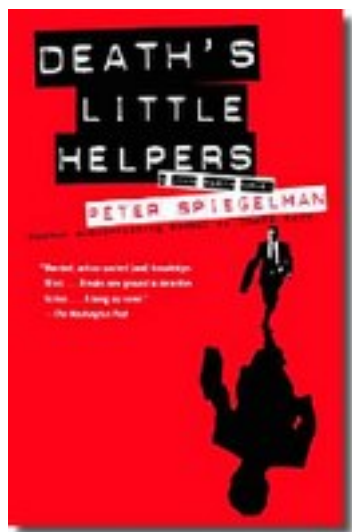


Death's Little Helpers



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著者:Spiegelman, Peter

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Crime fiction seems lately to have regained its fascination with investigators born into affluent circumstances, an archetype that was popular during the genre's "golden age" (between World Wars I and II) but was later eclipsed by more cynical and less solvent sleuths. Ethan Black, for instance, has won a following with his multimillionaire Manhattan police detective, Conrad Voort (*At Hell's Gate*). David Cray's *Dead Is Forever* introduced Philip Beckett, the black sheep progeny of a wealthy New York clan, who supplements his trust-fund allotments with whatever he can earn as private eye. And Peter Spiegelman's *Black Maps* (2004) gave us John March, a county sheriff's deputy-turned-gumshoe, whose history as the rebellious offspring of a New York banking dynasty positions him well to probe nefarious doings among Wall Street habitués.

Death's Little Helpers, the second March outing, finds this conscientious and compassionate PI working for Nina Sachs, a prickly Brooklyn artist whose ex-hubby, onetime celebrity stock-market analyst Gregory Danes, has abruptly dropped out of sight, leaving her short of both alimony and child-support payments for their peevish teenage son, Billy. The egomaniacal Danes, who'd helped clients make their fortunes during the booming 1990s, only to then go "from hero to goat overnight" because of a bad call regarding an over-inflated software enterprise, has more than his fair share of enemies. Among them: investors who had trusted his advice; a mistress, Linda Sovitch--"the blond glossy host" of a must-see cable-TV business show--who loved him as long as he could make her look good on the tube; the head legal counsel at Danes's investment firm, who's nervous about a federal investigation and had argued with the analyst just before he vanished; and a smart but pathologically private hedge-fund manager. As March digs deeper into Danes's history and habits, he strikes up a mutually beneficial alliance with a Ukrainian mobster, who already has his hooks deep into Danes's ne'er-do-well brother, and draws unwanted attention from Jeremy Pflug, the unscrupulous owner of a private intelligence service, who thinks nothing about intimidating March's family or his girlfriend, "CEO-for-hire" Jane Lu, in order to earn a buck.

Spiegelman knows this territory well (he's a financial-services vet himself), and twists together a hurtling plot that makes clear how short the distance can be between boardroom and gutter. He occasionally over-describes his scenes, sends his protagonist on far too many head-clearing runs around town, and could have done more to make March's fraying relationship with Lu interesting, or at least unusual. However, the author compensates nicely with a textured and emotion-laden portrayal of Billy Danes, a confused boy for whom "the closest thing he has to a grown-up in his life" is Ines Icasia, Nina Sachs's Spanish lover and business associate. Black Maps won a Shamus Award. Death's Little Helpers should win Spiegelman a still wider following.

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书评

In this 2nd book of the John March series, the story shows you the struggles of a PI's daily work, which is lots of work and usually not quite the result. Seeing this 'dead end' process, it's indeed frustrating to read on at times, took me maybe couple mont...

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