

Scattered Leaves

Richard E. Roach

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (8/08)

Following a spectacular explosion on a drilling rig, from which he escaped unscathed, Ben McCord returns home only to find his beloved wife June brutally raped and murdered. The main suspect at first, he is cleared of any suspicion after the police verified his presence at the explosion site, yet he quickly nearly becomes the next victim. After several more direct attacks on his life it becomes abundantly clear that somebody is out to get him. Ben rapidly discovers that this somebody is obviously a government agent, but the motives remain unclear. He decides to pursue justice on his own, wanting to avenge June's death and if possible, stay alive in the process. The following events develop briskly, and Ben is soon thrown together with another victim of the same gang, a young dentist, nicknamed PJ. Although it's been only a few short days since his wife's death, it is obvious that Ben immediately becomes preoccupied with PJ and his quest for his wife murderer really becomes secondary. He is much more focused on staying with PJ and helping her avenge the terrible fate she suffered at the hands of this unsavory bunch. Will they succeed and will the mystery of June's killer ever be revealed?

There is absolutely no doubt that Richard E. Roach can write. His prose hits you right in the stomach, and it hits hard. I felt totally desensitized. The violence never stopped. The main story, the one of June's murder and Ben's quest for vengeance, was graphic. When PJ entered the story, the description of what happened to her at the hands of the sleazy guys was vivid. The addition of several scenes from her past, involving ongoing sexual abuse of a child by a family member, pushed me over the edge. Yet the violence never stopped. There was much more to come, from castrations to recounting of news stories involving different horrible crimes, other rapes, even one of a child, marital rape and more. Although this is all probably very close to the realities of today's world, the reader needs to be warned of the content. And while we all mourn in different ways, I found it disturbing that one would remarry so quickly after the death of a beloved spouse who died in such a violent way. Undoubtedly well written, "Scattered Leaves" by Richard E. Roach is a book I would recommend to anybody who loves scenes of death, destruction, violation and obliteration.