



Feast Day of Fools

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Sheriff Hackberry Holland patrols a small Southwest Texas border town with a deep and abiding respect for the citizens in his care. Still mourning the loss of his cherished wife and locked in a perilous almost-romance with his deputy, Pam Tibbs, a woman many decades his junior, Hackberry feeds off the deeds of evil men to keep his own demons at bay. When alcoholic ex-boxer Danny Boy Lorca witnesses a man tortured to death in the desert and reports it, Hack's investigation leads to the home of Anton Ling, a regal, mysterious Chinese woman whom the locals refer to as La Magdalena and who is known for sheltering illegals. Ling denies having seen the victim or the perpetrators, but there is something in her steely demeanor and aristocratic beauty that compels Hackberry to return to her home again and again as the investigation unfolds. Could it be that the sheriff is so taken in by this creature who reminds him of his deceased wife that he would ignore the possibility that she is just as dangerous as the men she harbors?

The danger in the desert increases tenfold with the return of serial murderer Preacher Jack Collins, whom "The New York Times" called "one of Burke's most inspired villains." Presumed dead at the close of "Rain Gods," Preacher Jack has reemerged with a calm, single-minded zeal for killing that is more terrifying than the muzzle flash of his signature machine gun. But this time he and Sheriff Holland have a common enemy.

Praised by Joyce Carol Oates for "the luminosity of his writerly voice," James Lee Burke returns with his most allegorical novel to date, illuminating vital issues of our time--immigration, energy, religious freedom--with the rich atmosphere and devastatingly flawed, authentic characters that readers have come to celebrate during the five decades of his brilliant career.

Feast Day of Fools Details

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From Reader Review Feast Day of Fools for online ebook

Michael says

On the Texas border by Mexico, Danny Boy Lorca, a former boxer and alcoholic witnesses a brutal murder.

He tells Sheriff Hackberry Holland and his deputy that one man did escape and he heard the killers mention La Madelina, aka Anton Ling, a free spirited Chinese woman who sheltered illegal aliens. Danny also heard the leader referred to as Krill.

Krill has been hired to find the missing man, Noie Barnum because Barnum has info on the Preditor program and he wants to sell Barnum to Al Qaeda. Temple Dowling is also looking for Barnum, he is a citizen soldiers who has mercenaries working for him.

The characters are bound together in their passionate struggle to survive in this desert area. The vivid Hack Holland has been compared to John Wayne in True Grit.

I found it difficult when Hack mentions that he was in the Korean War which ended in 1953, that would make him in his eighties and it would seem hard for a man of that age to do the physical things that Hack does, or to have his deputy who is decades younger, have romantic feelings for him.

I also felt that Hack was not that original, he reminded me of Dave Robicheaux and it was like the author used the same traits on both men. They are both widowers, both dislike government agencies, both attend Mass and both dislike it when people use bad language around them.

Dispite these points, this is an excellent read and I recommend it for its colorful characters, the story that is well told and the exciting climax.

Ishmael Seaward says

Not one of his better books. The cast of characters seems unlikely for the location, (a Russian gangster who runs a game farm?) and Jack Collins reappears. Jack Collins is one of the most inconsistent characters I have come across, obviously educated but given to wasting the education on people who do not or cannot appreciate it, and then complaining about it. I had very little sense of the time span of this book, whether two days or two weeks. Burke also seemed more interested in describing the weather and the terrain than investigating and developing the characters. I also think he got the weather patterns of south west Texas mixed up with southern Lousiana.

I also found the physical description of the characters curious, sort of Dick Tracy-ish. All the bad guys stand out physically, in a mildly deformed way, as though their internal ugliness is manifested in their appearance.

In short, if someone is interested in reading a James Lee Burke novel but hasn't done so, I would recommend his earlier novels.

wally says

never have read a single story from this writer...but a few pages into this one and i can tell you that i'll be looking for more. wish i knew exactly how i came about this one...here, likely...or i wonder if it had to do w/that other'n i read...warlock....

good start...gutsy gritty bloody...and i'd hazard some hard truths simply stated

done.

yeah, i'll be looking for more from burke.

here's a sentence from late in the story:

upstairs, the thompson began firing again without letup, the rounds thudding into walls all over the house, the casings dancing on the floors as though jack collins had declared war on all things that were level or square or plumb or that possessed any degree of geometric integrity.

there's a cast of characters here....sheriff hackberry holland the main i spouse...and this is #3 of whatever? a bunch of hispanics...i like the way they talk to each other..."i will always praise your name when i hear it mentioned."....there's a lot to it and that's only a sample...

cast of folk you bet, and most of them are mean nasty. not like this has one main antagonist...the story is full of bad and they all play off each others....and prey on each other.

hackberry holland is this korean war vet, former p.o.w....who has a checkered past...he has made mistakes...there's a younger woman or two that are attracted to him and he holds them at bay....for the most...we're all too human.

but yeah...good story....non stop action, fast, description as needed, set up scenes..dialogue...lots of suspense...from one scene to the next. and throughout as noted elsewhere there is a kind of philosophy, from both the bad and the good...like:

"holland's greatest fear was his fellow man's propensity to act collectively, in militaristic lockstep, under the banner of god and country. mobs did not rush across town to do good."

or: "the compulsion to kill was in the gene pool, he thought. those who denied it were the same ones who killed by proxy..."

there's more of course and of a different flavor...

onward and upward...

Bettie? says

5 days late for April Fools Day 2013, however this will do whilst my Rosado is charging *kerchinggggg!*

Ever since Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid I've loved chase stories.

3* The Tin Roof Blowdown

CR Feast Day of Fools

OTBR into WPB:

Burning Angel

TBR Busting 2013

Mary says

I have just finished reading James Burke's Feast Day of Fools. There were several times during the reading that I wanted to stop and just put it away but I kept on. I kept on because I wanted to understand why this book was so popular and highly recommended. Reviews use terms like "riveting", "irresistible", "an exemplar of all that is great in American writing". The characters are described as "authentic" and "one of Burke's most inspired villains." What the book is actually about is violence, greed, cruelty and selfishness. There are few redeeming characters or actions.

Set in west Texas, 'there's no law west of the Pecos', illegal immigration and the subsequent climate of disregard for the law allow all types of outlaws to pass through. Players in the drama include dishonest 'coyotes', Russian mafia, a serial killer whose specialty is Oriental prostitutes, government contractors with hired muscle, and an opaque FBI team whose members are indistinguishable from the mafia and private contractors thugs. The 'good guys' include a sheriff with flashbacks to his time in a North Korean prison camp, an Oriental woman with a history as a political subversive who shelters illegal immigrants, and a Quaker who has invented something of military importance but doesn't want it to fall into the 'wrong' hands. Add to this a drunken Indian who sees visions, a road side preacher who takes target practice on people he finds in the desert and suspects of being there illegally, and the assorted types who end up at the end of the road and you have the cast of characters.

The action includes at least fifteen murders, torture, mutilation, and arson.

People are dismembered, buried alive, beaten and shot, sometimes in the process of acquiring information, sometimes by mistake and sometimes for no apparent reason. In the end, a lot of people are dead but no problem has been solved, justice has not been done and many of the characters will continue their careers of mayhem and death.

I appreciate Burke being able to write and publish this book – I am not in favor of censorship and am not asking for the book to be taken off the shelves. What I am asking is, why is this book and author so popular and why is it so highly acclaimed? There are many issues in the book that need to be exposed and brought into the light, but not in the voyeuristic method that is used here. I believe that there are people that actually do the things that are described in this book, but I am not all sure that we benefit from their being the subject of our recreational reading. I do not believe we gain any insight into either our individual life decisions or our duties as a citizen by this type of novel.

Near the beginning of the book Burke has his protagonist, the sheriff say, "The compulsion to kill is in the gene pool. Those who denied it were the same ones who killed by proxy. Every professional executioner,

every professional soldier, knew that one of his chief duties was to protect those he served from knowledge about themselves.” This, of course, is Burke’s statement and perhaps an attempt at justifying this book. Whether it is true or not is another question and cannot be answered in this forum. It is part of the question of good and evil that people have struggled with since the beginning of our awareness of ourselves as moral beings. Addressing this question requires a more thoughtful approach than that found in this novel.

Rapidio says

I have been a fan of James Lee Burke for many years, but I must say that this book is awful. His writing is as lyrical as ever and his descriptions of place are stellar, but even these strengths cannot save this totally unbelievable tale of good v evil, sorrow and redemption. Burke has always dealt in man's inhumanity to man, but I fail to see how this volume adds to his panoply in any relevant manner. I would not recommend this book, even to fans of the author

Faith says

This is a good thriller provided that you don't demand a high degree of plausibility in your books. The book has the largest collection of sick, twisted, violent men I think I've ever encountered in a book. Whole heaps of psychotic behavior were on display. I lost track of who mutilated/tortured/killed who and why. If you don't believe this book is over the top, one character gets crucified, another has his hand and foot amputated, another carries the mummified remains of his dead children around in a box and there's a lot more. In addition, there was the unlikely scenario of a young deputy with the hots for the elderly Sheriff Hackberry Holland. I guess the author is entitled to his fantasies.

In spite of this book being over the top, it was entertaining. As usual, the language was lovely and the narration of the audiobook by Will Patton was perfect.

Kathy says

Fools, mostly evil filled, flawed ones, populate this latest novel from James Lee Burke. And there is plenty of violence in this novel filled with violent and damaged people. The sociopath Preacher Jack Collins, probably Burke's most evil character ever, returns from the previous Hack Holland novel, Rain Gods. James Lee Burke's writing is brilliant as usual...no surprises there. If you look past the violence you can see his thoughts and views on politics and religion woven into the story.

Preacher Jack Collins is much more fleshed out in this appearance. Compared to some of the other violent people in this novel he doesn't seem quite as bad as he did in Rain Gods. He ponders upon why he has allowed Hack to live when he could have easily killed him so many times. He realizes Hack is the missing father figure in his life. Though Collins seems to appear and disappear like a spirit at times he is much more human now to the reader.

The character of Anton Ling, a woman of Chinese descent, who aids Mexicans illegally crossing the border

is a truly fascinating character. She reminds Hack of his deceased wife and is haunted by her much to the chagrin of his deputy Pam. Ms. Ling has a past filled with misdeeds yet manages to project an image of holiness to the evil men who inhabit this novel. She is just another of the many damaged souls who grace the pages of this beautifully written novel.

Though I don't think this novel surpasses the excellent Rain Gods, this is an engrossing and fascinating read from an amazing author.

Note (October 16): My husband just finished Feast Day of Fools and thought it was better than Rain Gods. He was absolutely mesmerized by the book and cannot stop raving about it.

Paul Nelson says

Chalk me up to the James Lee Burke hero worshipping fan club, I wanna go to Texas, the place has an atmosphere and the author brings it to your door in all its glory, although glory is perhaps the wrong word, sordid and a mite sleazy may be a more apt descriptions.

Feast day of fools is the third in the Hackberry Holland trilogy and if you read my review of Rain Gods you'll know how highly I rate this series. This one maintains those high standards but please be aware that if you start this series there's a big difference between the first book and the following two. The first one is all about Hack, the second introduces a bad guy called Preacher Jack Collins and this is where we come to the second major pulling point of this series, aside from an atmosphere that just leaks danger it's the characters.

The characters are absolutely gripping, I don't think I've ever enjoyed reading about characters so much, both flawed and honest as the day is long, on different sides of the law and with very different interpretations of honour.

The dialogue is also riveting there's almost a constant undercurrent of threat, aside from sheriff Hack Holland and Jack Collins, there's Russian mobsters, Mexican hard cases and others including a Reverend Cody Daniels and La Magdalena, a savior of souls. Each comes with a history, many of them flawed in some way, a depth of character that means you feel every one of them very deeply, even those that are not preordained long and prosperous lives.

If you want plot details, read the synopsis or this review could end up being a mile long, this is more of a homage to a series of books that are outstanding in their entirety. If you like character driven thrillers that have it all in regard to what I would call a perfect read then dig in but please don't be put off after the first, the game changes dramatically from then on and with the introduction of the killer, Preacher Jack Collins, it cements its place in my all-time favourites.

It's not all serious though, there is humour in there amongst the people that surround Hack, even romantically chase him to some extent but there's just so many things I enjoyed about Feast Day of Fools, and I actually enjoyed writing this review. That pretty much says how I felt anyway, amongst the incoherent rambling.

I don't know if this is the last we'll see of Hack and Jack Collins, it sort of felt that way but in the same degree was left open for a return and it certainly deserves a return, I hope so anyway.

So I'll leave you with a couple of quotes from Preacher Jack Collins dialogue.

“The sheriff tried to kill me by firing a whole magazine down a mine shaft. He has also insulted me several times on a personal level without provocation, even though I have always treated him with respect. So principle requires that I do something in kind to him, otherwise I’ll be guilty of what’s called a sin of omission. Are you following me?”

And talking to two Mexican hitmen.

“So we’re saved from your incompetence by the intervention of the fates, and that should make me feel good?”

When I think back I’m kind of amazed what James Lee Burke fit into this novel, there’s loads of complex characters but it certainly doesn’t feel like you’re overloaded. The audio was just over 16 hours and the only negative point I could think of was that they changed the narrator to Will Patton but how can that be a negative, it was however, just because you get used to the voices portrayed by Tom Stechschulte in the first two books.

Apologies for the long review but at the same time I think it tells you something, I hope so anyway.

Also posted at.

<http://paulnelson.booklikes.com/post/...>

Dan Oko says

I liked this a lot, but I am not impartial. I don't read much of what might be considered genre fiction, but Jim Burke is a best-selling author, who has been nominated for a Pulitzer, and a guy I admire. I met James Lee Burke at a film premiere for the ill-fated film adaptation of *Heaven's Prisoners*, when I was living in Missoula, Montana. The movie was not good. But in the books, his cinematic take on the criminal underworld, and moreover his sympathetic hero Detective Dave Robicheaux, a recovering alcoholic, inhabit a compelling milieu split geographically between Montana and Louisiana. He broke new ground recently with the outstanding *Tin Roof Blowdown*, published in the wake of Katrina and set around NOLA. This was the first Sheriff Hackberry Holland novel I have read. Holland is a character who shares tone and personal demons with Robicheaux, but the West Texas setting grabbed me and the visceral violence served a moral purpose that gave it proper gravity and context. So, yeah, I'm looking forward to reading the next, and perhaps the previous, *The Glass Rainbow*.

Yeah, I dig it.

Sue says

Very violent, full of "bad guys," some of whom the author ultimately hoped the reader would vindicate later. There was really no one to root for. I had a hard time not giving it just one star

Cathrine ?? says

3.75★

Following closely on the end pages of *Rain Gods*, there's more stuff hitting the fan deep in the south of Texas, too much stuff. While I would normally say I can't get enough, this one could have been edited down just a tad. By the end it was a bit messy and overwrought. Nonetheless I enjoyed the journey if not the destination.

Sheriff Hackberry Holland (JLB's alter ego me thinks) and Chief Deputy Pam Tibbs (more about her in a minute) are back, not to mention the scariest man Hack has ever known, Preacher Jack Collins, perhaps the most disturbed and complicated psychopath ever. He drives around in a rusted Trans Am with a Thompson machine gun (no doubt his favorite song is Don't Fear The Reaper). We have more JLB trademark unladylike kitchen ninja skills as well as an assortment of perhaps too many characters acting out in conflicted, who-would-of-thought-it moves and mannerisms.

Thugs are trash talking Pam's boss and she's pissed off. In an effort to bring her plumb line back to center Hack has a conversation with her about it.

"Blow it off."

"I followed them into the parking lot."

"Did you hit somebody?"

"No ... I told him I wasn't going to cite him for his broken taillights, but if I ever heard him slander your name again, I was going to beat the living shit out of him."

"He had two broken taillights?"

"He did after I broke them."

"Pam....What can I say?"

Pat Benatar probably had Pam in mind when she wrote Hit Me With Your Best Shot. Go on guys, fire away and *make her day* or show her some R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

We're talkin' serious Girl Power here.

Yes good**friends**, JLB has put a spell on me and *I like it*. I wrote him a fan letter of sorts as I was reading (yes I was having some wine and *no* I probably wouldn't have sent it otherwise), just letting him know how much I love his books and such. He most kindly sent me a reply, referring to me as Ms. C and said he hoped I would keep enjoying his books and stories. No doubt about that Jim (that's how he signed off ??). Made my day. Yes sir it did.

Donna Bridwell says

James Lee Burke has been quoted as saying *Feast Day of Fools* is his best work to date. I haven't read all of his novels, but I have read several, and I can agree that *Feast Day of Fools* is the best of his books that I have read (although all I have read are quite good). *Feast Day of Fools* has several intricate, almost allegorical, themes and subplots. The characterizations are thorough, with most of the main characters being neither 100% good or evil, but an interesting combination of both – like most people are in real life. The descriptive narrative of the southwest is superb. I particularly appreciate that the main character, Sheriff Hackberry Holland, is an intelligent, vibrant, caring man who is in his 70s. (Not many novels depict older people in this way.) James Lee Burke's writing has been compared by various literary critics to the writing of Cormac McCarthy, and while I can see why, I agree with critics who say that James Lee Burke is a master in his own right.

Joe says

Another fascinating story and novel by JLB, very descriptive details of the Texas setting with intricate and flawed characters results in a very thought provoking but enjoyable read. James Lee Burke is a master.

Michelle Lancaster says

By James Lee Burke
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Rating - Read This!

James Lee Burke is one of my top five authors. By my best accounting he has written 31 books. He is probably best known for the Dave Robicheaux novels that follow the life and times of a deputy sheriff in New Iberia, Louisiana. One of these novels, *The Lost Get-Back Boogie*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Mr. Burke has a gift for description that defies description so I won't try. I'll just say that you can feel the humidity of the Louisiana Gulf coast on your skin, smell the drowsy summer bougainvillea and taste the craw fish jambalaya. Please everybody try this guy and if you don't like him I'll send you a dollar.

Feast Day of Fools is a Hackberry Holland novel. Mr. Holland is the sheriff in a rural southwest Texas county situated in the Chihuahuan desert, somewhere in the Big Bend region. As it happens, I live in West Texas and will vouch for the stark beauty of this land, dramatic vistas in every direction, 6,000-foot mountain peaks, deep canyons revealing a geological story of eons, fuchsia prickly pear blossoms, the lazy Rio Grande known as the Rio Bravo south of the border. Mexico is a pervasive presence, impossible to separate the people or the land here. Mr. Burke takes that raw material and spins a poem.

Back to the story. It begins with the grisly murder of an escaped kidnap victim from Mexico by a scary psychopath known as Krill. This murder is witnessed by an alcoholic Indian by the name of Danny Boy Lorca who believes he has ecstatic visions of his ancestors. And we are off! Sheriff Holland and his deputy Pam Tibbs begin an investigation that will, before it's over, involve a Russian terrorist, a Chinese woman with a reputation for miracles, a sociopath called Preacher who if I tried to describe you wouldn't believe me, a guy with a head for physics harboring a secret that very likely could get him killed, and a mobster looking for the guy with the secret. The theme here is absolution and aren't we all searching for that?

I read everything Mr. Burke writes. I would read a book by this author that was just description. His dialogue is spare and true to his characters. My only quibbles with this book are that it was a tad long, I think it could have been edited down some. There's one character, another preacher, that I don't entirely understand his function in the story. My other beef is that the plot is so circuitous that I got confused trying to keep all the characters straight in my poor brain and how they were related. Other than that I am a very big fan. Read it!
