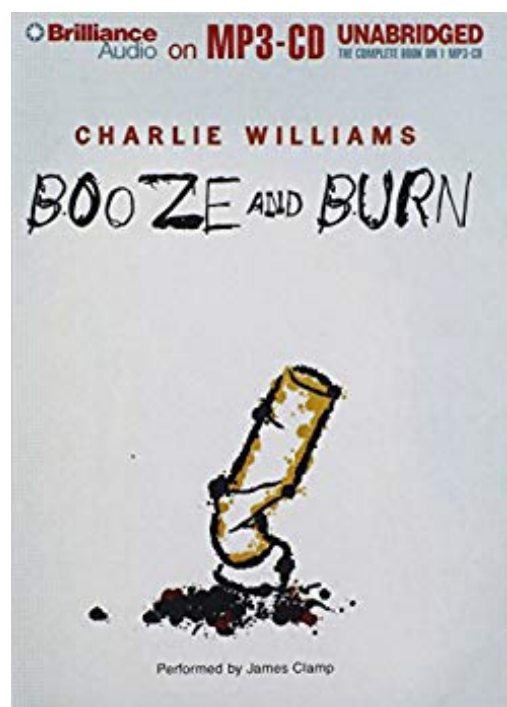


Booze and Burn (The Mangel Series) by James Clamp, Charlie Williams



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In this darkly comedic follow-up to Charlie Williams' breakthrough novel *Deadfolk*, Hoppers head doorman Royston Blake is once again up to his eyeballs in trouble of the worst kind. Since his face-off with the Munton brothers, Blake has been enjoying life as a "pillar" of the Mangel community. Sure, it's a bleak and rather dodgy town, but it's his town all the same. At least, until enigmatic outsider Nick Nopoly waltzes in and starts collecting friends faster than can possibly be legal. Blake doesn't think much of him until he notices a change in the behavior of Hoppers' younger clientele: less beery violence, more nonsensical blathering. But when Doug the shopkeeper comes to Blake for help "sorting out" the newcomer (who just happens to be dating Doug's teenage daughter), the bruiser figures helping out Doug will be good for business...never mind the 400 cigarettes and 400 cans of lager the shopkeeper has offered as payment. Of course, Mangel is Mangel, and it wouldn't be a normal day if Blake didn't soon find himself in an unholy mess. Raunchy, violent, and hysterical, *Booze and Burn* is an addictive trip into the dark underbelly of small-town England.



Reviews of the **Booze and Burn (The Mangel Series)** by James Clamp, Charlie Williams

Best West

"Royston Blake don't wipe arses for no f*****. I'm just being meta...you know, meta...I'm just saying like." BOOZE AND BURN has solidified the Mangel Series as some of my favorite books. I spent far too much time away after reading DEADFOLK...But I'm happy to say that BOOZE AND BURN held it's own and I'll be reading the next three books before the year is out. In BOOZE AND BURN, another outsider has arrived in the city of Mangel and kids are causing all kinds of disorderly mess. As Blake says so eloquently, "I'm Royston f***** Blake, and every c*** knows where I stands on outsiders. They don't scare us and I ain't fooled by their ways." The book takes place a couple of years after DEADFOLK, and Williams does a brilliant job making it stand on its own without dumping information about the events in DEADFOLK on the reader. Readers interested in a truly unique voice and a heavy dose of black humor should look no further.

Cogelv

The main character is painfully inept. Almost like one of the supporting characters in TRAINSPOTTING. The writing is decent but not inclined to read the rest of the series.

Error parents

Fascinating read - very different characters!

Agantrius

"Booze and Burn", the second volume in Charlie Williams' Mangel series, follows much of the form and evokes the same atmosphere as the original, "Deadfolk". Readers who enjoyed the first volume should surely enjoy the second. Those who weren't fans of the original or who were on the fence will not likely find anything here to change their minds. Despite numerous references to its predecessor, this novel can stand alone.

Mangel is a rough and tumble dead end English town. Those born in town are lifers, like leaves on a tree, and they don't take too kindly to outsiders. It's a dark and dangerous little town where drinking, sex, and violence feature prominently. Insight into the local culture may be gleaned from the narrator, Royston Blake, "I've killed more than some and less than others. But in this day and age who can put paw to chest and say they ain't? When folks is just folks it don't do to make a fuss over one or two of em getting dead."

It's difficult to identify "the" villain of "Booze and Burn" because everyone is pretty villainous when you get right down to it. There's the apparent outsider from the big city whose "sweets" are unduly influencing the Mangel youth. There's the local shopkeeper whose young daughter is running around with the outsider and who has some secrets in the back of his shop. There's the local pub owner and new proprietor of Hopper's (the most popular local drinking establishment) who seems to know everything that goes on in town. There are the local police whose methods are... well they aren't exactly kosher, are they? There are the local journalists whose simple and poorly written articles pepper the text as they investigate the recent local crime wave. And then there's the anti-hero and tough-talking narrator Royston Blake, head doorman - and manager - of Hopper's. The more he tries, the worse things get. With a friend like him, who needs enemies? The entire world, that is to say Mangel, seems to be turning upside down.

The narration is even a bit more conversational - with parenthetical responses to how the reader might react to some revelation or other - this go round. The British slang still dominates ("swede" is head, "yomping" is walking, "pins" are legs). The figure of Blake seemed a little more pathetic this time. He was a bit of a blow-hard in both books, but this time it's a little more apparent that he isn't the man he thinks he is. He's still somewhat lovable and fun, but a little sadder as well. Whereas the back story with his wife was used to humanize him in the first book, his parents are used this time. It's successful but not equally so because less effort went into it. His rapidly shifting loyalties also taint the character. Of course, he's supposed to be flawed.

It's definitely a dark (and darkly humorous) book. There's plenty of violence and deadfolk. There's even sexual abuse of minors. There's no redemption to be found... but then that's Mangel for you. It's a quick read and there are some very funny bits. The conclusion is a little tighter than in the first book and I enjoyed it more, but just so. It's not a bad way to pass some time, particularly if dark humor is your thing. Just hope and pray that when the time comes to formally pronounce your passing, Royston Blake is not the man standing over you.

monotronic

Blakey is not what you'd call a hero - the author sets that stage quickly in the first scene of the book. As you read, you realize even the word "anti-hero" doesn't quite suit. In fact, "protagonist" is like a jacket that's too tight that Blakey crams himself into after everything in this story has gone to hell. At some points, you're not even sure you're rooting for the guy. Sometimes he's perfectly aware that he's a jerk, too.

He's a bully, and a thug, thick as a brick, not very observant, and callously oblivious to the world outside of his immediate present, which is where he lives for the most part. He's the bumbling eye of a storm swirling around the town of Mangel when an "outsider" moves in, hires some local muscle and drugs start flowing. Blake is the self-important doorman of Hoppers, the local pub, who gets hired to run off the outsider by the father of a girl he's been seen with, in exchange for payment in cigarettes and beer. Royston Blake manages to fail spectacularly at life, and most everything he does, and not quite realize it, and this is no exception. It's also only the beginning, and it's all downhill from there.

Meanwhile, Stevie, a reporter for a local newspaper is investigating the real goings on in Mangel, and giving you the sense of urgency in the plot that Blakey seems to lack. Blake's view of himself and the world is slowly peeled away, sometimes subtly sometimes violently, as the novel progresses, so that at the end, the reader is fully aware of what's going on (with the outsider, with the girl, with Blake's flatmate and girlfriend, and Blake himself), but Blake is still the last to know that he's the emperor who has no clothes.

If anything, the read reminded me of Pulp Fiction - violent, messy, dark and often funny, with dialog thick with words I can't put in this review (starting with f*** and c*** mostly). By the time the bodies start really piling up, you know you've reached the climax. Some people might find the phonetic spelling of small-town UK dialect a little challenging, but it's part of the charm, as is Blake leaning on the 'fourth wall' and talking directly to the reader at several points.

Just feels like you're sitting down to a pint and a smoke while this guy tells you about this really cruddy time he had back when he lost his job at Hoppers...

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