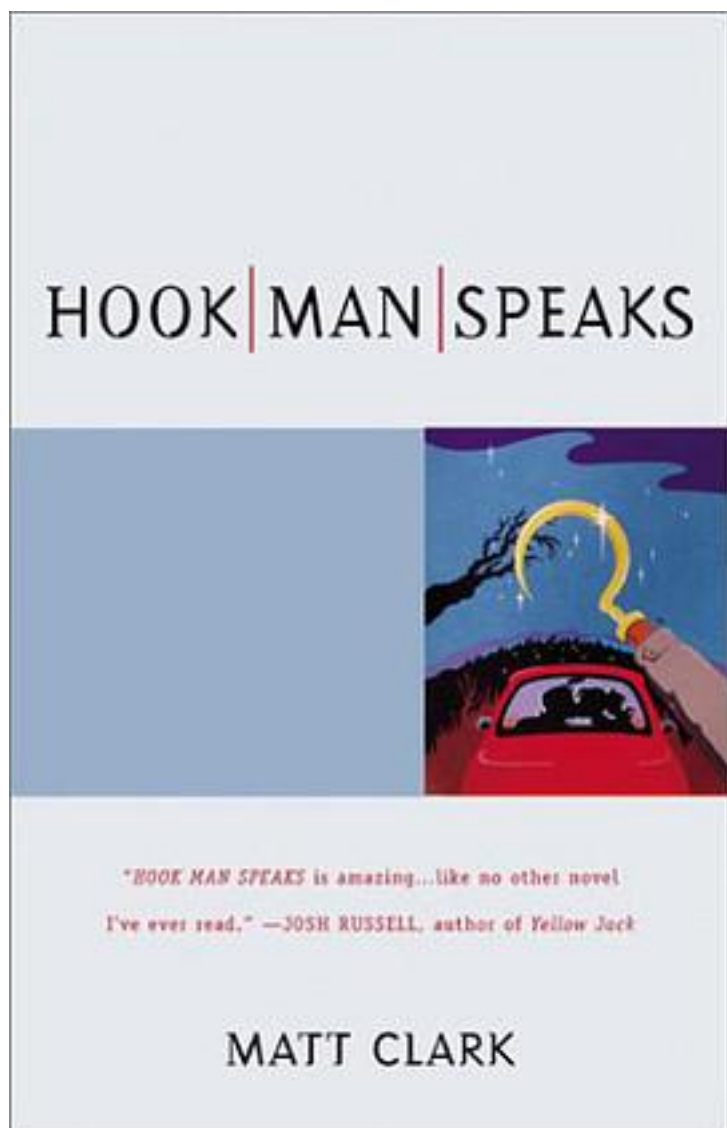


Hook Man Speaks



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著者:Matt Clark

出版者:Berkley Pub Group

出版时间:2001-10

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780425181621

From Publishers Weekly A one-armed man with a penchant for terrorizing lovers in parked cars is inexplicably elevated to the status of folk hero in Clark's muddled, disjointed first novel. As the book opens, the character known only as Hook Man is being interviewed by a folklorist named Dr. Brautigan, who takes the protagonist through his formative years, from his relationship with his father to the loss of his hand and the subsequent acquisition of his prosthesis. Brautigan then delves briefly into his subject's bizarre habit of frightening vulnerable lovers, but what's missing from the account is a coherent explanation of how Hook Man became a heroic figure beyond some vague references to America's growing love affair with violent outlaws. The romantic side of the story is no less strange, as Clark chronicles Hook Man's odd, ongoing relationship with a woman named Rosemary, who claims to have been served a fried rat by a well-known fast-food chicken franchise back in the '80s. The rest of the plot revolves around a trip Brautigan and Hook Man take to El Paso to interview an even sleazier figure named Axe Man, who delivers a bizarre monologue-cum-diatribes about America's fascination with evil. Clark, who died of liver and colon cancer at the age of 31, shortly before this book was published, manages to connect the dots in the individual scenes, with one noteworthy exception dealing with Hook Man's sexual initiation. But the sum of the parts is frequently incoherent and inexplicable, a marginal treatise that sheds little light on its subject. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Leonard Gage is the embodiment of the Hook Man, a figure well known from the urban legend in which teen lovers parked in some rural lover's lane hear a noise and drive away in fear, later discovering the bloody hook of a one-armed madman hanging from their car door. In Clark's funny, inventive, and ultimately moving first novel, Dr. Peter Brautigan, an academic folklorist, is interviewing Gage. As the narrative alternates between the present, in which Brautigan obsessively studies the Hook Man's modus operandi, to the past, in which we learn about Gage's life and how he lost his arm, other urban legends are introduced: the Kentucky Fried Rat Lady, the Disappearing Hitchhiker, and the Axe Man. Each legend is based on an event distorted by retelling. In this fictional exploration of the origins of urban legends, Clark deftly explores not only our desire to be normal but also how others' perceptions of us shape how we see ourselves. The talented Clark died of cancer at the age of 31, and his first novel is published posthumously. This offbeat book will be enjoyed in large fiction collections. Andrea Caron Kempf, Johnson Cty. Community Coll. Lib., Overland Park, KS Dodd, Susan. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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