

What Your Summer Reading List Is Missing

With the return of sunny weather and lazy days at the beach and poolside, eager readers seek adventure in the latest installments of their favorite series. But before reaching for that hot-off-the-press international spy thriller, sexy vampire novel, Swedish hacker mystery, or heartwarming tale of a traditionally-built Botswanan private detective, avid readers should consider *175 Cal.App.* (now available in hardcover). Devotees of this long running series know that each edition brings thrills and chills, as the able authors draw the reader through the full panoply of human folly and emotion. This latest effort is not as psychologically compelling as the earlier *132 Cal.App.4th*, nor as spiritually resonant as *54 Cal.App.4th*. Nor does it contain the delightfully metaphysical prose and postmodern magical realism of the renown and unforgettable *123 Cal.App.4th*. Yet this most recent book still captures the essence of what keeps its loyal subscribers clamoring for more.

Nothing spells action like high-speed accidents, and this book delivers: There's a Ford Explorer driven by a drunk driver who hits a motorcyclist, and another smash-up where two cars collide, knocking one into a light pole. (175 Cal.App.4th 7, 1260.) In addition to all the action, there is the ever-present bane of high crimes and misdemeanors. Here you encounter evil of all stripes, including attempted murder, aggravated mayhem and vehicle theft; kidnapping, rape and robbery; fraud, grand theft and embezzlement - even a gang member driving a stolen vehicle with an unregistered firearm. (175 Cal.App.4th 57, 405, 438, 843) That's just a tantalizing taste. And to keep things unpredictable, sometimes the good guys just might turn out to be bad guys too. (175 Cal.App.4th 249.)

Like its predecessors, this book resonates with realism, evoking raw human emotion. If modern readers demand sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, with a bit of senseless mayhem thrown in, then this baby delivers. (175 Cal.App.4th 729 *marijuana*, 864 *meth*, 1469 *cocaine*, 650 *Burning Man festival*.) Though the plot(s) sometimes seem disjointed, that is a hallmark of this series' singular style. Today's audiences enjoy the episodic approach that requires ingenuity to stitch the seemingly divergent story lines together.

In keeping with this series, the settings span the length and breadth of the Golden State. From the streets of San Francisco and the glamour of Los Angeles to the majestic Sierras, beaches, and deserts. (175 Cal.App.4th 262 *forested mountains*, 1175 *the peaceful sounding hamlet of Costa Serena*; 1510 *redwoods*.)

Readers will be amazed at the saga of Mimin Mintarsih, a domestic servant falsely imprisoned by her employers. (175 Cal.App.4th 278.) And readers will wonder at the travails (and vanishing emotional distress) of Sunnyvale esthetician Anastasiya Komarova - mistaken for that deadbeat Anastasia Komarova - and thereby learn what a difference a "y" makes. (175 Cal.App.4th 324) With a mistaken identity as a running theme, there's the delightful yarn of Yuki Kobayashi - vexatious litigant - and the "other" Yuki Kobayashi who is simply "Wrongfull [sic] Accused," as set forth in a custom-tailored judicial council form. (175 Cal.App.4th 539.) Or are these two souls really one and the same person? (Sorry, no spoilers here!) Meet other fascinating characters like the Bjorklunds; Shahin Mosaferei; Famararz Kiasi; and Moshen Tavoussi. And grapple with

solving the mystery of the disappearing stop sign at Whipple Avenue and King Street in Redwood City. (175 Cal.App.4th 618.)

But this treasure isn't done yet; it contains intellectual nuggets to keep those angels dancing on pinheads - keeping readers on pins and needles. Those with a philosophical bent, will be enchanted by heady explorations into the meanings of abstract concepts and seemingly simple words: What is an "occurrence"? (175 Cal.App.4th 64.) What does "false" mean? (175 Cal.App.4th at 627.)

But don't be fooled by cutesy mistaken identity skits or desiderata; deeply serious questions of contemporary culture are addressed too. Modern and heartbreaking issues abound: Incest and pedophilia are just the beginning. (175 Cal.App.4th 986, 1001.) A possibly bipolar Native American mother loses parental rights to her three children. (175 Cal.App.4th 1.) Sadly, adults abuse children and the elderly; talent agents are given the "treatment" (175 Cal.App.4th 169); and there's even a mentally challenged woman throwing hubcaps on the freeway (175 Cal.App.4th 210).

And what happens when two lesbians fight for custody over the child they had by artificial insemination? (175 Cal.App.4th 361.) Or what happens when teenage girls decide to meet some older men in person who seemed so nice on the Internet? (175 Cal.App.4th 561.) As the most malevolent urges of human nature surface, predictably, happy endings do not ensue.

Those more inclined to corporate intrigues will get their fill too. Macy's might not tell Gimbels, but what happens when Robinsons-May becomes Macy's? (175 Cal.App.4th 465.) And don't forget J.C. Penney. (175 Cal.App.4th 821.) The troubles of ordinary workers frequently take center stage throughout these pages. But some may find the story of unpaid laborers who installed drywall constructing a hotel in Hesperia, well, a bit dry. (175 Cal.App.4th 430.)

It's all here: family feuds (175 Cal.App.4th 891 *who gets the estate?*); politics (175 Cal.App.4th 489); religion (175 Cal.App.4th 663); even snippets of classic jazz standards: "'September Song' laments, 'Oh, it's a long, long while from May to December.'" (175 Cal.App.4th 1499, 1502.) What we have here is a delightful bundle of humanity securely bound between sturdy, mustard-colored covers.

As always the book is well researched by the authors and skillfully edited by Edward W. Jessen and crew (175 Cal.App.4th at viii). Of course, perhaps pictures might liven things up. Readers encounter only marginally exciting bits of stricken text (175 Cal.App.4th at 589) and an intriguing, somewhat kabalistic (though rather poorly reproduced) diagram (175 Cal.App.4th at 617).

Character development remains an issue in these tales. Sometimes players flit across the pages without adequate delving into their motivations. Even so, we gain valuable insight into the tangled lives of Lauren W., Kevin Q., Brent A. and the adorable Matthew W. (175 Cal.App.4th 1119) Then again, not all the tykes are so adorable or beloved; we meet the irrepressible Eddie L. and H.C., who aren't exactly the sorts of little rascals welcome in every neighborhood. (175 Cal.App.4th 809, 1069.) Word on the street is that it remains possible for certain of these

character's stories to be picked up by an elevated, smaller literary cooperative, and published in another popular hardcover series, "*California Reports*".

And speaking of other contributions to this fast growing genre, fans of *175 Cal.App.* also may find a somewhat similarly conceived series appealing: "*Federal Reporter*" - which, oddly enough, is not about the exploits of a Washington D.C. journalist. This other series covers a wider geographic scope, but restricts itself to tales of more limited jurisdiction. Another set that discerning readers may wish to eschew, however, is the more recent *Federal Appendix*," which contains shorter chapters of highly diverse and often dubious quality. One sometimes wonders if these half-baked tales would've been better off unpublished. In any event, this collection hardly merits further citation.

Weighing in at almost 4.5 pounds - 1560 pages nearly 2.5 inches thick - *175 Cal.App.4th* is a tome much larger than classic ditties like "*The Old Man And The Sea*" or "*Profiles in Courage*"; it more approximates the infinitely long "*Infinite Jest*." Yet it somehow reads quickly. And, despite its unflinching focus on contentious disputes and the darker side of human behavior, *175 Cal.App.4th* is mostly affirming. It seems safe to predict that many readers will turn to it again and again over the years.

175 Cal.App.4th is a welcome, indeed arguably necessary, addition to a beloved collection. While not suitable for children or young adults, *175 Cal.App.4th* is recommended for mature readers of all ages, but should be especially appealing to those at an intermediate level or lower. And, oh yeah, those with a particular interest in the law may pick up a tidbit or two as well.

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