just brought the novel to life. The descriptions of the mines and the men who work them were atmospheric (and for this reader claustrophobic!) I could taste the coal dust as the men emerged into the light.

Now, I need to mention the mystery as well - which was wonderfully plotted. I couldn't predict where the story was going to go and happily went along for the ride through the back roads of Little Egypt, eager to join the search for the photographer.

This is the first in a planned series and I will absolutely be listening to the next entry. Highly recommended. Down Don't Bother Me is a great entry in the 'grit lit' genre. Fans of Elmore Leonard's Justified will enjoy this novel.

Allen Murphey says

Jason Miller suddenly appears in the world of mysteries, a neatly wrapped package tucked under his arm, and presents us with the real thing: a well-written, seamlessly-plotted mystery with a likeable, everyday hero in a well-drawn world nearby but foreign to most of us – Little Egypt, the coal fields of southern Illinois.

Slim, from a family that's been in the mines for generations, is asked by the mine's owner to look into the disappearance of the owner's son-in-law, possibly in retaliation for the younger man's investigating gangs cooking meth inside the mine. Initially reluctant, Slim agrees when his pension is guaranteed if he takes the case, a big deal in the lousy mine economy. From there on everyone Slim knows or comes into contact with (including his daughter and Slim, himself) is threatened, shot at, wounded, severely beaten, and/or killed. Not necessarily in that order.

Slim's investigation pits him against miners, activists, thugs, owners, the sheriff, and his own girlfriend. Chasing down one lead after another, not only does every character seem to have valid reasons to both thwart Slim and assist him, but his own daughter must be kept safe from people working to do anything to stop him and keep buried what he's trying to uncover.

Although the setting may be unfamiliar to us, Miller tightly integrates the characters and the scenery into Slim's story – the narrative is never sparse and never laden with unnecessary description. The tale held me from the very beginning, the reading faster than the motorcycle Slim uses to get around the hills. Very few characters, other than the local police, appear in minor roles (sorry), and I was continually guessing in which faction most of the characters really belonged. And just how many factions there were.

Jason Miller's biggest treat for us: the title page bears the phrase *A Slim in Little Egypt Mystery*. It appears there are more to come. No doubt after Slim and a few of his friends heal a bit first.

I liked Slim's character right away and we got even closer when he made an allusion to something under the surface being the size of Angkor Wat. I really appreciate an author who goes out of his/her way to work with the language, to craft new phrases and thoughts, and to make the language seem effortless.

My hero.

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