



Opening Moves

Steven James

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Milwaukee, 1997. In a city reeling from the crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer, a series of gruesome kidnappings and mutilations draw authorities into a case like nothing they've ever seen. Cops think a Dahmer copycat is on the loose. But Patrick Bowers, working as a homicide detective, suspects this is more than an ode to the infamous cannibal.

When he discovers that the shocking acts reference some of the most notorious and macabre killers in our nation's history, the investigation spirals into a nightmare of manipulation, brutality, and terror.

Opening Moves Details

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Author : Steven James

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Genre : Thriller, Fiction, Mystery, Christian Fiction, Suspense, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Opening Moves for online ebook

Melissa says

Before he was an FBI agent, Patrick Bowers was a Milwaukee homicide detective. With his sharp mind and uncanny ability to 'notice things', Patrick moved quickly up the ranks of the Milwaukee Police Department. When a bizarre abduction and mutilation occurs, with eerie similarities to notorious serial killer, Jeffery Dahmer, Patrick is chosen to lead the task force responsible for locating the perpetrator. However, Patrick's case also happens to have some semblances to a series of deaths FBI agent Ralph Hawkins is investigating. With Patrick and Ralph combining their knowledge and expertise, it soon becomes obvious this case is bigger and more unsettling than either had imagined. In a masterfully written, though quite disturbing novel, *Opening Moves* is an absolutely brilliant, complex, riveting story of human depravity amidst whispers of hope.

I might be losing my credibility here, but once again I must say *Opening Moves* is quite possibly Steven James' best book to date. I feel like I say that way too often, but he is truly a master storyteller that seems to keep getting better. Once again, the characters are brilliant, the suspense intense, the story riveting, the terror real, and hope seeps through the seams of the disturbing nature of the human heart. This is creepy, crime fiction at its best, but it's also the illumination of hope in the midst of despair; of redemption within reach but tragically refused. Without a doubt, *Opening Moves* is brilliant and quite frankly I do not see how James can top this story come next year.

When I first heard about the premise for this book, I wondered how interesting the story was going to be. After all, there are several things I knew going in, not the least of which is the identity of the serial killer dubbed the Maneater. Several facts about the case have been provided throughout the Patrick Bowers series, so I questioned whether the suspense and uncertainty as the book reached its climax would be there. My concerns were completely unfounded. Even knowing what was going to happen, I simply couldn't put the book down. Not only that, this well-known storyline is intertwined with a second disturbing individual. Discovering the identity of the person responsible for abducting, blackmailing, and mutilating women is the main case Patrick is trying to crack. However, it blends and interconnects seamlessly with the Maneater case making both storylines thoroughly engrossing.

Opening Moves is certainly a disturbing novel. Usually when an author notes they had nightmares while writing the book, I take it with a grain of salt. But I don't doubt James had nightmares writing this book. At one point, I wasn't sure I wanted to venture outside during the early morning hours for a walk. There's something terribly disturbing about reading accounts of real-life serial killers, but equally disturbing is a fiction author who has done their research and presents it so that their fiction comes across as authentic. The casual tone of the killer in this book is at times chilling. The normality in which this person goes about their vicious crimes left me shaken. But the reminder that the potential of evil is within each of our hearts is illuminated against the blackness of the lives of the real-life and fictional people in this story. Yes, this book is undoubtedly disturbing, but it also full of truth, offering hope and redemption.

It is interesting to read the beginning of Patrick's story, especially knowing how his life progresses in the coming years. Several parts are quite humorous given the many different twists his life will take. In keeping with the rest of the series, *Opening Moves* can be read out of publication order. But unlike other series, I'm not sure it has a place where it fits best. It makes a fantastic beginning to the series but works equally well as a sixth book prequel; it's quite versatile.

What else can I say? Well, actually I could probably write a 15 page paper on this book, but I will show some restraint. This is seriously a freakishly amazing book. I cannot say enough positives about Steven James or the Patrick Bowers series. I'm blown away each time I pick up one of James' novels and *Opening Moves* is simply another brilliant book by an unbelievably talented storyteller. Five stars is way too low of a rating for this one!

Review copy provided courtesy of Signet Select

Gail Welborn says

Steven James never disappoints, only gets better and better!

Steven James, best-selling author of “The Bowers Files” takes readers back to FBI Special Agent Patrick Bowers early years in “Opening Moves” the prequel that releases today, Sept 4th. There readers find Bowers working as a homicide detective, ten years before his career as an FBI Special Agent.

James weaves fact and fiction together and uses 1997 Milwaukee, Wisconsin for his setting, just a few years after serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's cannibalistic “...kidnappings and mutilations...” paralyzed the city with fear. At the time, Bowers is a Milwaukee homicide detective involved in a gruesome case that mimics the work of Jeffrey Dahmer. While the homicide squad believes “...a Dahmer copycat is on the loose...” Patrick isn't so sure.

The chilling story opens with Vincent Hayes, an ordinary man on a bizarre assignment that challenges him to his core, an assignment he isn't sure he can complete—yet his choice is unthinkable which leaves him no choice at all...Full Review: <http://tinyurl.com/8qak4to>

Suspense Magazine says

Steven James brought us Patrick Bowers in his debut novel “The Pawn” and the series has continued onward, earning Steven rave reviews and many awards along the way. His last book “The Queen” continued the events of Patrick Bowers both professionally and personally, but one thing was always in the back of my mind, how did Patrick get this way?

With many series characters, the author sets you in the middle of their life, leaving the reader to wonder what happened to them in the beginning. Steven answers that question with his latest book “Opening Moves.”

While this book is the sixth in the series, it should be read as the first. Steven is not only a master storyteller, but actually does have a master's degree in storytelling from ETSU.

“Opening Moves” takes the reader back to 1997 in Milwaukee, WI at the height of the Dahmer crimes. With a city still recovering from those events, Patrick is now on the hunt for a copycat killer. At that time Bowers was a homicide detective and thrust into a deadly game of cat and mouse, giving the reader the exact point at which Patrick's life changed. “Opening Moves” is a high octane thriller that expands on the life of Patrick, while taking the reader through a journey that is both horrifying and suspenseful.

Put “Opening Moves” in your library, and then continue on through the rest of the series. Very few writers can do what Steven has done with this series and that is what puts him at the top of the thriller genre today.

Nicole says

I really, really like Steven James's books. They're extremely well written and full of facts. This book has a lot of true crime mixed into it.

This book was written after the first five books had been released, and I would recommend reading this one before you start *The Pawn*. Having read the other books, I was almost at a disadvantage because I knew the outcome to the main plotline. But don't get me wrong, this was still an incredible book!

Opening Moves is quite gruesome, more so than the other books. The book starts out with the author saying how this book gave him nightmares while writing it. It really kind of grosses you out as you're reading it, you're thinking; There really can't be people out there like this, can there? But yes, unfortunately there is. And there are people out there who have to see and deal with this in real life. People like Pat. You really get to know him throughout this book. His thought process, what makes him the cop he is, and how he copes with everything. What I really love about Steven James's books is how he gets into the characters' heads. He tells the story from Pat's point of view, then switches to the killer.

Too many times have I read crime books and not felt a thing for the victim. It's just another book with another murder. But there's just enough back story on each victim, that you really feel for them, and hope that they might survive.

So, if you can get over the grisly details, I highly recommend this book if you like suspense and thrillers. This is an outstanding installment in the Patrick Bowers series.

Read more of my reviews [here!](#)

Lisa Johnson says

Title: *Opening Moves*

Author: Steven James

Pages: 483

Year: 2012

Publisher: Signet Select

If you've never read Steven James before, this book should be the first. He does a masterful job of building tension, maintaining suspense, and action. This book is the beginning of his Patrick Bowers series, a prequel if you will. I've read all of the other Patrick Bower books, which are great! This one is no exception.

For this story, the reader finds Patrick Bowers as a homicide detective in Milwaukee. This is where he first meets his mentor Dr. Werjonc, one of his college professors. Pat is pursuing a degree in criminology and law. He also meets a man that will become one of his best friends, Ralph Hawkins, who works for the FBI. Ralph has been called in to work on a current homicide case and partners with Pat. After the case is over, is there a future for Pat as a homicide detective in Milwaukee? Will the FBI become his new employer?

There are two serial murder cases being investigated simultaneously. Are they connected in any way? The

criminals are vicious, evil, and deadly. Please be aware that the subject matter of how they commit their crimes is extremely grisly. The evil these criminals perpetrate is unthinkable to the average person. Pat has vowed to get the guilty person(s). There are personal questions that occur during the course of his investigations as to the existence of heaven and hell. He considers himself to be not very religious, but these questions keep coming up and begin to make him think.

Patrick must face down his own struggle with his ability to commit criminal acts. Not that he has committed any, but that he thinks it possible that he could. He also must deal with his relationship with Taci, his girlfriend of one year. They've talked about marriage, and they've said they love each other, so what is holding them back? The crimes begin to escalate in severity, and begin to touch someone on the police force. Someone has personal knowledge of police procedures and chain. Is the criminal involved in law enforcement? Can one of their own be committing these heinous acts?

This is a page-turner that will be hard to put down. Readers get to know Patrick from his first law enforcement job, and his beginning questions of faith. His attention to detail, his methods of investigation, and his dedication will become his trademarks. He is tenacious, but also caring. He is not a hard-nosed cop, but no wilting daisy either. He has strengths and failings just like the rest of us, but how he uses each to attain his goal is what is interesting.

My rating is 5 stars.

Note: I received a complimentary copy for an honest review of this book. The opinions shared in this review are solely my responsibility. Other reviews can be read at <http://seekingwithallyurheart.blogspot...> . Also follow me on Twitter @lcjohnson1988, FaceBook at <https://www.facebook.com/lisa.johnson...>

Sarah says

AMAZING! I couldn't put it down.

Cristina Oliveras says

This was a really good read! Chilling and gripping story that keeps you turning the page. Had some true event elements to it which made it that much more chilling.

ElaineY says

REVIEW OF AUDIOBOOK; JANUARY 28, 2016

At least I managed to finish the audio this time, being prepared for the gory details. While I plan to listen to the rest of the series, I hope I'll be able to follow the story, unlike this prequel - I found it hard to keep track of the investigation and why Ralph, the FBI special agent was there if Bowers was leading the way right to the end. While I got that there were two killer threads interwoven together, I couldn't follow it and at the end of the audio, I still don't know how Basque and Joshua Padilla are connected.

Not the fault of the book, since everyone else could follow it, but one of those books better read than listened to (for me, that is) as there's a lot of detail and I need to pay careful attention. This is not always easy to do listening to the audio as I tend to pause in my head to think about something and the audio is running. With

an ebook, one automatically pauses.

What I did get out of this prequel is FBI agent, Ralph. I hope he becomes a recurring character. I like my leading characters to have a partner/friend who appears in every book and solves the crimes together.

REVIEW OF AUDIOBOOK; JULY 27, 2015

Narrator: Richard Ferrone

I had to abort but won't give the 1 star for books that I DNF as I hope to be able to return to this one day. Probably the Kindle, not the audiobook, so that I can easily skip the parts I can't bear.

I'd say 3 stars for the 25% I listened to. I had to stop because it was just too gory. I knew the case Bowers was investigating was connected to the Jeffrey Dahmer, who killed and dismembered seventeen men and boys between 1978 and 1991, but I wasn't expecting to listen to a list of other serial killers through the years as well. By the time I got to the reading of a serial killer's letter (Albert Fish) describing the killing and eating of two boys, I gave up.

I enjoy police procedurals. The lurid descriptions of serial killings (or going into the killer's mind), not so much. If this is your cup of tea, this book should work.

It's written in 1st Person, but there were several instances I wasn't sure as many scenes were 3rd Person, then shifts to 2nd Person when someone is recounting a scene to another character. I did not buy the Kindle so could not check.

I have come to like Richard Ferrone from his narration of the Lucas Davenport series but his voice is too old for Patrick Bowers who is only 25 years old in this prequel. I intend to listen to next book, after Bowers joins the FBI, and Ferrone should fit better as an older Bowers.

Terri ♥ (aka Mrs. Christian Grey) says

Two in a row where I didn't get The Who done it right. Fabulous. I love it when I'm wrong. I'm sorry I waited so long to continue with the series.

I will say I knew what one of the killers was but didn't put together who it was until right before the reveal.

It was very descriptive with the killers. But it made it all real, believable.

Wow and to find out how the author has a tie to real killers.... scary.

Heather says

I love Steven James and I love all his books. This one included. But, this is a very, very hard emotional read. There were many times I sobbed, felt gut wrenching pain and became very nauseous after reading many chapters. This book is very graphic and while good is not for the squeamish.

Many times after reading several chapters I laid in bed and asked God to just wipe us out. The pure evil that people can do just boggles my mind. The flood IMO came too early. But, on the other hand if I think the world is evil now, How much MORE evil was it during the flood?!

While I say that most of Mr. James books reads like a CSI episode, this one reads more like a Horror movie or an episode of Criminal Minds. Both are too much for me. I did have to stop reading for a time and read something more light hearted.

Very well done Mr. James, but please, don't write another book this intense and graphic. This was almost too much for me to finish.

Brittney Condren says

The drama and suspense were epically intoxicating. I think this however, may be the goriest book in the Bowers series. I skipped over a few sentences cause it was a little too real. Lol but the climactic ending was WORTH IT. I'm telling you... when a book makes you sit straight up and almost throw the book you are so psyched... it's a good read. FIVE STARS EASILY

Chris Jager says

Opening Moves by Steven James should come with a warning on it. It may cause sleeplessness and/or nightmares. It also should contain the warning that if you have a busy weekend coming up don't start the book as it may cause you to miss something important, like work, a business meeting or breathing.

Written as the prequel to the Patrick Bowers series, Opening Moves joins Patrick as he starts his career in Milwaukee. He is a detective and a new case has come to him. Someone is honoring Jeffery Dahmer. The problem is the person who did the crime claims he only did it because his wife was kidnapped and the real criminal threatened to kill her. Is he telling the truth? What about these other crimes that are surfacing? Are they the same person or are there two killers on the loose with similar MO's?

Ok that is enough about the storyline as I don't want to spoil anything for any of you. I so loved this book. It was right in Steven's pocket of writing. It is the creepy crime scene with a criminal that is evil beyond belief. There are times when I read books like this that I wonder if someone could actually do this to a fellow human, then I read the evidence from actual criminals... That is the stuff of nightmares.

I have always enjoyed the discussions that Steven writes into his books. Not only does he write a good crime story, he has his characters wrestling larger moral dilemmas. One of those discussions in the book has generated lots of discussion here at the store. What has been interesting is that as more and more fellow employees finish the book they have join the discussion also. That makes for a good book.

Melanie says

Opening Moves was just as good the second time reading it! Even though it's only been a couple years since I originally read it, I still had forgotten a lot of the story, so things definitely ended up surprising me again.

I loved seeing how Patrick and Ralph met. It was fun how they interacted with each other and I loved the ending. It made me very eager to pick up *The Pawn* and continue reading Patrick's story.

Overall, I loved this book. The crimes in *Opening Moves* are very gruesome and cringe-worthy, but they're not glamorized. If you are a reader who can't stomach gruesome books, then this probably isn't a book for you. BUT, if you love thrillers and aren't creeped out easily, then I recommend it!

I had received a review copy of this book earlier and I've already reviewed it. This second review was not required, I just wanted to share my thoughts on my reread. As always, all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own.

Deanne Smith says

Wow. As with the other books in this series, I could hardly put it down! I really enjoyed going back to the beginning of Pat's career and filling in details that were alluded to in the previous books. I now feel like I understand his character more. With this new insight, I now want to reread the series. Maybe I'll get them squeezed in before *The King* comes out next spring.

Dina Sleiman says

I should start by saying that I'm not the typical thriller reader, but I love all of Steven's novels! For me they are beautifully written forays into difficult psychological and philosophical questions that force me to take a deep look at life and into my true beliefs. This latest offering is the most disturbing and therefore the most challenging of the bunch. My favorite aspect is that while the villains are unbelievably creepy and evil, you also get inside of their heads and see what caused them to become who they are. In a strange way, it creates a sense of compassion for the villains. While a part of me was screaming for justice, another part of me was longing for these men to find healing and redemption. It's the rare writer who can create such exceptionally rounded characters.

Opening Moves is the prequel to the Bowers series. It did take me a few chapters to orient to the new time and place and to adjust to the younger Patrick. However, once I did, I was hooked as usual. And while it might be nice to read the books in chronological order if you're new to the series, there are also advantages to reading it as the sixth book, most notably the fact that these crimes are more vicious than any we've seen before and therefore create a sense of escalation for the series. Also, there are many fun and humorous elements that only longtime Bowers fans will appreciate.
