



Dark Winter

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At America's base at the South Pole, 26 people wave goodbye to the last plane out before winter. In the succeeding days and weeks they'll be tested not just by unimaginable weather extremes, but by a murderer intent on eradicating them.

Dark Winter Details

Date : Published December 1st 2002 by Warner Books (NY) (first published April 24th 2001)

ISBN : 9780446611978

Author : William Dietrich

Format : Paperback 480 pages

Genre : Thriller, Fiction, Mystery, Adventure, Suspense, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Dark Winter for online ebook

Ron says

I loved this book. The critics did not share my enthusiasm. I wish Mr. Dietrich would write a hundred of these. His journalistic skills captured the reality of Antarctica. I understand that he spent some time there... I loved this book.

Steve Aldous says

The Antarctic setting is the star of this book. Dietrich has a feel for the isolation and absolute cold and having personally visited the location, the author is very capable at describing the environment in which this psychological mystery is set. There are problems though. Dietrich spends a good third of the book establishing the setting and introducing his large cast of twenty-six characters. This slows the pace to a crawl in the book's early sections and less patient readers may abandon ship. But, once the murders begin the pace quickens. The McGuffin is a priceless rock from a meteor, which has been discovered in the ice and becomes the motive for the murders. The characters all have their own reasons for being at the Pole and their suspicion of Lewis, as a late addition to the party, coincides with knowledge of the meteor becoming public and the first of the deaths. However, as the murders increase, credibility becomes stretched. This is ultimately something that would make a passable movie adaptation – with its references to John Carpenter's *The Thing*, betraying its inspiration of an isolated group gripped with paranoia. As a book it is diverting enough, despite its uneven pacing.

Jim Thomsen says

This Agatha-Christie-in-Antarctica mystery is one of my very favorite thrillers. Snow-packed in authentic detail, author William Dietrich nicely balances his environmental and scientific grasp on South Pole life with a neatly paced, unbearably tense, character-driven whodunit.

The story: Twenty-six scientists and support staffers are stuck at an international research station at the South Pole for "dark winter" — six months without sunlight, a time in which no planes can arrive. That leaves the people left behind to police themselves — and the ability to which they can do that depends in large part on strength of individual character and pressure points of human weakness. Or madness.

Into this vacuum-sealed environment, on the last plane in, arrives young Jed Lewis. Ostensibly a meteorologist, he's actually there to discreetly spy on his fellow social misfits. Instantly, the presence of the "fingie" is resented by some — and used by others as cover for their own misdeeds. When Dr. Mickey Moss, the station's star scientist, disappears and is found dead among reports that he had found a valuable meteorite deep in the ice under the Pole, fear and suspicion sweep over the survivors — and center on Lewis.

The bodies continue to pile up, and each grisly discovery seems calculated to make Lewis look even more guilty. Is he? Events culminate in a bloody, frenetic series of events that threaten to destroy the entire station and kill off those who are left — unless those who harbor secret doubts about Lewis' guilt act in time.

Dietrich, a longtime reporter for The Seattle Times who won a Pulitzer Prize for his science and environmental reporting, cradles his narrative in a soothing, surprisingly compelling blanket of interesting detail about the unique nature of life at the South Pole. He never overdoes the science, however, and keeps just about every bit of it germane to the plot.

The revelation here is the rich bits of character detail. Dietrich does a fine job of developing the characters of about two-thirds of the "winter-overs"— everybody's psychologically complex, everybody's got a past, everybody contributes to the currents of tension between one another. Some of it is alpha-male conflict, some of it is male-female percolation, some of it is professional jealousy. And some can't help but exploit those to create explosions out of malicious amusement — or just plain malice. There are few one-dimensional characters here, and following them is like following the high-priced stars in an Irwin Allen disaster movie — you're dying to know who isn't going to make it, and you're hoping like hell it isn't somebody you've come to care about.

Some reviews, notably a slash-and-burn in Publishers Weekly, have taken Dietrich to task for by-the-numbers mystery craftsmanship that supposedly drained "Dark Winter" of suspense and surprises. I can't say I agree. It is true that Dietrich hints pretty strongly at the mastermind behind the mischief and murders by the halfway point, but the rest of the story is so skillfully told that one can't be sure whether or not this tipped hand is just another piece of misdirection. And, of course, the REAL suspense is just as much in who lives and who dies.

I'm a pretty tough judge of mysteries and thrillers, dinging them often for implausible plotting, poor characterizations, pallid settings and perfunctory prose. But "Dark Winter" passed all these tests for me. The worst I can say about it is that an italicized flashback narrative sprinkled throughout the book is tediously slow. But that's a minor quibble in an otherwise ambitious, airtight, awesomely tension-filled tale.

Tommy says

I had read two other books by this author and enjoyed them but, this one was a real disappointment. It took me forever to get into it. In fact at times I thought about quitting it. However, I am the type of reader who cannot not finish a book. I wanted to find out who the killer was. I do plan to continue with this author.

Greer Andjanetta says

A morose unpleasant tale about a series of murders in perhaps the most unpleasant place on earth, Antarctica. I research group isolated there for the next 8 months fractures apart when rumours of a valuable space fragment found at the station begin to spread and the killing starts. Gloomy and morose, not a story to read for enjoyment.

Victoria says

Second book of Dietrich's I've read, enjoying it for a well crafted yarn about dangers in the cold, this time

placed at Amundsen-Scott station on Antarctica. With a little forewarning via the ritual of watching the film Thing as the winter begins, an unknown killer creates havoc amongst the 26 denizens of the winter-over scientists and technicians. I enjoy the characterizations and the realistic descriptions of being in -100-degree cold.

Frank Lambdin says

Slow to start, however it kept my interest. Wouldn't read it again. A good one timer.

Joshua Taylor says

Didn't find much here that was compelling except perhaps some of the narrative structure. Slower than the previous Dietrich books I've read - I've been working on the ebook version of this for many months.

Finally, and this is unlikely to be the authors fault, it should be noted that the editing of the ebook release appears to have been nonexistent. While most of the issues are just spelling related, I came across multiple instances where guessing at the identity of a character was made necessary because multiple members of the group were incorrectly being identified by the same name. Disastrous!

Christopher says

Very much a page-turner. It really gives you the feel of cold and remoteness of Antarctica with an engaging murder mystery

BlackoutCal says

A well constructed Agatha Christie style murder mystery set in the harsh, alien landscape of Antarctica. The setting and detail of the environment took centre stage in this thriller where the location was just as deadly and dangerous as any character.

Generally well paced the story was only let down by a misplaced frantic climax which was at odds with the well crafted slow burn of the rest of the story.

A good story with the where and why playing a much larger and more interesting part than the who

Sara Stamey says

A thrills and chills trip to Antarctica:

I'm a fan of Bill Dietrich's historical adventures with Ethan Gage, and just discovered this earlier novel. A fascinating setting in the Antarctic reflects his personal experience visiting there, and a well-rounded cast of

characters with various hidden motives for murder create chilling (literally) suspense. Great armchair travelling and action that made me really grateful for my cozy room and fireplace!

Barbara ★ says

Jed Lewis, geologist travels to Antarctica to join a team researching global warming. Shortly after his arrival, an artifact disappears and then the owner does too. The other scientists no longer trust each other and it's every man for himself - which doesn't work well in the frozen environs where in order to survive everyone needs to look out for everyone else. A psychologist is also part of the scientific team, studying the social dynamics of a bunch of socially inept lab rats when disaster strikes again and again and again. When bodies start appearing and a murderer is suspect, everyone quickly turns on everyone else and all hell breaks loose.

This is an extremely well-written thriller with many suspects and plot twists and turns.

Pat says

Although I found the start of Dark Winter a little slow, the payoff for my patience was huge. Dietrich's characters are always interesting and his action scenes are superb. The near-future world he creates in this novel stays in your mind.

Craig says

Murder and mayhem at the South pole.

Mark says

OK rendition of a Christie-like "10 Little Indians" mystery as the murders pile up at an South Pole scientific station...plenty of psychological torture as the survivors come to grips with their situation...not as much fun as the Ethan Gage series, but more than adequate summer mystery
