

Pilate's Cross

By J. Alexander Greenwood

Thriller/Suspense Novel 55,647 words.

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Pilate's Cross takes “murder in a small town” to a new level in this generation-spanning tale of death, deceit and the art of finding yourself while lost.

John Pilate is looking for a fresh start at a teaching job in a small Midwestern college town. He quickly becomes the whipping boy for Cross College’s president and a curiosity for the townsfolk. Out of sheer boredom, he stumbles into a 40-year-old murder conspiracy.

The college librarian befriends Pilate and shares the story of the violent death of the college’s former president mere days after JFK’s assassination; a murder that still has loose ends. Pilate begins digging into the mystery with the help of a fellow instructor, the lovely yet wary Kate, whose funeral director husband died mysteriously a few years earlier.

The local sheriff is looking over Pilate’s shoulder and oddly begins to consult him about aspects of his investigation. Together they discover a grave robbery, the desecration of two corpses and a savage assault on an elderly mortician linked to Kate.

Pilate's amateur investigation upsets the town fathers and the Cross College president. To make matters worse, a sarcastic “imaginary friend” called Simon dogs Pilate’s every move; both fueling and hindering him as he tries to unravel the secrets of Cross College.

He discovers a tie between the murders in 1963 and a land deal being engineered by Cross College’s arrogant, ambitious president. The land deal threatens plans by the crooked and dangerous longtime mayor of Cross Township—who was at the center of the murders in 1963. In too far to “wash their hands of the mystery,” Pilate and Kate risk death as they pit forces against each other to get to the truth, which has been sealed with the ashes of a dead man for more than forty years.

Despite the machinations of the mayor, his boss and his own psyche, Pilate learns all in a final, bloody confrontation at the funeral home. He narrowly survives and finds the key to what really happened in 1963, putting the mystery and the dead finally to rest.