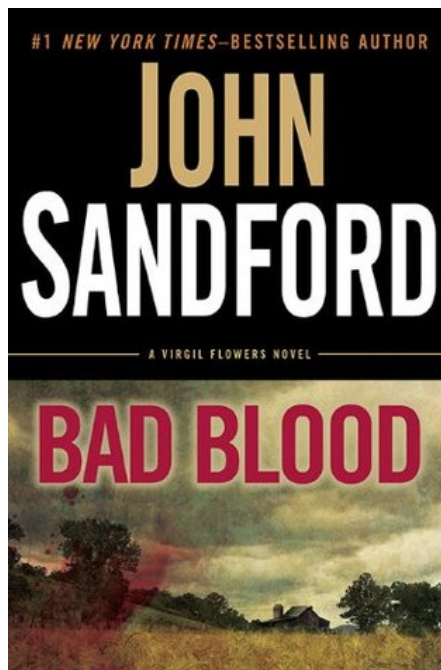




Bad Blood

John Sandford

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The brilliant new Virgil Flowers thriller from the #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author.

One late fall Sunday in southern Minnesota, a farmer brings a load of soybeans to a local grain elevator- and a young man hits him on the head with a steel bar, drops him into the grain bin, waits until he's sure he's dead, and then calls the sheriff to report the "accident." Suspicious, the sheriff calls in Virgil Flowers, who quickly breaks the kid down...and the next day the boy's found hanging in his cell. Remorse? Virgil isn't so sure, and as he investigates he begins to uncover a multigeneration, multifamily conspiracy-a series of crimes of such monstrosity that, though he's seen an awful lot in his life, even he has difficulty in comprehending it...and in figuring out what to do next.

Bad Blood Details

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From Reader Review Bad Blood for online ebook

Sandi says

Though the crimes in this book were particularly unpleasant, Virgil is a great character and I always enjoy his investigative methods. As always with this series, the plot was compelling and the rural Minnesota setting well described. Listened to the audio version which was narrated by **Eric Conger** who has really improved since the first book and now adds to the experience.

Mal Warwick says

Any aspiring mystery and thriller writer would do well to study John Sandford's Virgil Flowers novels. The ten books Sandford has written to date (as of March 2018) display several of the characteristics that make them all candidates for the bestseller lists. Bad Blood, the fourth novel in the series, shows them all:

** Like so many other thrillers Sandford has written (there are 28 in his other series, the Prey novels), Bad Blood's plot revolves around a topic that has recently surfaced in the national news: child abuse inside a religious cult. Numerous child abuse cases among Jehovah's Witnesses have come to the attention of law enforcement officials in several countries. The church has refused to share information about the alleged abuse with authorities. The practices of the cult Sandford describes in Bad Blood are apparently far more extreme, and there are no strong similarities between the two faith systems, but the provocative topic nonetheless brings to mind those real-world cases.

** The protagonist, Virgil Flowers, is like no other character in mystery and suspense fiction. He's colorful to an extreme—interesting, in other words. He's a cop who hates guns. He moonlights as a magazine writer. He wears a different T-shirt every day, each of them featuring the logo of an obscure rock band. He has a college degree in environmental science. He's been married and divorced three times, but he falls in love with a different woman in every novel. (In Bad Blood, the new love interest is the sheriff of the county where Virgil is now working.) And, like so many other cops and private eyes in the genre, he breaks the rules. Often.

** Sandford's plots are intricate. Invariably, what might seem at first as a simple case will inevitably turn out to involve numerous crimes—and often a large number of criminals as well. Sometimes, there are several seemingly unrelated cases that come together as the investigation unfolds. (That's the case in Bad Blood, when four separate murders all prove to be closely related.) Sandford does use manipulative techniques, such as disclosing the fact that Virgil has a plan of action but without explaining the plan in any way. But he uses such devices infrequently. For the most part, the logic of the case builds steadily throughout the novel and reaches an explosive climax shortly before the end.

** Sandford's dialogue sings. Virgil's conversations are usually fast-moving and often very, very funny as well. In these novels, the characters obviously don't speak the way people normally speak. But the stories benefit from the illusion that they do. Sandford is undoubtedly a witty man. Here, for example, is Virgil: "Your eyes sparkle when you're annoyed," he said, giving her his second-best cowboy grin. His first-best grin was so powerful that he reserved it for places where the woman had her back against something, for support; like a mattress." (The sexism is Virgil's, or Sandford's. Apologies.)

** There is violence. A lot of it. As a reader, I wish this weren't the case. But clearly these novels wouldn't work otherwise. (The same is true of the work of another bestselling American author, Karin Slaughter, and

of the work of the Norwegian writer Jo Nesbo.) In *Bad Blood*, the focus is on a religious cult child abuse and a long string of murders.

** In the Virgil Flowers series, as in his other works of fiction, Sandford employs an intimate brand of third-person storytelling. We share Virgil's thoughts and feelings consistently throughout the book. Sometimes, we enter the minds of other characters as well. This approach gives the author maximum flexibility.

If you enjoy mystery and suspense fiction, chances are you'll love the Virgil Flowers novels.

Jim says

Dropping a star only because I was uncomfortable with the central plot line - child abuse - and the author's portrayal of it. Sometimes I felt he sailed very close to the edge in his descriptions of what was going on in a vice ring for what was a novel as opposed to a factual account. Some of the words he puts in children's mouths, not to mention the situations he imagines them in, made me squirm a bit. Still, he's not the first to do it and I'm sure he'd argue his story needs to ring true if it's to work. And it does work, because I didn't give up on the book. It was tightly written, had enough levity in it to counterbalance the dark storyline and had really likeable characters as the good guys.

I sailed through the pages and would admit that as a hard boiled thriller it doesn't pull punches, which I like. I've read a lot of American crime fiction and was really surprised I hadn't come across Sandford before. Where has he been all my life? He has a recognisable style of his own and stands apart from the crowd when that's pretty difficult to do in this genre. It's the first book I've read of his, and i'm looking forward to reading more.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

The further adventures of "that fuckin' Flowers." This one takes awhile to heat up, but once they start going after the bad guys it gets pretty exciting. The big showdown and final outcome is sort of like a combination of the Ruby Ridge fiasco and the raid on the FLDS Yearning for Zion compound.

I give *Bad Blood* 2.5 stars for story, but I rounded up to 3 stars because Sandford writes so well. This one wasn't as much fun as the third installment. The subject matter is very disturbing, all the more because it's so believable. It's disgusting what people justify under the protected status of religious beliefs.

Kemper says

There's not enough 'W's in the world to convey the 'EWWWWWWWWWW!!' factor of this book.

In Homestead, Minnesota, a young man just out of high school with a bright future brutally murders a farmer and tries to make it look like an accident. However, his crime is discovered, and he's found dead in his cell before he can explain why he did it. The boy's death looks fishy, and the chief suspect is a deputy that the new female sheriff just defeated in an election for the job so that's a political shitstorm just waiting to happen. The sheriff comes to Virgil Flowers (a/k/a 'that fucking Flowers'), agent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, for assistance. When Virgil starts digging into the case he finds some very shocking secrets and more than one person willing to kill to keep them.

John Sandford delivers once again. Virgil is a spin-off character from Sandford's Prey-series featuring Lucas Davenport, and while I've always liked this character, I hadn't found any of the Virgil-based books quite as entertaining as the Davenport ones until now. There's an intriguing mystery followed by some twisted revelations and then a series of intense and exciting action scenes. This was one bad-ass crime thriller.

Virgil has always been fun reading as the outdoorsy ladies man who favors vintage rock band t-shirts and sometimes forgets his gun in his truck, but he's turning into a more fully formed character instead of just a collection of traits. Now I can't wait until we see Virgil again instead of just thinking of him as an entertaining placeholder between Davenport novels.

Random Thoughts

* Davenport is starting to be a bad influence on Virgil because he does some highly illegal breaking-and-entering in this one, and he comes up with an elaborate scheme that puts a civilian in danger to flush out some of the bad guys. Those are some classic Davenport moves.

* I continue to love the interactions between Davenport and Virgil, especially the way that Davenport's more ruthless political side comes out when he's giving Virgil his marching orders.

* Virgil's background as a minister's son comes in handy when he gets to drop some serious Bible-knowledge on folks.

* After 30 books, you'd think that Sandford would start to seem repetitive when it comes to describing brutal Minnesota winters, but he can still make me feel the wind chill.

* Sneaky Virgil pulls a nice small-town trick by talking about the investigation openly in a diner. Before long, he's drawing crowds who are anxious to hear the gossip, but he gets a lot of information and goodwill in return. Plus, he gets to stir up public opinion in a way that is beneficial to his investigation.

* Again, just let me say, "EWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!"

Karen Hall says

Somebody recently asked, "If you could have dinner with any character from fiction, who would it be?" My immediate answer: Virgil Flowers. John Sandford has written a lot of books, and I've read most of them. I followed Lucas Davenport religiously through the Prey books, read the standalone novels, and didn't much care for the Kidd novels. But Virgil Flowers is my guy.

Virgil knows how to get to the bottom of things, and in *Bad Blood*, the bottom is not only complicated, it's a long way down. A southwest Minnesota farmer is brutally murdered at the elevator as he delivers his soybeans. The murderer, a decent young man from a good local family, confesses to the sheriff, and the next day is found hanging in his cell. When the deputy on duty during the apparent suicide is also found dead, the sheriff realizes she needs help. Though both deaths appear to be suicides, the forensic evidence suggests otherwise. Enter Virgil Flowers.

Flowers loves women. Married and divorced three times, Virgil has realized he falls in love too easily and has sworn off the taking of vows. That doesn't mean he's given up the fairer sex, though. In this book, he finds the sheriff herself, recently abandoned by her husband for another woman, to be not only an excellent investigator, but excellent in other ways as well.

Virgil's investigative technique is as unusual as he is. Raised nearby, the son of a Lutheran minister, Virgil knows how things go in small towns. He takes the sheriff to the local café, speaks clearly enough that the locals can overhear, and garners several important leads through the resulting firestorm of rumor and innuendo. He sets traps, calls in favors, interviews locals, and uncovers a crime so old and so massive that even he has trouble believing its scope.

While I've always enjoyed Mr. Sandford's Lucas Davenport novels, I can understand why he's working on this series as well. Virgil Flowers is very different from Davenport, and must be tremendously fun to write. He's both a cerebral and a spiritual guy, a BCA agent who wears his hair long and his cowboy boots scuffed. If you haven't tried these books, please do. You won't be disappointed.

Marty Fried says

Well, this one was a strange one; it began getting pretty dark toward the end, with lots of bad things happening. This shouldn't be too surprising considering religious extremists were involved. A lot of this is not something you'd expect from religious people, but as someone says in the story, you can interpret the Bible in many ways, and read almost anything you want into it.

Fortunately, there was a lot of very humorous dialog that helps mitigate this dark behavior somewhat, and that's the reason I like this series so much. That and the political correctness of it all. OK, well, Virgil is a bit of a ladies man, and seems to fall in love with every female he comes across. But he doesn't really come on strong, and it works with him.

James Thane says

When Bobby Tripp, a popular high school athlete, brutally kills a farmer late one night at a grain mill in rural Minnesota, there seems to be no logical explanation for the crime. Bobby fails in his attempt to disguise the murder as an accident and is arrested. Shortly thereafter, he is found hanging in his cell, an apparent suicide.

Lee Coakley, an attractive divorcee who is also the local sheriff, appeals for help from Virgil Flowers of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Coakley wants Virgil to investigate what role, if any, Jim Crocker, the deputy on duty, might have played in Bobby's suicide. Virgil agrees to help out and is immediately immersed in a complex situation involving a number of related crimes, many of which seem to center on the members of a secretive religious group in the small rural community.

With that, the book is off and running, and the reader is hopelessly trapped in a story that he or she will have great difficulty putting down before the conclusion. Flowers, who has often been described as a younger, single version of Sandford's long-time protagonist, Lucas Davenport, is a great lead character and this is another very entertaining read. Very few writers are capable of successfully combining humor with a series of grizzly, unspeakable crimes, but Sandford is one of the few who pulls it off without seeming to trivialize the brutal crimes that are at the center of the story. This is a book that will certainly be devoured by Sandford's legion of fans and one that should appeal to anyone who enjoys crime fiction.

Eric_W says

An excellent addition to the Virgil Flowers series, a series I prefer to the Lucas Davenport books which often devolve into psychobabble with Weather and Ellen.

The case begins with the baseball bat head-bashing murder of a local farmer delivering soybeans to the local mill. The killer is a well-liked football star and his actions puzzle the community, but not as much as the string of killings that follow. BCA detective Flowers is asked to help with the investigation by the local newly elected sheriff who fears her election at the expense of one of her deputies might compromise the investigation.

If you read the reviews on Amazon, the one-star comments seem to fall into a couple of groups: those who object to "bad" words and/or the subject matter (child abuse and its connection to a religious cult or it's just "pornography", a bizarre complaint indeed), and those who complain about the Kindle price (get a life folks, you don't have to buy the book.) In other words the one star reviews have little substance to them and can be safely ignored as trite.

Some of the dialogue, especially with the children of the cultish group, seemed forced and whether such a group could be as large as it was in a rural community without raising more than a few eyebrows is problematic. It's a good story. My quibbling minor complaint is that perhaps Sandford could have used the story to examine the ramifications of a mindset that teaches a belief system to children they believe to be good that is in direct opposition to normal societal values.

One line I really liked: "Nothing scares a shit-kicker like somebody shooting up his truck."

Kathy Davie says

Fourth in the Virgil Flowers ~~detective mystery~~ thriller series and revolving around that effin' Flowers, lol. *Bad Blood* takes place in October in Minnesota.

In 2011, *Bad Blood* won the ITW Thriller Award for Best Hard Cover Novel. And I completely understand why. I'd give it a "7" if I could.

My Take

Holy cats! H-O-L-Y cats!! This one will have your jaw dropping *below* the floor! The drama and tension will keep your heart racing as well as your eyes and fingers as they turn pages as fast as possible. Sandford certainly trips you up as he slowly and quickly twists you around.

Yeah. That's what I said. *Slowly* and *quickly*. Slowly you find out why Bobby killed that farmer. Quickly you begin to suspect the overall crimes within *Bad Blood*. It could take a strong stomach to get through this.

I finally figured out why everyone calls him that fuckin' Flowers is because he's too good at what he does. Virgil says it's just "cop alliteration". He does make a good point about that early suicide in the story. Never really thought about how a guy might, um, present himself in such a situation, but it does make sense. Then again, Lee Coakley sure appreciates him, lol. Virgil, that is.

Virgil does have an unexpected way of investigating murder. He likes to blab all about their leads, to see

what might happen. And his background as a preacher's son comes in right handy in this.

In some ways, I can understand why the Catholic Church was so upset when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. Ya let anybody read the Bible, interpret it the way they want, and it can become a nightmare.

"I'll tell you what, Emmet, reading the Bible for the ... parts is not really reading the Bible."

Perverts will use any excuse...

I can't believe these religious idiots, how quickly they leap to blame others. I understand why, but it still astonishes me. I did have to laugh about the "minor pie fight" over why the World of Spirit kids scored at the top of academic achievements. Yep, you got it. Everyone decided the other kids in Minnesota would score just as well if teachers got paid more, lol.

The Story

One late fall Sunday in southern Minnesota, a farmer brings a load of soybeans to a local grain elevator — and a young man hits him on the head with a steel bar, drops him into the grain bin, waits until he's sure he's dead, and then calls the sheriff to report the "accident".

Suspicious, the sheriff calls in Virgil Flowers, who quickly breaks the kid down...and the next day the boy's found hanging in his cell. Remorse?

Virgil isn't so sure, and as he investigates he begins to uncover a multigeneration, multifamily conspiracy — a series of crimes of such monstrosity that, though he's seen an awful lot in his life, even he has difficulty in comprehending it...and in figuring out what to do next.

The Characters

Agent Virgil Flowers, a preacher's son, works as a detective-at-large (but doesn't carry a gun) for the BCA. His true love, however, is writing articles on hunting and fishing. **Mrs. Wilson** is Virgil's neighbor.

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is...

...is a state police organization. **Lucas Davenport** is Virgil's boss. **Beatrice Sawyer**, **Don Baldwin**, and **Mary Lopez** are the scene-of-crime investigators. The hippie-ish **Sandy** is an excellent researcher. **Rose Marie Roux** is the commissioner of public safety and Lucas' boss. **Shrake** and **Jenkins** are BCA thugs.

"I've never been overgunned. I have been undergunned. After that happened, I reconceptualized."

Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation

Agent Bell Wood and **Mitch Ingle** worked the Kelly Baker murder. **Janice**.

Warren County

Homestead is its county seat with **Dennis Brown** as its chief of police and Lee's former boss. The **Yellow Dog Café** where Virgil spends a lot of time is owned by **Bill Jacoby**. **Earl** and **Dick Street** are some of the customers at the diner. **Pat Sullivan** is a gay reporter. **Clare Kreuger** delivers the mail. **Rich** is a photo technician with a tip. **Brian and Judy Craig** are farmers with some interesting insight. **Peter Van Mann** is a widower farmer who got reamed; **Jake** is his dog. **Son Wood** owns Son Wood's Surface Sealers and was a friend of Crocker's. **Roger** works for him. **Delores** is Son's chatty bookkeeper.

The nineteen-year-old football jock, **Bob Tripp**, works at the Battenberg Farmer's Co-op. **George and Irma Tripp** are his parents. **Maicy** is a student. **Jay Wenner** was a friend of Bobby's.

Sheriff's Department

The divorced **Lee Coakley** is the new sheriff in town and has three kids. (**Sue** is one of the boys' girlfriend.) **Ike Patras** is the medical examiner in Mankato. **Deputies Gene Schickel** and **Gregg Dunn** will back up Virgil and Lee. More deputies include **John Kraus**, **Buddy**, **Marcia Wright**, **Rob**, **Don**, **Sherry**, and **Bob Hart**. **Stupek**. **Deputy Jimmy Crocker** was on duty the night of the suicide; he was also a childhood friend of Flood's. **Harlan** is the previous sheriff.

Bill Clinton and **Andersson** are highway patrolmen. **Sheriff Beau Harrison** in Martin County will need to lend jail space. **Larry Cortt** is a friend of Hart and his wife, **Jenny**. **Darrell Martin** is Lee's private attorney. **Judge John O'Hare** is tight-lipped; **Doris** is his wife. **Harris Toms** is the county attorney.

The World of Spirit is...

...a religion brought from Germany back in the 1900s. **Leonard and Louise Baker** were **Kelly's** parents. **John and Luanne Baker** were her uncle and aunt. **Jacob "Liberty" Flood** is married to **Alma**. **Edna** and **Helen** are their precocious daughters. **Emmet Einstadt** is Alma's father and the head of the World of Spirit. **Leonard** and **Junior** are his sons. **Mary** is Leonard's wife. **Wally Rooney** will be moving into the Floods' house. **Kathleen Spooner** is Crocker's ex-wife.

Harvey Loewe has his own secrets and a desperate need to run. **Joe and Marsha Loewe** are his parents. **Greta and Karl Rouse** are really into it, and Karl loves photography. **Kristy Rouse** is the helpful daughter. The **Bochers**, **Steinfelds**, **Beckers**, **Muellers**, **John McGuire**, **Ted Morgan**, and **Loren** are fellow worshippers. **Dick and Mary Bosche** and **Dick and Sandy Waldt** had slid right in. **Jacky Shoen**.

Lucy "Birdy" McCain Olms is one who got away. **Roland "Rollo" Olms** was her jerk of a husband. Birdy's family included her parents, **Ed and Ruth**; her brothers **Robert** and **William**; and, **Louise McCain Gordon**. **Charlie Lane** is a cop in Sleepy Eye. **Gina Becker** is an old friend of Louise's.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

The Reverend John Baumhauer is an old friend of Virgil's dad. **Danny McCoy** used to be the Catholic priest in Homestead.

Hayfield is...

...a town where Virgil worked a case some time back. **Clay Holley** wants to help out. **Marie** is Clay's girlfriend. The **Johnsons**, **Pells**, and **Schooners** are all retired neighbors who can't wait to help as well.

Nebraska State Patrol

Lieutenant Joe Murphy knows how to get to **Lenore Mackey's** house.

Tom Parker is a very good defense attorney. **Laurie** is his associate and connects the murders. **Richard Reedy** was a slick guy from Marshall, Virgil's hometown.

The **World of Law** is the real world.

The Cover and Title

The cover reminds me of an Old Master oil painting with that gorgeous and atmospheric landscape with its lone barn set back behind the field and surrounded by hills and trees. The *painting* covers not quite half of the cover's bottom while the author's name — in a dull gold and white against a black background — is embossed and taking up the top half with a tiny bit of series information banding the middle.

Oh, yeah, the title is definitely about *Bad Blood* in this community.

Giovanni Gelati says

Right off the bat I want to say that I am a huge fan of John Sandford. I have devoured all 20 of his Prey novels and each of the Virgil Flowers spinoffs. There are three other Virgil Flower novels: Dark of the Moon, Heat Lightning, Rough Country and now Bad Blood. Do you have to read them in order? No. Do you need to read them, yes. They rock. I find it incredibly hard to put any of his novels down once I get on a roll. The book just doesn't want to leave my hand or my mind. Okay, I guess you have to understand that I like the guy's style and substance.

Bad Blood in my estimation is his best work to date with that %\$#@Flowers. The dialogue in between the characters is incredible, the repartee fun and at times intense, and the action swift. I offer no spoilers as usual but here is a sample of the dialogue. "Yeah, but....not like that. Not like some giant conspiracy. "Clinton said." Then there was that whole thing about morals and good behavior. I'm not sure exactly... I'd like to know what their definition of 'moral' is. I mean ,you smell that place?"

"You mean the soup? It smelled pretty good."

"I mean the smoke. The dope. The spliff, the ganj. As these good Germans would say, the dank."

Virgil put a hand to his forehead and rubbed. "That's what it was. I was thinking it was some kind of herb in the soup."

"It is some kind of herb, but I don't think it was in the soup, "Clinton said," I think it was in the curtains and the couch and the rugs. I think she was cooking up that soup to cover the odor. Those people are Christian fundamentalist stoners. I was sitting there grinning the whole time, listening to them. They were totally full of \$%^&....depending on how you define moral."

"What is it with these guys?" Virgil asked. "These church people...I talked to one today who was carrying a gun in her pocket. I think some of them know more about Kelly Baker than they are saying, I think..."

"I'll tell you what it is," Bill Clinton said," What it is, is, something is seriously*&^%\$\$, I wish you luck in detecting what it is."

That came from page 125. The novel totally rocks the whole way through. The plotline is excellent and Sandford as his usual self just crafts another intense narrative with Flowers leading the way, turning over stones and pushing things to a conclusion. I really enjoy novels by the heavyhitters in the genre that continue to push themselves and not just mail it in. This is in my opinion the best Virgil flowers stand-alone of the bunch. If you are a fan of this character in any way shape or form then this is going to be a fun ride for you. If you are a first timer, then you are going to be getting an introduction to Virgil Flowers at his best. I would suggest then that you backtrack and pick up the rest after that.

There are some very big novels coming out between now and Christmas, and John Sandford has set the bar very high. Tomorrow I am going to run a post with a preview of novels to come this fall and winter. I can guarantee that this novel will appear in the top 10 if not the top 5 for the quarter when we do our little top 20 list before Christmas. If you are a fan of excellent writing, enjoy a well-crafted plotline, humor, action, and great character driven fiction like I do , then this novel needs to be read. What is your favorite John Sanford novel? Is Lucas Davenport still numero uno or is Virgil working his way there?

What are you reading today? Check us out and become our friend on Facebook & LinkedIn. Go to Goodreads and become our friend there and suggest books for us to read and post on. You can also follow us on Twitter, and the Gelati's Scoop Facebook Fan Page. Did you know you can shop directly on Amazon by clicking the Gelati's Store Tab on our blog? Thanks for stopping by today; We will see you tomorrow. Have a great day. <http://www.gelatisscoop.blogspot.com>

Judith says

This book makes me wish for a no stars option.

Normally I enjoy this series both for the pace and the plotting. Not this time. The sexual abuse of women and children is ugly, and perhaps Sandford was trying to make that point. I couldn't help thinking that his depiction of sexual abuse of women and children for the purpose of entertainment (and let's not forget profit) was just as ugly. And it was made worse because I was listening to an audiobook and I couldn't skip over the more graphic sections the way I usually do. Now those images are stuck in my head.

And on a less serious note, the amount of product placement in these books is getting ridiculous. Vehicles, motels, soft drinks, frozen dinners, you name it. It's almost entertaining seeing how he can work discussions of the products into the story lines. The Tahoe/Tundra conversation was so contrived as to be ludicrous. I don't know if this is getting worse, or if I noticed it more because I had to listen to every word.

Jean says

Let's get this out of the way right off the bat: Is it possible to review a John Sandford book featuring Virgil Flowers without referring to his Marshall, Minnesota-based investigator as "that f***ing Flowers"? No, it's not.

Moving right along, then, Bad Blood is the fourth installment in the series that features the blond, truck-driving, boat-hauling, son of a Lutheran minister who works for the Minnesota BCA. When Virgil shows up in the town of Homestead to handle the case of a suspicious death, his reputation precedes him. Then the suspect is found dead in his cell of an apparent suicide, and from there, the plot thickens, as they say.

The subject matter is disturbing. Not only are there multiple murders, but also sexual abuse of both adults and minors. There's no great mystery here; it is obvious quite early on that there is something very wrong going on in the World of Spirit Church. Rather, the task facing Virgil and Sheriff Lee Coakley is how deep does the abuse go, and how do they prove it?

Despite the very serious subject matter, this book is highly entertaining. Sandford is an excellent storyteller, and Virgil Flowers is not your everyday lawman. He's a casual, down-home kind of guy who likes to schmooze with the locals and keep them up-to-snuff with what's happening (sort of) in the investigation – because you just never know what information you might pick up in the Yellow Dog Café. He also doesn't have great boundaries when it comes to women, so it's no huge surprise when he and the lady sheriff, both divorced, do their own "under covers" work.

There are lots and lots of names to keep track of in this one, both good guys and bad guys, and that got confusing, especially when the s**t hit the fan. There is a good deal of chaos and violence toward the end, so if sexual abuse and violence bother you, this might be one to skip. The church seemed too exaggerated to me, and I felt that it actually could have been a better story if the abuse had been toned down somewhat. I did like the sections where Virgil quoted Scriptures to church members in his attempts to get them to talk to him. I found myself smiling more than once at his many tactics during the course of this investigation. I

sailed through this novel in a day, and I liked it. I liked the local flavor of the book. While Homestead is a fictional town, a town that is briefly mentioned, Sleepy Eye, is not. It happens to be my mom's hometown, and that was a neat connection for me. I am conflicted about how to rate *Bad Blood*, since the subject matter was so intense, downright nasty, actually, yet there is humor and comic relief too. All in all, Sandford did a good job of telling the story and keeping me interested.

3.5 stars

Lynn says

I generally like John Sandford's Lucas Davenport books better than his Virgil Flowers books, but this book was a pleasant surprise. Maybe "pleasant" is the wrong word since Flowers is investigating a pseudo-religious cult that engages in child sexual abuse. The plot moves along very quickly, sometimes too quickly. Sometimes it's hard to keep it all straight. There are a lot of characters and suspects to keep track of. But it all comes to a satisfying conclusion.

Maybe it's just me, but it felt like Sandford took some of the rougher edges off Flowers this time, and I found myself liking him a bit more. And I really like Sandford's writing style. A good thriller with just enough snark thrown in to ease the tension.

Ethan says

A small Minnesota town is shocked when local high school football star, Bobby Tripp, is arrested for the brutal murder of farmer Jacob Flood. Immediately, this opening scene, in which we read the details of Tripp killing Flood, strays from John Sandford's usual practice of hiding the identity of the killer. Knowing Tripp's identity, I was certain that this would be a story that was much different from any of the previous installments in this series. Sure enough, Tripp is found the next day, dead in his jail cell from an apparent suicide. Upon further investigation, it is revealed that Tripp's death was involuntary which could mean only one thing. . . murder.

Enter Virgil Flowers. He probably better resembles an aging cowboy/rocker, but there is no denying his skill. Despite his unconventional appearance and behavior, he has become one of the best investigators working for the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension(BCA). He is called by the town's sheriff, Lee Coakely. Coakely is an attractive, recent divorcee with two sons. From their first encounter, there is palpable chemistry between her and Virgil. But there is no time for romantic excursions. It is soon revealed that the officer who was guarding Tripp's cell has also, apparently, committed suicide. As you can probably predict, his death is quickly determined to be a murder, as well.

As Virgil investigates, he comes across two possible directions at which to follow the case. The first involves the young Bobby Tripp. As a high school sports star, he was sure to get a large scholarship to continue playing ball at the college level. But an injury left him in his small town. Virgil's snooping reveals that Tripp may have been gay. Stuck in his small town and hiding the secret to his sexuality, it is possible that Jacob Flood threatened to reveal Tripp's secret, leading Tripp to kill him.

The other thread involves the dead officer's secretive church. Perhaps more reminiscent of a cult, the church is rumored to condone strange sex acts, including pairing underage children with older members. This thread reveals actions dating over 100 years into the towns history and possible connections to previous murders.

With all of these issues coming to light, Virgil is thrust into some of the darkest crimes he has ever experienced.

This is kind of a change of pace for John Sandford's Virgil Flowers series. Yes, he continues to make Virgil one of the most entertaining and relatable characters in crime fiction, but he forces his lovable character into some of the darkest situations he's ever written about. Rape is never an easy topic, especially when it involves children, but Sandford's skills as a writer allow him to touch upon the subject with a delicate hand, while still advancing his fast paced mystery. This is the best Virgil Flowers novel to date, with a strong web of mystery that will keep you engrossed until the very last page.
