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“Audacious . . . [a] giddy thrill.” — *Los Angeles Times*

“Weird? Obviously. But oddly gripping and convincing. . . . Skip that evening Scotch and read this one stone-cold sober—it’s plenty trippy as is.” — *Washington Post*

Amberville, Tim Davys’s first novel about Mollisan Town and its stuffed animal inhabitants, is both a noir novel with an unusual cast and an utterly original meditation on good and evil. In the words of Brad Meltzer (bestselling author of *The Book of Lies*), “When you’re tired of run-of-the-mill fiction, it’s time to read *Amberville*... a mystery that’s completely original.”

Amberville Details

Date : Published (first published 2007)

ISBN :

Author : Tim Davys

Format : Kindle Edition 351 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller

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From Reader Review Amberville for online ebook

Tony says

Davys, Tim. AMBERVILLE. (2007; Eng. trans. 2009). **. This is a first novel from a Swedish author under a pseudonym. It is, to say the least, a strange novel. In it, there are no human characters, only stuffed animals. The stuffed animals all live in Mollison Town – for which this novel is the first in a projected series of four. It is kind of a mystery and kind of a fantasy novel, but takes on the guise of a mainstream tale, too. The story is told through the voice of Eric Bear. We are told at the outset that Eric Bear has it all: a successful career, a beautiful wife, a blissful home. He knows he's been lucky. When he was younger, his life revolved around drugs, gambling and a gang of stuffed-animal thugs. He lived in a gambling dive under the control of Nicholas Dove, the major crime boss of the city. Life has been good for him since he went straight, but he is visited one day by Nicholas Dove and asked to do one final job: to get Nicholas Dove off of the Death List. Should Eric fail, Nicholas threatens to tear his beloved wife, Emma Rabbit, to pieces, limb by limb. Nobody knows if the Death List even exists, so Eric has a tough job ahead of him. He gathers his old gang together – most of whom are relatively unwilling to join up again – and puts together a plan to first discover if the Death List is real, and then to make sure that Nicholas' name is removed from it. So it goes. There's humor here, but the author's stretches to include it are obvious. I'm not sure where you'd find this book in a book store, but I'm not sure I'd look very hard for it anyway.

Eric Mesa says

This is one of the top five weirdest books I have ever read. It takes place in a world of stuffed animals, but that has both almost no bearing on the story and is key to the main plot. What I mean is that it's never revealed that actually they're toys in a toy store or a messed up version of the 100 Acre Woods. The fact that they are stuffed animals is not part of some plot twist. (The thought that it might be a twist kept distracting me the entire time trying to find out the clue) But at the same time, the entire plot of the book, which in a way I don't wish to spoil, revolves around life and death depends entirely upon the fact that, as stuffed animals, they can't be killed in the ways that we can.

Contributing to the strangeness of the book is the fact that it shifts from omniscient 3rd person to first person POVs in various chapters. Two main characters are always in first person and a few auxiliary characters are in first person. But the bulk of the main protagonists have 3rd person omniscient POVs. Part of the trick there is that it's generally assumed that 3rd person narratives are reliable narrators. But it eventually becomes clear that some of the first person chapters are unreliable narrators. And the reasons for the unreliability are quite varied.

Speaking of which, the narrative winds back and forth between the present and past, filling in little details here and there and eventually revealing an almost Fight Club level twist partway through the book.

It's a meditation on the lies we tell others and the lies we tell ourselves. It considers whether there is redemption or whether people are just evil or good. Church and state and power are examined. Hero worship. It's a dense book for so strange a premise that I thought would be mined for humor.

If you want something different; perhaps something Weird (as in the genre) - you should give this a shot. And push through the seemingly cookie cutter-ish first few chapters until it flips you around and makes you

start questioning everything.

Laura says

Someone claimed that this book maybe a mixture of The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler and Animal Farm by George Orwell. I really doubt!!!

João Reis says

Origem do exemplar: Coleção pessoal.

Língua da edição lida: Português.

Tradução: Aceitável.

Género: Ficção; thriller; policial.

Avaliação: Medíocre.

Olethros says

-Existencialismo noir protagonizado por peluches animados. Sí, en serio.-

Género. Narrativa fantástica (por decirles algo, aunque tal vez sería mejor decir “Novela con una gigantesca licencia de partida”).

Lo que nos cuenta. En el barrio de Amberville, en Mollisan Town, Eric Oso es un maduro profesional de la publicidad y un amante esposo que ha dejado muy atrás un pasado ilegal. Pero uno de los jefes del crimen organizado para quien trabajó, Nicholas Paloma, le obliga a realizar un trabajo: localizar una lista que muchos consideran que no es más que un mito y quitar su nombre de ella. Si no lo consigue, Eric verá asesinada a su amada Emma Coneja, por lo que recurre a sus antiguos compañeros de correrías, Tom-Tom Corneja, Sam Gacela y Serpiente Marek. Escrita bajo seudónimo por un autor (o autora) de origen sueco, de identidad aparentemente relevante en la sociedad de su país y con mucho celo sobre su intimidad. Primer libro de la serie Mollisan Town.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Ron says

This novel reminded of the tale of the emperor's clothes. Not because of a similar story, but because some people will see wondrous things while others will see nothing. I'm in the latter category.

A Raymond Chandler-style pot boiler with stuffed animal characters? Well, it's different.

Don't waste your money. In fact, if it's free, don't waste your time.

David Hebblethwaite says

Well, this is quite an oddity – a *noir* thriller with a cast of stuffed animals. The story goes like this: Eric Bear has a happy life, married to the beautiful Emma Rabbit and with a good job in advertising. But, in his past, Eric was involved with some shady characters, one of whom now comes calling – Nicholas Dove, who has heard that his name is on the Death List, which means (if the tales are to be believed) that the Chauffeurs will shortly come to escort him on the ultimate one-way journey. Dove demands that Eric find the Death List and get his name removed from it, or Emma will be the one who pays the price. The job should be straightforward enough, because the Death List is just a fable; but Eric gets his old gang back together all the same – and, of course, the truth proves more complicated than anyone thought.

So, this Scandinavian crime novel (the author is Swedish; ‘Tim Davys’ is a pseudonym) is far from the norm, and could have been ridiculous – but it’s not. What is perhaps most striking about *Amberville* is that Davys tells his tale with a completely straight face; one might laugh briefly at the thought of, say, a stuffed dove walking around with two stuffed gorillas for heavies, but not for very long, because it’s not funny at all in the context of the story – it’s deadly serious. Davys creates his world with such integrity that one can’t help but take it seriously. His control of voice is also superb, switching between different characters whose voices are all distinctive, no matter how brief their turn at narration (and here, I must also acknowledge Paul Norlen’s excellent work as translator).

Driving the plot of *Amberville* is a mystery – is there a Death List, and, if so, who’s behind it? – which is deeper for readers than it is for the characters, because we have more questions to ask: what is this place, Mollisan Town, inhabited by walking, talking, *living* stuffed animals? What goes on behind the scenes to make it all work (the inhabitants of Mollisan Town know that the young animals are manufactured somewhere and delivered to the city in vans, but no one thinks to question any further)?

Well, *Amberville* is the first novel in a series (though that’s not clear from the edition I was reading), so the answers aren’t all forthcoming here. That’s not a problem in itself, but I do think it has a knock-on effect – it seems to me that the major revelations for this volume are made some time before the end, leaving the rest of the book to be mostly i-dotting and t-crossing, which feels somewhat anti-climactic. This is unfortunate, because most of the rest of *Amberville* is pacy and engaging (with an added helping of speculation about the nature of good and evil, courtesy of Eric’s brother Teddy).

My misgivings about the conclusion of *Amberville* make me feel a little less inclined to find out where Davys takes his series; but the momentum of the earlier parts of the book is considerable. It’s worth a look, I think.

John says

I came to this book in an unusual way. My first novel, *The Terror and the Tortoiseshell* (about a world which has been taken over by mutated animals) was reviewed by Publishers Weekly and in its summation mentioned that my book bore superficial similarities to *Amberville*, a book about stuffed toy animals. The review also said my book was the better of the two. To say I was intrigued is putting it mildly.

So what kind of book is Amberville? A damn hard one to classify. If you go by some of the quotes, then it's a crime novel. Only I'd say this isn't true. It starts like that (kind of) but in the end becomes a book about good and evil and making the right choices, with quite a strong religious slant to it. And stuffed toy animals.

The thing is, the way the book has been written, I think it could as easily have been told without them - a lot more could have been done with these characters, and I wonder whether some of the power of the story has been lost in the translation, with some of the phrasing being below par. Another problem is the general pace of the book, which is pretty much the same the whole way through. Having said that, I enjoyed the book, but felt that there was a better one in there trying to get out.

But negatives aside, I'd recommend this book to anyone who wants something more than a bit different, as the central ideas are intriguing (it would make a cracking animated film if somebody like the Quay brothers could get hold of it) and the book takes you into places you really wouldn't expect or even think possible - somehow, despite its failings, it works. It also contains perhaps the best line I've ever read in my life - "He challenged the baboons to a duel"!

I've just found out that Amberville is only the first book in a series of four. I shall certainly be hunting out the other books in the series.

Three and a half stars.

Franklyn Thomas says

Amberville, part 3 of Tim Davys' Mollisan Town Quartet, is a slightly offbeat, mildly disturbing, thought-provoking, entertaining read. It touches on the nature of life and death, mistaken identity, law and order, and good and evil, all viewed through the perspective of stuffed animals.

Yes, you read that right. Stuffed animals. Mollisan Town is populated with stuffed animals of varying moral alignments, from the holy penguin Archdeacon Odenkirk to the malicious gangster Nicholas Dove.

Eric Bear, former mob enforcer, now a successful ad exec and devoted husband, is asked to do a favor for his former employer, the aforementioned Nicholas Dove: locate the Death List -- a roster of all the stuffed animals slated to die on a particular day -- and remove his name from it, or suffer the death of his beloved Emma Rabbit. The problem is no one knows if the Death List actually even exists, much less where it is or how to remove a name. Eric assembles his old crew from the old days -- the hulking yet sweet Tom-Tom Crow, the effete Sam Gazelle, and the dispassionate Snake Marek -- and the foursome search Mollisan Town high and low for leads on this Death List. Along the way, we see interludes about the characters' seedy past, especially one concerning a case of mistaken identity.

Amberville is shockingly adult, in stark contrast to the idea of the characters being stuffed toys. There's drinking, smoking, drug use, and sex all over this book, and on several occasions you forget you're reading a book about stuffed animals. It is imaginative and wildly fun, and I honestly can't help but to recommend it.

8 out of 10.

Marvin says

Amberville tries to be a lot of things. It is a gritty gangster drama, a fantasy world of stuffed animals living human-like lives, and a allegory about good and evil. For the most part it is entertaining in a dark *Animal Farm* way. Yet the author is simply doing too much in one tale. It is even questionable whether this particular story benefits at all from placing it in a fantasy setting. I liked it but eventually became annoyed with it. Essentially it is a clever gimmick that simply didn't pan out. two and a half stars.

Melissa says

I got *Amberville* as a free-Friday selection on my nook. The description alone had my attention, stuffed animals in a gritty story of crime, conspiracy, corruption and redemption. Sounds good. The story is told from multiple points of view, so the reader is constantly changing voices. . In truth, the entire book reads as a series of character studies, or at best a set of interconnected short stories that have been crammed together into a single volume. Nothing ever quite gels, as threads in the story peter out and lead to nowhere, characters are introduced and then forgotten, or dark hints are made that never really resolve into anything juicy enough to sustain our interest. There are a good deal of characters, some that are introduced then never seen from again. There were many pages in the middle that felt less like pleasure reading, more like work. Plus the ending is a huge let down, or at least it was for me and I just wanted to throw the book at the end. While I was happy I finally finished I just wished I had gotten an ending. The idea of stuffed animals in a detective mystery novel begs for plenty of sarcastic tongue-in-cheek humor, but *Amberville* avoids silly humor and instead relies on the subtle absurdities, to deliver the humor on their own, which they never really manage to do. I was interested by this book, but not entertained.

Maria João Fernandes says

"Se fechasse os olhos, podia visualizar quatro milhões de fios finíssimos a saírem do seu cérebro, cada um ligado a um dos peluches da sua cidade."

O conceito por trás do livro de Tim Davys prende a nossa atenção no mesmo segundo em que o confrontamos. Mollisan Town é um cidade habitada por animais de peluche, que dormem, comem, trabalham, divertem-se e deixam-se envolver pela amizade, amor e religião como as pessoas normais.

"Mas o amor é um mundo em si."

Eric Urso vive uma vida tranquila, ao lado da sua mulher Emma Coelho. Porém, circunstâncias para nós misteriosas, arrastam o peluche para as teias do seu passado, onde se esconde o mundo obscuro da máfia. Nicolau Pombo é como o Padrinho e exige a contribuição do seu antigo empregado numa tarefa urgente. Este, assustado por ser obrigado a aceitar, reúne os antigos colegas e, com eles, inicia uma aventura, por vezes divertida, mas acima de tudo perigosa.

Esta é uma história que envolve duas listas: a lista dos nascidos e a lista dos mortos, que envolvem todos os animais de peluche. Tal como nós, eles nascem e morrem, ainda que de formas diferentes. Os cidadãos de *Amberville* são criados e entregues aos pais pelos fornecedores. No final da sua vida, em que a aparência se mantém, mas o intelecto evolui, os motoristas vêm buscá-los.

"O género de coisas que te fazem doer o coração, dentro de ti, são o mal."

"Amberville" é um livro muito difícil de classificar. Entre o mistério e o drama estão expostos vários pensamentos, principalmente sobre o mal, o bem e o que distingue uma má de uma boa pessoa. A par da história principal, dominada por Eric Urso e o seu grupo, Davys insere histórias secundárias sobre obsessões, dificuldades e tristezas de personagens que, de uma forma ou de outra, estão ligadas ao fio condutor do livro.

Inicialmente, a originalidade por detrás da exposição de temas pertinentes e intemporais como a relação entre o passado e o presente, o bem e o mal, o amor, a amizade, a religião e o existencialismo são suficientemente fortes para nos manter cativados. Porém, a certa altura, os discursos tornam-se repetidos, ainda que as palavras e os interlocutores mudem, as ideias mantém-se. E assim, apenas o mistério persistiu, mas por si só, a busca por uma lista de nomes não é nada que nos faça perder a cabeça.

"Que a morte seja obra do acaso é de alguma maneira...indigno!"

Shotgun says

Amberville je m?sto, které pod na první pohled oby?ejným a pokojným zevn?jškem skrývá spoustu špín, násilí a temných tajemství. A narušit váš spokojený a do poslední doby bezstarostný život m?že cokoliv. T?eba návšt?va nejv?tího mafiánského bosse, který vám dá zdánliv? ne?ešitelný úkol, který musíte splnit, jinak se vám pomstí na vaši milované žen?.

-- A vám nezbývá nic jiného než se zkontaktovat s dávnými p?átníci z dob, kdy jste se ješt? nem?li tak dob?e a proto jste se pohybovali na temné stran? m?sta. ?í více se hlavní hrdina dostává k spln?ní náro?ného úkolu a odhalení nejv?tího a nejtemn?jšího tajemství m?sta Amberville, tím víc na povrch vyplouvá antagonismus v part? bývalých kumpán? a také r?zná tajemství a h?ísky z d?stev a mládí nejen hlavního hrdiny.

-- Kniha výborn? navazuje na klasiky žánru noir a v knize se dynamicky st?ídá oby?ejné fyzické násilí s rafinovaným psychickým terorem. Autor, který p?ekvapiv? do doby, kdy se rozhodl napsal knihu, žádnou sám nep?e?etl. tedy pokud nepo?ítáte komiksy a grafické romány. Skv?le si hraje s hlavními postavami, kdy je ?tená? po n?kterých kapitolách nucen zcela p?ehodnotit sv?j pohled nejen na hlavního hrdinu ale i na charakter a chování jiných postav. A ty nejsou v?tšinou moc sympathetic. Spíše naopak. Boj o moc, intriky a manipulace prostupují celým m?stem jako pojivo, které drží vše pohromad?.

-- Ani si nevzpomenu, zda v p?íb?hu najdeme n?jakého kladného hrdinu. Možná tak v za?átku p?íb?hu a v další ?ásti vám autor ukáže, že všechno je jinak a daná postava není zas tak fajn, jak jste si ješt? p?ed párem stránkami mysleli. N?které scény knihy jsou hodn? mrazivé a i když n?které hrdinové knihy se hodn? snaží být hodní a slušní plyšáci tak se ?asto do?káme velice nep?íjemných p?ekvapení. A kurwa! Já se úpln? zapom?l zmínit, že v celé knize vystupují pouze humanoidní plyšáci, což celý p?íb?h posouvá trošku jinam a navozuje atmosféru ztráty d?stev a ideí.

Alan says

I was... a little disappointed in this one.

It has a *great* concept, a really neat conceit, to use the phrase I like to use. A sordid city full of stuffies come to life, a noir vision of love and betrayal where Eric, a tough-talking teddy bear and Emma, the bunny who is his sometimes disturbingly aloof lady love, can make a life together in Amberville, one of the four color-

coded quadrants of Mollisan Town, at least until the even tougher-talking gangster Nicholas Dove comes with his two gorillas (one of them bright red) to advance a proposition that Eric dare not refuse. But...

But it didn't really grab me. The prose just seemed stolid, its short sentences choppy and rigid instead of laconic and punchy like a good two-fisted detective novel. This might be an issue with the translation—I discovered after finishing that this book was translated from Swedish. But also... while the initial idea was great and there were occasional flashes of brilliance in how it was executed (I'm thinking in particular of a scene involving an effective, if gruesome, method of intimidating a bunch of cotton-stuffed toughs), the parts never seemed to hang together very well—I never really got a sense of scale, of the size of the stuffed animals in relation to their city, nor did I get that feeling of "yes, I would never have thought of it, but this is how it *must* be" which comes from a well-constructed fantasy world with its own strong internal consistency.

Take the very name "Amberville," for example... it doesn't seem to have any significance beyond being a way to separate Mollisan Town's neighborhoods. And if there is any intentional connection between Mollisan's four color-coded quadrants and the four colors of the Land of Oz, it is never made at all clear. There are parts here that are brilliant, parts that are fascinating... but they just don't add up to a coherent whole.

I won't say this is a bad book, and I'm sure it'll find its niche among people who are hungry for this sort of experiment. I just didn't get what I wanted out of it.

S. Wilson says

Eric, now an adult and a successful advertising executive, has been successful in putting his reckless and somewhat criminal youthful indiscretions behind him. At least, that's what he thought. But then the local kingpin he once worked for shows up with a non-negotiable proposition. Find the hit list that his name is rumored to be on, and remove it from the list. Otherwise, he will kill Eric's girlfriend. Now, Eric must get the old gang back together and track down the "Death List" at any cost.

A compelling and straight-forward plot. The big twist? Eric, the crime boss, and all of the other characters in the book are stuffed animals. They live in a world completely populated by stuffed animals, in which the young and old are delivered and taken away by pick-up trucks. It is definitely an interesting plot twist. But is it necessary?

The idea isn't completely original (The Hollow Chocolate Bunnies of the Apocalypse, Who Framed Roger Rabbit?, The Big Over Easy: A Nursery Crime, Meet the Feebles), but that doesn't mean it isn't good. It just means that the author might want to approach the concept from an original angle.

Tim Davys does, but he unfortunately decides to play it straight. The idea of stuffed animals in a detective mystery novel begs for plenty of sarcastic tongue-in-cheek humor, but Amberville avoids silly humor and instead relies on the subtle absurdities (a small stuffed dove as a crime kingpin, for example) to deliver the humor on their own, which they never really manage to do. Even the author's approach to the way characters are named in Amberville (simply a first name followed by the type of stuffed animal they are), shows a lack of desire to truly have fun with the concept. In short, things that should be comical or farcical are just as boring as they would be in the real world.

The result is a story that could easily be translated into a realistic, non-fantasy setting and written as a

straight hardboiled noir novel. Amberville doesn't necessarily fail at making the concept work, it just doesn't fully convince the reader that fantastical setting was crucial to the story.

Amberville is supposed to reveal truths about human nature, morality, religion, and the concepts of good and evil, by having stuffed animals act out the scenarios in which these philosophical debates occur. This is where the book does fail, much in the same way that *White Man's Burden* failed. Changing reality in some ironic or absurd way might seem deep and meaningful at first. But unless there are other connections on multiple levels, all that you are left with is an overused gimmick.

Amberville is a good book. It has a compelling story, interesting characters, and enough twists and turns to keep a mystery lover interested until the end. It just doesn't quite manage to be what it wanted to be, and that's what keeps it from being a great book.
