

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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The Painted Gun.

Spinelli, Bradley (Author)

Mar 2017. 224 p. Akashic, paperback, \$15.95. (9781617754982). e-book, (9781617755057).

Remember *Laura*, the novel or the movie, with its detective falling in love with the image of a woman whose murder he's investigating? Spinelli here works an oblique turn on that classic. David Crane, a San Francisco "information consultant," is hired to find the missing—and, like Laura, gorgeous—Ashley. The twist? Crane has only one clue to work with. An oil painting. Of him. By her. And he's never met her, nor posed for her, nor even heard of her. As he trolls through the usual collection of goons, following Crane as he looks for clues, Spinelli treats us to a sprightly sampling of noirish turns of phrase. A blonde is "tragically washed out." A face is "beaming with rancor." Then Spinelli tries to blend this romantically stylized world with one of modern evil: greedy multinationals, the CIA installing and supporting dictators, hit squads—all the ingredients of a "ripped from the headlines" thriller. It doesn't quite work—too much oil and water—but read it anyway, and treasure the intriguing mystery and its haunting solution.

— *Don Crinklaw*