



# Striking Back

*Mark Nykanen*

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## **Striking Back** Mark Nykanen

Justice is coming.

These men like to hurt women. Now it's payback time for an unknown murderer who's slaughtering the abusers in ways that mirror the ugly violence they forced upon the women in their lives. As the death count grows-and media interest explodes-innocent people could get caught in the killer's revenge.

Los Angeles therapist Gwyn Sanders keeps her ugly family history to herself. More than twenty years ago, when she was still a teen, her violent stepfather died a grisly, mysterious death. Gwyn knows all the secrets but she's not talking about the past-she's too busy trying to change the future by breaking the cycle of domestic violence. The men she counsels aren't saints, but maybe she can change the mindset that makes their lives-and the lives of the people closest to them-so miserable.

But when someone starts killing her controversial clients, Gwyn becomes LAPD's primary suspect. After all, there's the unsolved mystery of her stepfather's bizarre death. Maybe Gwyn has a hidden desire for justice that's far from therapeutic.

Mark Nykanen is an Emmy-winning former NBC correspondent and the author of acclaimed thrillers HUSH, SEARCH ANGEL, THE BONE PARADE, PRIMITIVE and, writing as James Jaros, BURN DOWN THE SKY. Visit him at [www.MarkNykanen.com](http://www.MarkNykanen.com).

## **Striking Back Details**

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# From Reader Review Striking Back for online ebook

## Joni says

An enjoyable little thriller. It kept me wondering who'd done it, and kept me from putting it down a couple of times.

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## Jen Lynn says

For the most part, this book was pretty good. It kept you questioning who is doing all the murdering. It's quick paced and entertaining, with enough twists and turns throughout to keep you on your toes. I found I didn't care too much about any of the characters though. And for a book that kept me moderately excited for about 90% of it, the ending fell short. I waited that long to figure out the who and the why, and then when it is revealed, my only response was a disappointed "oh". I think it was more disappointing because the book simply went one twist too far. But it did keep me guessing all the way through, so that's something.

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## Naomi says

Nykanen is back!! I was very concerned with the publication of his book, Primitive, that he had lost his creepiness factor! Yippee, he didn't! It is nice to see that in Striking Back, it is the guys getting it instead of the women!!!

If I had to give it a bit of criticism (and why it didn't get a 5 star rating), I would say he wasn't as graphic with the guys as he is with the women! Nykanen is incredibly gifted in the twistedness factor and I thought he held back a bit in this one!

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## Naitasia says

I loved the idea of men that had a history of battering and abusing women being punished by some vigilante, vendetta killer. All killed in accordance with the way in which they harmed their victims. How fence-walkingly exciting! Mark Nykanen does a nice job keeping us wondering exactly who the killer is. Although the police waste time suspecting Gwyn Sanders, we know it's not her. So who is it?

The questions keep popping up as the LAPD conduct their investigation, opening up an old, suspicious case involving the death of Gwyn's stepfather and Gwyn conducts her own, stumbling on accidental evidence along the way. Meanwhile, her love affair with the handsome Dr. Howard Harken ebbs and flows like the Pacific tides they like to surf on as they share a bed and each other's secrets. Is Harken the killer?

Could it be her mother or one of her group members? Maybe it's a fellow social worker? Or perhaps an abused ex of one of these maniacs striking back?

You don't really know until the end and that's where the story falls short, the who and the why are somewhat

anticlimactic. There is a lot of build up to it and when it finally comes down to who it's not too surprising, which would be fine if the why was gasp worthy. That being said, I don't actually know why. It's kind of left to one's imagination that the vigilante vendetta killer is pretty bent and at the point of having nothing left to lose, which isn't very exciting. It's disappointing in that it doesn't match the pace of the rest of the book.

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### **Lori Henrich says**

Not sure why but I didn't like this.

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### **Rose Cimarron says**

I think the blurb sounds grittier than the actual novel, but I did enjoy the novel. The descriptions in the final act (I won't say more as I hate spoilers!) are such that I was there in the room.

Some of the twists were imaginative but handled a little clumsily, imho. When they happened, I was made aware I was reading a book, rather than being submerged in an alternative reality.

Well worth the time to read.

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### **Jen says**

Not a life changing book, but I turned the pages and kept guessing. I guess I have watched too many Criminal Minds to find anything new here. One for the beach, methinks.

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### **Majanka says**

Book Review originally published here: <http://www.iheartreading.net/mini-rev...>

Gwyn Sanders is an intriguing as it gets. She can easily relate to her patients because she has an ugly family history herself. When her worst clients start getting killed, Gwyn becomes the primary suspect. Her stepfather's bizarre death was never solved, and that's not working in her advantage either. The book was twisted at times, and very intense. The characterization was spot on.

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### **Cheryl says**

"Power and Control. Gwyn could have made a huge headline out of what these guys were all about."

The first book I ever read by Nykanen was HUSH, a terrifying tale of child abuse. It's been years since I first read it and I still remember the dramatic impact the words of this writer had on me.

STRIKING BACK was good. In fact, it started out very good, but it ended up to be rather a mess - thus the

rating I gave it.

Gwyn Sanders is an L.A. therapist who holds group counseling sessions for men that are guilty of violent physical abuse against women and children. She has a rare insight into this field because she grew up with an abusive stepfather - that died a mysterious death when Gwyn was 16 years old.

Now men in her group sessions are being killed off and she's one of the suspects.

Some parts of this book were great while some really stretched the seams of believability. It's still a book worth reading but if you're given the choice of reading either this book or HUSH, definitely choose HUSH.

I received this book from Belle Books through Net Galley in exchange for my unbiased review but I also bought this book to support this author.

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### **Dave Nichols says**

Just average.

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### **Christa says**

Mark Nykanen was a new author for me, and I am glad that I was able to read his book as an ARC through Netgalley. Striking Back was a good, suspenseful story that kept me guessing until the end. There were some interesting twists, and I'll be looking for more by this author.

Gwyn Sanders counsels violent men with a history of abusing women. When the mean in her group start becoming murder victims, suspicion is thrown on Gwyn and those who are close to her. Her stepfather's unsolved murder years earlier remains unsolved, and makes the police suspect her involvement. Just as she meets Dr. Howard Harken, a man she could be interested in, she become the prime suspect in the murders of the men she counsels. Hark has his own skeletons from the past, and Gwyn starts to hope that he won't run when he finds out the extent of hers.

Striking Back was interesting and clever. I liked the characters of Gwyn and Hark, and enjoyed reading about them getting to know and care about one another. This book had some surprises, and kept me riveted from beginning to end.

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### **Vivian says**

Being a counselor/therapist for men who abuse their partners or children is difficult. The difficulty increases when the therapist is a woman, especially one with a history of abuse. Gwyn Sanders has first-hand knowledge of what it's like to live with an abusive male . . . her stepfather. Now that members of her therapy group are being targeted, the police are targeting Gwyn and reinvestigating her stepfather's death. Unfortunately for Gwyn, several of her therapy subjects feel that she may be the "cause" of their fellow member's death and the group members become even more violent, verbally at first, as more members die horrible deaths. Fortunately, the police soon realize that Gwyn is not the killer nor is she instigating the

murders. But the questions remain who is killing off these abusive men and why?

Mr. Nykanen has provided a captivating thriller in **Striking Back**. The characters are all too realistic with their quirks and flaws. Although the acts of these abusers are despicable and hated, it is easy to feel a small amount of sympathy for them as they suffer through the abuse of the killer. The burgeoning relationship between Gwyn and Hark provides a softer side against the ever-increasing violence against the members of the therapy group. The story is filled with just enough twists and turns to keep the reader guessing "whodunit" to the very end. **Striking Back** isn't filled with blood, guts and gore although there is a certain amount of violence; it is quite simply an extremely well-crafted suspense thriller.

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## **Dan Fletcher says**

A great "who-done-it"!

The author weaves a tangled web of intrigue and suspense as a therapist becomes the chief suspect in the murder investigation of some of her very complicated clients by the LAPD. It becomes apparent that the domestic bullies are being killed off in some kind of systematic order by a serial killer. I liked this because the victims to a large extent deserve their comeuppance and you become involved in a two-sided affair with Gwyn (the therapist) at the centre as the plot unfurls. Her history and the death of her stepfather lead the police to believe she is a vigilante murderer. But is it her or one of another series of suspects? Well, that would spoil the book for you. Wouldn't it? My only criticism would be that it is rather pricey for an ebook. Not that I was disappointed. Just wish I'd bought the paperback instead.

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## **Linda Strong says**

3.5 STARS

Therapist Gwyn Sanders is counseling a bunch of men who have all committed acts of domestic violence.

One of her clients is found murdered, ironically killed the same way he abused the woman in his life. When second man is also murdered, in a different way, but again in the same manner he abused his wife and child.

When it's learned that Gwyn was a suspect in the murder of her abusive step-father 23 years ago, the detectives take a much closer look at her and her mother.

Is she trying to break a cycle of domestic abuse in her clients ... or is she a killer taking revenge?

The subject of domestic abuse is a hard one to address. I'm sure the author did some research, but there were areas that didn't come across as cohesive. There are twists and turns and practically all the characters are suspects. The ending tied up all the loose ends, but it felt a bit rushed.

Many thanks to the author / BelleBooks, Inc. / Netgalley for the digital copy of STRIKING BACK. Opinions expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

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## **Mandy says**

This book was intense and I kept making time to read because I was curious to see what happened. It was hard to get a glimpse into the world of spousal abuse, and some of the book gets pretty graphic. Overall, I liked this book, but it did drop the F-bomb a lot and had some sexual content.

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