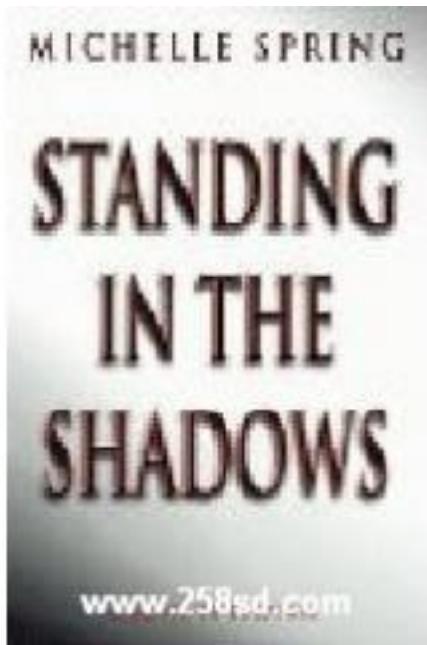


Standing in the Shadows



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Amazon.com In Standing in the Shadows, Michelle Spring's third novel about Laura Principal, Cambridge-based private eye, the detective investigates the brutal murder of a widow at the hands of her 11-year old foster child. Daryll Flatt was convicted of crushing Geraldine King's skull with a barrage of rocks and concrete blocks. As a police detective on the case puts it, "This was a Chicken Little kind of death. The sky fell in." Two years after the murder, Daryll's older brother hires Principal to learn more about why he did it. As she interviews the boy's neighbors, social workers, and relatives about his character, Principal begins to notice that a) most people thought the boy was hyperactive and disturbed but not homicidal, and b) the men she talks with liked the widow, but the women generally did not. Along the way, Principal learns more than she wanted to know about the messy lives of the

well-kept denizens of Cambridge. She meets nosy, vitriolic neighbors, men who are unkind to their wives, and a fellow in a gorilla suit who exposes himself to young children. And yes, she begins to get the distinct feeling that she is being followed. The story is an engrossing one, and Laura Principal is good company. She's a thoughtful, observant narrator who has entertaining friends and coworkers. There's not much action in this book, but there is plenty of suspense, thanks to the odd assortment of characters Spring has created. Initially, none of these characters appear to be particularly suspicious (except the man in the ape outfit), but most of them have done something horribly wrong. Principal doesn't want to believe that a little boy could murder a nice old lady. She can't understand why people are so awful to one another. She keeps asking herself, Why would a person hurt another person like that? That's a pretty compelling question. -Jill Marquis From Kirkus Reviews
Nobody ever said Daryll Flatt's life was any bed of roses. By the time he was 11, he'd already been deserted by his abusive father, abandoned by the brother who said he loved him but took off for a job in Australia anyway, and bereaved of the grandmother who'd taken him in. But does any of that excuse his bashing in the head of Geraldine King, the temporary foster mother his social worker had placed him with? Now that Daryll, who unhesitatingly confessed to the Cambridge police, has served 18 months of his sentence, Howard Flatt, back from Australia, wants inquiry agent Laura Principal to find out why the boy killed his guardian. What makes a child kill? asks Laura, whose scant experience (*Every Breath You Take*, 1994) has done nothing to prepare her for this case. Luckily, the investigators Q-and-A with Geraldine's uncordial neighbors and Daryll's uncaring relatives will be broken up by distractions an unexpected brush with her partner Sonny Mendlowiz's latest divorce case, an attempt to track down the flasher who's been menacing her friend Helen Cochrane's daughter that will end up throwing unexpected light on Geraldine's murder. Highly competent parboiled British detective work, even if a crucial few of the *dramatis personae* remain muffled. -- Copyright © 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. See all Editorial Reviews

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