

Book Review: Errant Blood by CF Peterson

Eamon Ansgar has been away.

The son and heir of the laird of Duncul Castle has served in Afghanistan and tried his hand in the City. None of it has gone terribly well, and now he is back in his ancestral home. His remote and cruel father has died; he does not care. His partner has left him; he doesn't seem too bothered about that either. All he wants to do is hide away; all everyone else seems to want to do is visit him.

And now the body of a child has been incinerated at one of the houses on the scheme that Eamon's father fought so hard to block. Joel Kennedy, a childhood friend who, unlike Eamon, never left the village, has been arrested for murder. Eamon doesn't believe that Joel, drug addict that he may have become, could have done it.

When Eamon's housekeeper makes it clear that, as the laird, he has a responsibility to visit the bereaved mother, Eamon soon finds himself involved in a mysterious – and dangerous – situation. Although all sorts of people live on the Tarr Bow council estate, most of them are local – how did Isobel, the boy's mother, turn up here from the Congo of all places? Who are the people with her? And where does she disappear to when Eamon starts digging?

For this is definitely not *Monarch of the Glen* territory, and as Eamon starts to investigate, it's not just his own life that's put at risk.



CF Peterson (image: Scotland Street Press)

CF Peterson's *Errant Blood* opens far away from the Scottish Highlands, on the coast of Southern Spain. Here, among the boats and the bougainvillea, a starving African hawkler catches sight of a man from his past and follows him home to ask questions. The answers will bring him, eventually, to Duncul.

Meanwhile Samson Vanneck, a wealthy and celebrated scientist, is crossing the Atlantic with only one colleague to sail his yacht. The rest of the crew have been left behind – why? In the cabin below lies Vanneck's dying wife. The yacht's course is set for Loch Houn, a strip of seawater stretching twenty miles into Eamon's estate. Vanneck has his own reasons for returning to this remote Scottish glen, and for doing so in such an unconventional manner.

And as the *Rage III* continues its voyage, back in Glencul Eamon is starting to uncover all sorts of strange goings-on around what is now his property. His late and increasingly dissolute father left the management of the estate to his land agent Edgar Dupuy, who seems reluctant to tell Eamon the whole truth, and is keen to persuade him that the building of a dam on the loch is the best thing that has happened for years. But why are there still portacabins up at the construction site

long after the completion of the project? – and more importantly why won't the men there give Eamon access? And why did his notoriously cantankerous father tell Edgar to take no action against Stevie, a known supplier living in an ancient caravan in Duncul's old quarry?

When Eamon comes across Rona, a local girl with whom he has (possibly questionable) history, they join forces to try to clear Joel's name, find out where Isobel has gone, and fathom the meaning of a stone she pressed into Eamon's hand, a stone whose markings resemble the strange signs in a secret room under the castle – signs that Joel was obsessed with before he was arrested. For, much as Eamon would rather it didn't, everything leads to Duncul. And, much as he would rather he didn't, he feels responsible.

Errant Blood is a novel about secrets; the secrets we keep from one another, and the secrets we keep from ourselves; the wrongs we persuade ourselves to be right because that suits our personal agenda. It's about crime and morality in many areas of life, and whether the two have anything in common. It's also a fast-moving story encompassing everything from people trafficking to drug dealing, corruption and murder.. CF Peterson brings most of the strands of the story together in a spectacular climax, and the scene is clearly set for further instalments in the lives of the laird of Duncul and the people of his estate (the first sequel, *The Purified*, has now been published.) It will be interested to find out what lies in store for Eamon, Rona and Stevie.

THE PURIFIED



C.F. PETERSON

Errant Blood and *The Purified* by CF Peterson are published by Scotland Street Press, Edinburgh.