



Knights of the Open Palm: Race Williams #1 (Black Mask)

Carroll John Daly

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The first hard-boiled detective Race Williams, runs up against the Klan in his premiere adventure, which leads him to fast and tragic action. Plus two other early Daly hard-boiled classics: "The False Burton Combs" and "Dolly." Story #1 in the Race Williams series.

Carroll John Daly (1889–1958) was the creator of the first hard-boiled private eye story, predating Dashiell Hammett's first Continental Op story by several months. Daly's classic character, Race Williams, was one of the most popular fiction characters of the pulps, and the direct inspiration for Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer.

Knights of the Open Palm: Race Williams #1 (Black Mask) Details

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Author : Carroll John Daly

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From Reader Review Knights of the Open Palm: Race Williams #1 (Black Mask) for online ebook

Greg says

Book 51: Mid-20th Century American Crime Readathon-Round 2

Having completed 50 Books by 50 Authors during Round 1, I enter Round 2. I'm going to read a second work by as many of those 50 authors as I can find.

It's only fitting that I start this second round by going back to 1923. Otto Penzler, editor of 'The Black Lizard Big Book of Black Mask Stories' tells us: "Daly is remembered today as the writer who essentially invented the quintessential genre of American literature: the hard-boiled private-eye story."

HOOK=5 stars: We're introduced to Race Williams with "...I'm what you might call the middleman-just a halfway house between the dicks and the crooks." That's as perfect of a description of a "hard-boiled" private investigator I've encountered. Plus, an opening page illustration of a Klu Klux Klan meeting in a forest is about as ominous as it gets. Will Race run up against the KKK? Will he win? And if so, how? If you aren't hooked, the hard-boiled detective genre isn't for you.

PACE=5: This novella is a breathless read.

PLOT=3: A person is missing. Race must find him. Standard for any crime genre.

CHARACTERS=5: Race, as previously stated, is the first hard-boiled series detective, and it's intentional that his first case involves race relations. Add the horrendous KKK bunch, the kidnapped son (Willie Thompson), Buck Jabine and his two sons (the ONLY 3 men in town, other than Race, who openly defy the Klan) and town members shaking in their boots (for good reason) and this cast explodes!

PLACE=4: We get a bit of the feel of a small town in the South, but not much, definitely not enough. That said, the illustration on the first page adds much atmosphere to the text, for a 4th star. And since this story is most likely only to be found in this omnibus format, you're going to encounter the illustration.

SUMMARY: This is a very good start for the first of its kind. You have to hand it to Daly for taking on such a huge issue, race relations, and pushing it toward the pulps. No, there isn't a starring role for a sexy, curvy, troubled, pulp gal. He handles it beautifully, and he does the right thing: the KKK MUST be humiliated and without giving away the when and who and how, the good guys win, gloriously.

Overall Rating for Daly's "Knights of the Open Palm"=4.4

Overall Rating for Daly's "The Third Murderer"=3.2

Average Author Rating: 3.8/2 works
