



Nemesis: The Final Case of Eliot Ness

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In his bestselling legal thrillers, William Bernhardt has explored the dark side of contemporary politics, power, and the law. Now Bernhardt turns back the clock to the city of Cleveland, Ohio, in the fall of 1935. Based on true events and new discoveries about Eliot Ness, *Nemesis* is a brilliantly told story featuring this legendary lawman's fateful duel with a terrifyingly new kind of criminal: America's first serial killer.

In Chicago, Eliot Ness had created 'The Untouchables', the fabled team of federal agents who were beyond corruption and who finally put Al Capone behind bars. Now the headline-grabbing Ness has been moved to Cleveland, where a new mayor desperately needs some positive publicity. The heroic, squeaky-clean Fed is the perfect man to become the city's director of public safety, but by the time Ness starts his new job, a killer has started a career of his own. And this man is as obsessed with blood and mayhem as Eliot Ness is obsessed with justice.

One by one, bodies are found, each one decapitated and uniquely dissected with a doctor's skill and a madman's bent. The police are baffled, the population is terrorized, and newspaper headlines blare about the so-called 'Torso Killer'. Though it's not his turf, Ness is forced to cross bureaucratic boundaries and take over the case, working with a dogged, street-smart detective and making enemies every step of the way. The more energy Ness pours into the investigation, the more it takes over his life, his marriage, even his untouchable reputation. Because in Cleveland, there is only one true untouchable: a killer who has the perfect hiding place and the perfect plan for destroying Eliot Ness.

From the first primitive use of forensic psychology to a portrait of America battling the Great Depression and a man battling his own demons, *Nemesis* is a masterwork of mystery, murder, and vivid, dynamic historical suspense.

Nemesis: The Final Case of Eliot Ness Details

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Peggy says

I listened to this audiobook. I guess I expected more than this book could deliver. I admit, I know nothing about Eliot Ness, so I didn't know he was such a loser. I remember Robert Stack from my childhood TV days, but this Eliot Ness is so tone-deaf and arrogant it was hard for me to take. He is fresh off his Capone catching glory days in Chicago. Ness has moved to Cleveland to clean up the corruption in the police department, implement new traffic safety laws, and form a boys club for the Depression Era youth. All well and good, but he gets dragged kicking and screaming into investigating a gruesome serial killer who chops up his victims. Time and time again Ness ignores advice; he seems to toggle between being unconcerned about the killer, and being vigilant about him. He ignores his wife as she begs to him to spend time with her. The case ends up unsolved and Ness is okay with that, even though he knows very well who the killer is. I hated it.

Mary says

Cleveland, Ohio, in the fall of 1935. Based on true events and new discoveries about Eliot Ness, *Nemesis* features the legendary lawman's fateful duel with a terrifyingly new kind of criminal: America's first serial killer. One by one, bodies are found, each one decapitated and uniquely dissected with a doctor's skill and a madman's bent. The police are baffled, the population is terrorized, and newspaper headlines blare about the so-called "Torso Killer."

From the first primitive use of forensic psychology to a portrait of America battling the Great Depression and a man battling his own demons, *Nemesis* is a work of mystery, murder, and vivid, dynamic historical suspense.

Good book. I enjoyed the story and the historical setting.

L.M. Elm says

I would agree with some other reviewers I felt disappointed with this book too. While the dialogue is as rapid fire as blasts from a Tommy gun, just using that as the sole method of characterization isn't enough. There were too many instances where it took three or four paragraphs to figure who was speaking. At one point I thought is the author trying to write a scene play or emulate Hemmingway? The ending felt rushed and Ness' character's felt wishy-washy and didn't really fit with how he reacted in the previous 2/3 of the book. At the book's conclusion I found the author's two page acknowledgement listing the source material he had used far more facinating then all the previous pages put together.

Rick Ludwig says

I'm a Bill Bernhardt fan, as anyone who has read my previous reviews of his Ben Kincaid series can tell you. But this book is a special kind of jewel. It stands alone and draws you into to a story that is mostly or almost totally real, depending on how you want to take it. Like Eliot Ness, the book does its job with dedication and skill, and cares little about where the trail will ultimately lead. Ness is drawn as a persistent, but flawed character who is only truly alive when he is stretching all of the rules to make the world he lives in safer--by his own definition of safer, of course. You can hate him, idolize him, or complain he's too set in his ways, but you cannot ignore him. Even those who fight him or betray him know that he is someone to respect. I knew nothing of this "last" case of his and learned a great deal about the realities of the mid-1930s from Bernhardt's finely drawn and obviously accurate portrait of Cleveland, Ohio in 1935. His characters deserved my attention and his plot moved at a brisk and compelling pace through a landscape true to its time and circumstances. I love historical fiction as my reviews of William Martin's many fine books discloses. But I now know another favorite author who is as adept in this genre as in the others he's tackled. Let's have more like this, okay Bill?

Teechbiz says

Honestly, before I read the book I knew very little about Eliot Ness except for he had something to do with the Untouchables. Years ago I remember hearing something about the Torso Murders. Now that I've read this book I feel that the case was solved but it was covered up for political expediency. I realize this was fiction, but you can tell the author did his homework. While I was reading I would google various things about Ness and the murders. Wow! Worth reading

Mary says

I was really disappointed in this book. After all, lots of things (for me) to like: Depression setting, in Cleveland, no less, a serial killer, and a wonderful, if flawed, hero. So what's wrong here? I've never read Bernhardt, but he manages to make the business of serial killing, well, boring. Except for Eliot Ness's speeches to the press, and the public, the dialog is uninspired. And the suspected murderer? Just a stick figure, not the bogey-man who's been suspected of also perping the Black Dahlia murder. This sounds so mean-spirited; maybe I was expecting too much, but, bottom line is this: the book was perhaps rushed to publication, as much of the writing was lack-luster and uninspired. Too bad, as a good editor could have brought it around.

Mmmhmm says

Despite my poor rating, I did not hate this book. More like, really disappointed in it.

Of course I read this book cause I saw the Untouchables. I read the wikipedia page on Ness before I started this book, so I know beforehand it wasn't really Ness who caught Al Capone or that he was the great American hero the movie put him out to be. In the author's note in the back of the book shows Bernhardt really did his research and many of the situations that happened in the book happened in real life. Of course, certain creative liberties were taken.

And yet, how does a book that's about a serial killer, who's modus operandi was chopping up people into itty-bitty little pieces, be so darn slow and boring?

The author should've taken a lot more creative liberties. Get more crazy. But because he wanted to stay true to the actual murders, things got slow and repetitive. For goodness sake, Ness doesn't even take part of the investigation till nearly HALF-WAY into the book. I know, I was keeping track. For the first half, all Ness does is track down a few non-important traffickers and fight with his wife. And he fights with his wife A LOT. No, don't think he's abusive towards her. She's angry cause he's an absent husband and he keeps making promises he doesn't keep. Rinse and repeat for two hundred pages.

When Ness finally gets involved with the murders, that's when things get a little more fun. The dialogue gets witty, the interactions with other investigators is interesting, and one my favorite parts was when Ness has a battle of wits with a lying sheriff. Also, seeing some of the folk getting all fan-boy on Ness ("Does that mean we're Untouchables now?") is shit-loads of fun.

For me, what really got the final nail on the coffin was the climax with the torso killer. The conversation between them SUUUUCKS. Good lord, it's literally the same words spoken over and over again.

"I see myself in you."

"I'm nothing like you."

"Yes, we're very alike, aren't we? We share the same infirmity."

"I may take a drink now and then, but I'm nothing like you."

"We are nothing alike. Nothing!"

"I'm nothing like you!"

"I'm nothing like you!"

I am not exaggerating, those are taken straight from the book. Pg 337 if you wanna double-check.

Overall, this could've been so much better, so much more fun.

Marsha says

This is an engaging historical mystery. Eliot Ness has put away Capone and now is the safety director of Cleveland, Ohio. He just wants to make the city safe...ridding it of drugs and gambling and adding street lights, boys clubs, etc. Ness never meant to become embroiled in tracking a sadistic serial killer. In the afterword, you learn that this story was based on facts which makes it even more intriguing.

Dkeslin says

Based on true fact, Eliot Ness of Al Capone fame, tracks the first serial killer in Cleveland in the fall of 1935. A chilling, fast read full of excitement.

Ice says

In Chicago, Eliot Ness created "the Untouchables," the fabled team of federal agents who finally put Al Capone behind bars. Now, in the fall of 1935, Ness has been moved to Cleveland to become the city's director of public safety. But as Ness starts his new job, a grisly serial killer starts a career of his own. One by one, bodies are found, each one decapitated and dissected with a doctor's skill and a madman's bent.

The police are baffled and the population is terrorized over the so-called "Torso Killer." Though it's not his turf, Ness is forced to take over the case, but the more energy he pours into the investigation, the more it takes over his life and even his untouchable reputation. Because in Cleveland, there is only one true untouchable: a killer who has the perfect hiding place and the perfect plan for destroying Eliot Ness.

William Blake says

Certainly good enough to transcend my initial mental picture of Ness (looking very much like Kevin Costner) as the Capone-busting Untouchable. It's an unquestionably entertaining read, though not a very well-written one. But one does not pick up a thriller to spend time enthralled at the linguistically lovely turns of phrase . . . one picks them up for the gory thrills, and this book about a famous crimefighter having to reconsider the customary methodology for catching a murderer in the light of a new kind of killer is, at many points, very thrilling.

Sherry says

Somewhat of a cross between historical fiction and fact, *Nemesis* is based upon actual events from the 30's and information that came to light years later surrounding a case that Eliot Ness was involved with in the years that followed his Chicago success in putting away Al Capone.

The story was interesting and intriguing and was a fairly easy read. Most interesting to me were the little historical tidbits, such as Ness working so hard to install traffic signals that reduced the death rate from 400 to 40 in Cleveland. Never really thought about traffic signals much, but it stands to reason there was a time without them in big cities, and you can only imagine the chaos.

The book is clearly labeled fiction, but it wove fact and fiction together well. Ness is portrayed as a man driven to solve the case of a serial-killer who is hacking up transients in Cleveland during the depression.

The greater nemesis, however, proves to be the political machinery that Ness gets caught up in, as well as his own drive and refusal to let the past go.

All in all, a good book. Definitely made me want to read more about Ness and that time in our history.

Jay Arcy says

It was a super slow start. I tried reading the first few pages so many times. Then skipped to chapter two. When it became more interesting, I went back to the prologue (or was that chapter 1) and I've enjoyed it since.

Made me stay up late at night. Engaging (except the first few chapters!)

Rachel Shields Ebersole says

A historically based Depression-era serial killer mystery. I actually liked this a little more than I thought I would--it seemed well researched, the gruesome parts were few & far between and easily skipped over, and the author portrayed the difficulty of doing good in a highly public political office well--I got frustrated for the main character, frustrated AT him, and at the same time understood where he was coming from.

That said. ...it was ok. The writing was unnoticeable (could be a virtue). The ending wasn't terribly satisfying or brilliant. The supporting characters were shallow and uninteresting.

A decent diversion.

Monica says

I really liked this book! Very much. It combines some fact with a lot of fiction and the result is ideal crime fiction from the 1930s. I really only put this book down because life was messing up my reading time. I went in knowing really nothing about Eliot Ness, nor anything about the murders that took place in Cleveland. Now i want to know more.

The book moves fast, short chapters, paragraphs that don't mince words.

The ending was a bit unsatisfactory but i can see why Bernhardt concluded the way he did.
