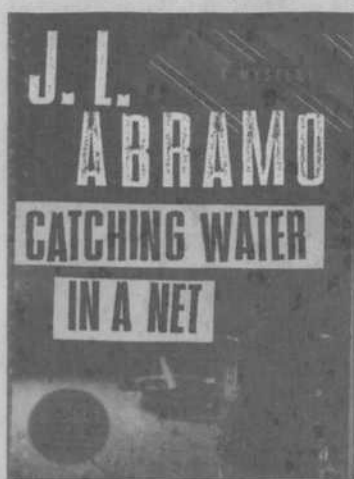


BOOK REVIEW

Detective mystery compels but doesn't stray from its genre



CATCHING WATER IN A NET
J.L. Abramo

BY CARRIE PHILLIPS
THE GAMECOCK

Catching Water in a Net doesn't sound like murder

mystery title; it evokes images of Nicholas Sparks, not Agatha Christie. It's attached, however, to one of the most classically oriented examples of pulp detective fiction to come out recently. First-time author J.L. Abramo is a Brooklyn native who lives in Columbia with his wife, Janis McWayne, a doctoral student at the USC School of Public Health. Abramo has created a tough piece of fiction that won the 2000 Private Eye Writers of America/St. Martin's Press Award for Best First Private Eye Novel.

Abramo has created a tightly knit, no-holds-barred novel that catches the reader and holds him through a deluge of murder, betrayal and suspense. The book's 230 pages take off with a woman's entry into the private

investigator's office. Evelyn Harding needs P.I. Jake Diamond to find her husband, Harry. Harry Harding is on the lam because he's suspected of murdering his business partner and Jake's mentor, L.A. private eye Jimmy Pigeon.

So the case begins. It's personal for Jake, who epitomizes every hard-boiled private eye cliché: He keeps a bottle in his desk and a pack of Camels in his pocket, and his saucy receptionist keeps his San Francisco-based business on the edge of survival. Jake is shoddy in dress and in lifestyle, and his love life is tragic and distant. He has all the right friends, from mob bosses and inmates to cops, and everything in between.

When Harding turns up dead, Jake becomes a suspect and has

to use every friendship and connection in San Francisco and L.A. to keep himself out of jail until he can clear his name and find Pigeon's killer. He's forced to request help from two mob bosses, dodge the strong men of another and even go to his ex-wife and her family for help, a humiliating move for Jake.

While the case and the characters set the pace of the novel, the most intriguing and engaging aspect is the emerging relationship-that-should-have-been between Jake Diamond and Jimmy Pigeon. As the case moves on, Jake finds out things he should have but was never inclined to know about the man he silently revered.

Jimmy Pigeon took Jake under his wing and turned him from a struggling actor into a private eye. While the two men were friends, the 400 miles



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http://www.hometown.aol.com/jakediamondpi

between their respective cities and Jake's personal hang-ups kept them from being as close as they should have been. Jake comes to realize he should have been more of a friend to his mentor and teacher and begins to treat the case as the last thing he can do to make up for the time that was lost between them.

Abramo treats the situation with just the right amounts of tenderness and unforgiving candor. Jake knows he messed up—that's why he must try so hard to make amends, even though he knows that time can never be regained. But, as Jake's ex-wife tells him, it's "a step in the right direction."

Abramo has certainly taken a step in the right direction in the creation of this character. The novel sparkles throughout with the wit of an Intelligent author who obviously knows the ins and outs of his genre. The story knows it's hard-boiled private eye fiction. It stays on course and never strays into the dangerous realms of symbolism and literary fiction. That dedication to his art makes Abramo's offering that much more compelling and worthy of notice. This is the first in a series of Jake Diamond, P.I., novels, and he promises to be as captivating a private eye as P.D. James' Adam Dalgleish or Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum.

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- Shannon Byrd
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- Kristen Demaree
- Jenni Dwyer
- Sara Eddleman
- Cheri Fish
- Tiffany Galloway
- Jenny Gesick
- Jessica Green
- Andrea Hollon
- Cassandra Kleinlein
- Lyndsay Knowles
- Crystal Krom
- Amanda Lee
- Tess Lockavitch



- Heather Martin
- Ashley McGee
- Meghan McNair
- Mandy Mesimer
- Leslie Miller
- Jennifer Morehead

- Kate Mulcahy
- Lori Mullins
- Brooke Munn
- Grace Nachman
- Melissa Nassauer
- Laurie Nigels
- Erica Oberg
- Katie Owens
- Katie Page
- Leslie Patterson
- Jenny Rhodes
- Sara Ryan
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- Sheena Smith
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