



A Time For Secrets

Marshall Thornton

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In the first full-length novel of the Boystown series, it's late summer 1982 and private detective Nick Nowak is asked to find a retired gentleman's long lost lover. Instead, he finds himself embroiled in a decades old murder connected to the man who wants to be Chicago's next mayor. Meanwhile, an ambitious young reporter develops a friendship with Nick's lover Bert, making Nick wonder exactly where their relationship may be heading.

A Time For Secrets Details

Date : Published January 23rd 2015 (first published March 30th 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Marshall Thornton

Format : Kindle Edition 238 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Mystery, Historical, Crime, Lgbt



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From Reader Review A Time For Secrets for online ebook

Ije the Devourer of Books says

'He looked about one meatball sub away from a major coronary'

I love this series.

First of all the mysteries are really great, very gripping and keep me guessing. I don't like reading stories where I solve the mystery early on in the story and these stories have so many satisfying twists and turns.

Then I like the context. I like the fact that these stories are rooted in real history - Chicago in the eighties just as the Aids Pandemic begins its relentless devastation. For me as an Aids activist from the global South this history is enriching my own story and helping me to understand the devastation the pandemic caused in the global North, but these stories are also showing the very early days of HIV activism.

I also love these stories because Nic Nowak is human. He is real and kind of grimy at the edges. He loves his partner but is quite realistic about his own sexual needs and it isn't pretty because he doesn't miss an opportunity with anyone. His life isn't what he wants it to be but he knows how to work the angles. He is estranged from his family and doing his best to make a living as a PI even though he only ever wanted to be a cop. He has a wounded past. He is flawed and somewhat vulnerable, and very realistic. He has moments of heroism and altruism, and moments of selfishness. Gritty, strangely attractive and real.

The setting in Chicago makes the city and its beauty and ugliness come alive. The clubs, restaurants, the lake, shops, the El, the seedy areas and the wealthy areas are all brought to life as the backdrop for these mysteries. The corruption in the City Govt, police and political structures are all clearly seen as Nick chases down murderers.

And then there are Nick's friends, acquaintances and estranged family.

All these different factors come together for me and make the series a must read.

This book finds Nick in the middle of the mystery. Having helped someone find an old estranged friend Nick realises that there is more than meets the eye when the two friends are murdered. Nick delves into the past to see why the murders have been committed and to find justice for the two friends.

I love mystery stories and every now and again I come across a series that grabs me and become part of my reading life.

This series is one of them.

Kaje Harper says

I really enjoyed this first full novel of the series. Nick is asked to locate a client's long-missing acquaintance, and is drawn into murder and corruption within the city. As someone who lived in Chicago in the early

eighties, I love the period feel of this series, and am taken by (although not charmed to remember) the level of political machinations and corruption that marked the city in that era. Nick battles to see justice done, against the influence of those with wealth and power. We meet a couple of his closer family members, and are reminded that blood may be thicker than water, but it's sometimes thinner than money. And we're reminded that one of Nick's finer qualities is his desire for justice.

Harker, Nick's lover, is not declining fast, but he's also not getting better. His mother is hanging around Nick's house, cooking, insulting him, and wishing her son wasn't gay (perhaps even more vehemently because it distracts her from fearing that he may be dying.) She's a great, prickly, quirky yet believable character. Harker is subdued, dealing with the restrictions on his life and handling his fears quietly, for the most part. He gives Nick more patience and more leeway than Nick deserves, sometimes. And the affection and connection between them sweetens and strengthens as the book moves on.

Although GRID has now been renamed AIDS, at this point in the story the method of transmission is not known. So unprotected sex is still the norm, between Nick and various strangers, and between Nick and his clearly-positive lover. There is a poignancy watching that from the distance of the future that adds emotional weight to the story. This book has a slightly darker over-all tone, as Harker's situation becomes all too real to the main characters. But Nick's narrative tone and dry humor keep it from wallowing in angst. The lines of character and plot are skillfully and lightly drawn in, and the reader's own emotions color between those lines.

Lena♥Ribka says

The real treasures don't lie on the surface.

You have to dig deeper to find them.

Have patience and you'll be rewarded.

Amen.

Ingie says

[(This one was partly my companion on the flight from Gothenburg, Sweden to wonderful Spanish Majorca in the Mediterranean this morning.) (hide spoiler)]

Sofia says

4.4 stars

This review might be spoilerish to those who have not read Book 1 to 3 which I strongly urge you to read before reading this book.

Thornton interweaves the cold case Nick is asked to investigate with Nick's own story masterfully. The cold case definitely starts to warm up again and things spiral out of control both on a personal level and in the story.

At last Nick starts to acknowledge that his sexual shenanigans are leading him to trouble. This reminds me a bit of the film 'Shame', where sex had become an addiction not a pleasure, a means of escape or hiding, a temporary release leaving the protagonist empty.

Feelings/love for Harker crept up on Nick unawares. I think Nick needed the steadier, older Harker in his life, he proved to be a bulwark Nick could steady himself against. So I begin to understand a bit the difficult position Nick has found himself in, loving both Daniel and Harker, not an easy road this. In a way Nick has come to depend on his home life which includes Mrs Harker. (view spoiler) As usual for Nick he does not seem to realise this until he is jolted into awareness by the arrival of jealousy. His standing up to be counted in his dealing with Harker's illness and his need to save others are I think his deep rooted reactions to his perceived inactions in the past.

Considering everything I liked this book best from the series up to know.

Lou Harper says

As I said about previous Boystown books, this is not m/m but gay genre fiction, mystery to be exact.

Boystown 4 is a hard boiled detective novel set in Chicago in the early eighties. It's probably the grittiest of all the books--corrupt police, corrupt politicians, prejudices, murder, and the beginning of the AIDS epidemic come together in a volatile and often emotional mix.

It's not a light read, but it's gripping and rewarding. Marshall Thornton is superb at bringing the location and the era alive--they're no mere backdrops to the story. For anyone who's been around in the eighties it should be like a trip down memory lane.

Highly recommend it.

Genre says

Although this is the fourth book in the *Boystown* series, it's the first full length novel. The other books have been a collection of two-three novellas. It's also a change in publisher for the series, with the other books published by TQ and this one from MLRP, so don't let that confuse you either.

This book follows on almost directly from book three. Nick Nowack, our PI hero, is employed by a man, Ronnie, who helped to save Nick and his lover (now ex-lover) Daniel when they were attacked in a gay bashing. Ronnie asks Nick to find the whereabouts of an old lover of his, Vernon. It seems like a simple case but actually turns out to be a huge, dangerous mess for Nick when he discovers the reasons why Ronnie wants to find Vernon. Nick is torn between avenging the deaths of three men, or staying out of a case which could get him killed.

One of the main plus points of this being a full length novel is that there is a balance between the case and Nick's personal life. In the other books the case seemed to take up most of the pages with Nick's relationship with Harker given little time to grow, but here we find out much more about Nick and Harker. It meant that Nick's feelings for Harker were also explored in greater depth making Nick seem much less cold-hearted than he may have appeared in earlier books. Nick is finally admitting that he loves Harker, and isn't coping too well over the fact that Harker has been diagnosed with GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) - something which has been signposted since book 2. Nick is trying to do his usual thing of pretending he doesn't care, and sleeping around whenever the chance arises. However, it's becoming clear to the reader that these trysts are becoming increasingly tawdry and unfulfilling for Nick, and I've liked the clever way that the author is showing this slight change in Nick, through comparing the opportunistic sex with the tender and loving kind found between Nick and Harker. We are introduced to a new character in the form of journalist, Christian, who gives Nick a sour taste of his own medicine when Christian attaches himself to Harker. Those scenes made me smile in a wry fashion, as even Nick can see the hypocrisy in his feelings about this.

As always the eighties setting is vividly realised, although this time less through description of setting and fashion and more through the attitudes shown in the characters. Politics and corruption in particular are highlighted in the book, especially police brutality, with many of the stumbling blocks that Nick faces being due to the actions and ignorance of those who profess to protect the innocent. It gave me a very different view of the 80's than I experienced and at times frustrated me as much as Nick.

The case itself was another plus point, with the longer format allowing things to unfold slowly. Like the previous books I was exhausted on Nick's behalf as he pounds the streets, looking for clues. The amount of leg work which had to be done then just to find someone seemed overwhelming in the face of today's technology when Googling a person will find more information in seconds than it took Nick to find in several days. I enjoyed watching Nick puzzle through things and also weigh up how much his conscience could allow him to continue with the case or not. Often Nick comes across as heartless, self-seeking and cynical, but here we see that he is also dogged and moral. It made me warm to him more than I have in previous stories.

One final thing I liked about this book is that we get to see Nick being vulnerable. There were several scenes where he allows his emotions to surface, for example talking to his friend Ross about Harker, or seeing his Dad for the first time in three years, that made him wholly human. His confusion about being a couple and doing coupley things is also another point where he seems less cold as do his feelings for Harker, his loyalty and fear for the future. This development in Nick showed a side to him which is increasing my admiration for him as a character, and my admiration for the author who is slowly changing Nick through each subsequent book. Marvellous.

Overall, if you're a fan of the *Boystown* series then this is a must read. You could even start with this book if you've not read any of the previous books because the only continuity problem would be Nick's relationship with Harker which could be easily picked up. Be warned though, you'll want to pick up the rest of this series once you read this! As for me, Nick is fast becoming one of my favourite detective characters. The fact that we are seeing chinks in that tough, rough, cynical exterior only makes me like him all the more and I shall

look forward to seeing more of him in the next book in the series. Until then, I highly recommend *A Time For Secrets*.

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

Nick, Nick, Nick.

At first I think I gave you too much credit from the last book, because over and over in this installment you should have known better.

You should have known better than to tell Harker's secret.

You should have known better than to continue feeding your huge libido.

You should have known better than to interfere with a police investigation.

Most of the time things work out for you because you're part lucky bastard and part quite good at your job. But I have to say that I've never been so mad at a person for blatant stupidity and neglect of other's feelings. I just wanted to reach through my kindle and throttle you many, many times!!

Having said that, your luck did persevere and your risk taking did pay off. Harker is right. You're a stubborn shit and that character flaw (or you can call it a trait) redeems you. Despite the fact that I disagree with your personal decision making skills, you do have morals most of the people you encounter do not. And yes, that's what counts.

So I guess I'm giving you back your "credit", and keeping my fingers crossed. You're not making this easy on me at all, but that won't stop me from seeing what else is in store for you in the future. I only want the best for you but sometimes you make it very hard to like you. Am I going to end up telling myself I should have known better??

Otila says

"Everything works out for the best." It always irked me when people said shit like that. I didn't believe it for a minute. Things did not work out for the best unless you bent logic into a pretzel."

This review contains spoilers for books 1-3.

First of all the mystery in this one was the best so far. This being the first full length novel, instead of a series of novellas, we get a much more complicated case. When Nick is hired to find a man's long lost lover, he stumbles across a decades old murder. While trying to find the murderer and later bring him to justice, he is confronted with the corruption of Chicago politics and just how deep it reaches into the Chicago PD.

This book also shows us more of Nick's relationship with Harker than in the previous books. I really sensed Nick's deep love for Harker here. It's shown through Nick's jealousy over the young reporter flirting with Harker. But mostly seen through Nick's desperation at not knowing how to handle the fact that it's more than likely that he will lose the man he loves.

This series has always had this sense of impending doom just looming below the surface. Well it's in your face now. Harker is diagnosed with what they called GRID at the time and he and Nick have to deal with the fact that most of these cases end in death. Harker seems to be dealing with it better than Nick. Nick tries to bury his feelings and problems in work and anonymous sex. Then there's the Bughouse Slasher case that Harker is apparently still obsessing over. It makes you think that Nick will eventually have to confront the killer again.

This series is gritty and real and Mr. Thornton gives us a character that you can't help but love, eventually, despite all his flaws.

Trix says

[the progression and effects of Harker's illness, the niggling sparring sessions with Bert's mother, the mystery surrounding the death of Ronald and Verner, the brief encounter with Daniel again.

It feels like so many have happened in a mere handful of pages. Nick finds himself investigating a 20 year old murder of a famous actor

Laura says

"I caught his eye, and we looked at each other. This was going to be good, I could tell."

Politics, murder, secrets and more. So much more!

Book 4 in Marshall Thornton's Boystown series hits hard. A "find-this person" case that appeared simple enough on the surface quickly turns to BIG time trouble for Nick. The it-can-get-you-killed-in-a-hurry kind of trouble! A case with a world of hurt attached to it and a strangle hold on witnesses, history, and the truth. Can Nick reveal the truth without getting hurt? You're going to have to hop on the El train to find out. :)

I really can't say much more about the mystery or Nick's personal life without spoiling the shocks, twists, and jabs of emotions. But I will say that I learned and loved so much more about Nick Nowak in this visit. Readers really get to see what makes Nick tick. Old flames, new friends, and family all come into play with power and pain. We discover a new jealous side to Nick, which was hilariously infantile and fun at times. Haha....And Nick's fierce sense of justice shines in this book. Shines! This story held my full attention and heart from the first click til the last. A story filled with history, fear, sex and secrets. So many secrets. Secrets that needed to come out.

You won't be able to stop reading once you hear Nick's voice and see Marshall Thornton's way with words on the page. Terse, gritty, honest words that pack a punch. Quick jabs of regret, humor and love.

Come on! Come meet Nick and Chicago in the 80s. See, feel, and listen to it all.

My favorite line:

(view spoiler)

? Irena ? says

A Time For Secrets is the first *Boystown* book that isn't a story collection. You quickly understand why when you realize just how powerful this latest threat is. It is almost untouchable. Still, someone innocent had been murdered and whether you like Nick Nowak's *lifestyle*, his decisions, his choices or his mistakes, you know one thing is certain - he will not let it be.

In addition to the self-appointed case Nick has to face the thing that's been looming above him for quite some time. It finally got its dreaded name in this book.

Jennifer?Pher? says

I've realized with series books there is a part of you that is always forward thinking. Moments within your current read that aren't acted on but your brain says, oh, that will come up later. It's like a bus that you know just keeps moving when there are more books in the series. Sometimes it is your only focus.

This series is just like that but oh so different.

Yes, my brain is thinking forward and trying to figure things out, within the current read and what is going to come but never, never, ever am I ready for the next book. My brain and my heart are invested in the now.

I look forward but live within.

Shit. This is good fucking shit.

Oh and I forgot to mention. On to the next one.

KatieMc says

I really like the longer format story. Cracking a cold case isn't easy, even when the case becomes red hot again, but Nick is up to the task. We also get to see a bit on the home front, where he is dealing with Harker's health issues and his mother. Oh, and Harker makes a new friend causing Nick to deal with new emotions.

Lena♥Ribka says

Audible

I want this series to be a movie.

It'll be great, I'm sure, but it'll never be as great as the book itself.

Boystown is my all time favourite series, *Nick Nowak* is my all time favourite PI, *Marshall Thornton* is one of my favourite mystery writers, and *Brad Langer* is one of my favourite narrator.

That's all I really want to say.

If you have not read it yet, you can chose between an audible, print or an ebook version. Doesn't matter what you chose, you won't be disappointed.
