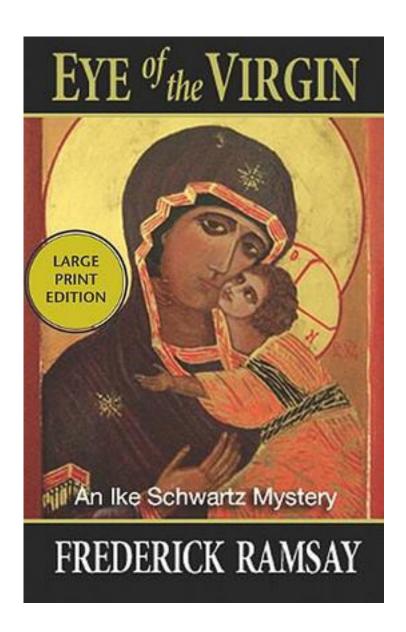
Eye of the Virgin



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On the same evening that a body is found in Picketsville's urgent care clinic, a mysterious break-in occurs at the house of one of Callend University's faculty. Both seem to be connected to an icon, "The Virgin of Tenderness," in the faculty member's possession. The fact that the body is that of the faculty member's ex-wife's lover who, more interestingly seems to have entered the country under an assumed name only complicates things for Sherriff Ike Schwartz. In the search for killers and thieves, what appears to be outdated spycraft, a microdot, is found on the icon. In an era of sophisticated cyber-encrypted information transfer, the presence of this bit of CIA nostalgia brings in Charlie Garland and the forces from Langley. Ike has no wish to engage with them or their problems. He has killers to apprehend and sets out to do his job in spite of the meddling by government agencies. That the bit of spycraft is something more than old time microphotography and it carried information that implicates the involvement of Israel's super secret Mossad only complicates an already messy set of problems. A dead CIA agent, a rogue handler, and a potential international incident are avoided outside the faculty member's house as the good, the bad, and the ugly are neatly sorted and carted away. During the course of all this, Ruth's mother arrives for an extended visit, Ike and Ruth are officially engaged, and the Sutherlins, Billy, Frank, and Essie, like Dilsey Gibson, endure.

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