

Novel Gains Organic Cult Following

In the expansive realm of literature, certain works rise above the ordinary, developing a dedicated and fervent fanbase that propels them to cult status.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- In the expansive realm of literature, certain works rise above the ordinary, developing a dedicated and fervent fanbase that propels them to cult status.

'Skulduggery' by the notable recluse, Australian Paul Rushworth-Brown, stands as one such hidden treasure within the domain of historical fiction mystery. Over time, this novel has quietly nurtured a passionate following, captivating readers with its intricate blend of history, mystery, and intrigue.

“

I loved the descriptions, the rawness of the story and the chance for a better life something to believe in, even if they could not. A read that is hard to put down and a story to suck you in.”

Sharyn from Beauty and Lace Book Club

Melissa Wilks, on April 20, 2023, at 12:48 pm, shared her thoughts on the book, noting its 16th-century Yorkshire setting and praising author Paul Rushworth-Brown's narrative. The story revolves around Thomas, thrust into the role of the man of the house and destined for an arranged marriage, only to unexpectedly find true love with Agnes. Wilks expresses her

SKULDUGGERY
A NOVEL BY PAUL RUSHWORTH-BROWN

(Now appearing as a Historical Times monthly periodical article)

CHAPTER 1
MISSING SPARKS

In the tumultuous year of 1603, England found itself mired in a web of intrigue, where both locals and outsiders engaged in shadowy dealings. The grim era of Good Queen Bess had drawn to a close, and the realm now lay under the rule of King James, who occupied the thrones of England and Scotland. However, King James' reign was far from a tranquil one.


As the eve of his second Parliament approached, a sinister Catholic conspiracy against the monarch was unveiled – an event that would echo through history as the notorious Gunpowder Plot. This revolution sent shockwaves across the nation, igniting sectarian violence and shattering the very foundation of King James' promised religious tolerance.

England, once poised for unity, now stood divided. The rift between the king and his Parliament deepened, plunging the country into an unrelenting state of turmoil. Financial woes and rampant inflation only added to the headaches, bearing down heavily on the populace.

For the less fortunate, these were times of dire change. Scarcer food, pervasive poverty, and the brutal persecution of Catholics for their beliefs defined the daily struggle. In response to this turmoil, Parliament introduced a bill, which sought to outlaw all English adherents of the Catholic Church.

But it was on the distant moors of Yorkshire, some two hundred miles away from the political machinations of London, where a single family would experience the profound, lasting repercussions of these transformative events. Their story like so many others in this era, stands as a testament to the resilience and indomitable spirit of those who weathered the storms of 1603.

The bleak Pennine moors, a beautiful, harsh place close to the sky, rugged and rough, no boundaries except the horizon which in some places went on forever. Green pastures and upward hills, the colours of ochre, brown and pink in the Spring. Green squares divide the land on one side of the lane and on the other. Sleepy with thick wool



and dark moor dot the hills and dales. One room cruck cottages were scattered, smoke billow out of some and not others. Dry stone walls divide and fall, a patchwork of green, green and greener. Long grasses whisper white, swaying in the chilled wind, waiting for the summer months. As the sun goes down, the silver beak glimmers among the ghost-like trees that line the bank. The country-side sings its song to the beat of the day, a chorus of echoes from the undulating hills. Clouds line the horizon and widen the gap between the blue and the moor.

Thomas Rushworth, a man of medium height, and a face weathered by the punishing wind and harsh burnings of summer sun of the Pennines, the boyish good looks hardened by winter months, injured and alert. Thick dark brown eyebrows crowned honest, deep-set eyes, a straight nose and chiselled chin.

A vicar's hat, worn stained and tipped slightly, shadowing his relaxed expression. The hat peaked a weathered, leathery countenance and allowed the thickness of the brow like cut to be seen reaching the nape and covering the top part of the ears. The hat, slightly too big, had been down with a worn, sandy coloured brim lining at the base of the crown. A slanting shadow, but with a light tick on his long chin from the old steel straight blade that he used. Long white shirt girted by frequent washing opened at the top to show braided chest hair, speckled with grey. It had his heavy upper arms, bent of hours upon hours in the fields, tapering to the wrist and his rough, calloused hands. A pinkish red tattered sheepskin tunic frayed at the bottom stretched and secured across his chest with two sheepskin ties. A brown jerkin dyed with madder plant dye and mutton sleeves wide at the top. Tight, dirty, cream coloured hose covered both slender legs from hip to waist, stained from the day's cultivations. The codpiece pinkish a similar colour to the hose, covered the groin area but Thomas as did not find the need to advertise his masculinity unlike some others in the village. Tattered leather and wood shoes tied at the top gathered loosely around the ankles, and the thick sheepskin soles tried their best to keep out the unforgivingly earthy chill. Not a tall man but one of confidence which made him seem taller. His bearing was upright, although he walked with care, before putting weight down on the foot lost a stone piece of the thin leather sole.

It had been a severe winter, and a ten week deep freeze had made life intolerable for Thomas and his family. Trees split, hinds were frozen to death and travellers sold stores of the Thames freezing, stopping river traffic and allowing people to walk across it. Thomas remembered the stories his father told him as a boy about the great drought that had brought king and country to its knees and the memories of the summer of the flooding which spoiled crops and decimated food reserves. Thomas was only a youngster then, but he could still remember the feeling of the pang of hunger that he had felt when his mother had carefully split that little bread and potato that they had into small portions for their family of six. Better the pang of hunger than resorting to eating the unimaginable that others in the village had succumbed to his father said. He sat there on the hard uncongenial wooden stool warmed by the central fire, smoking his clay barrel shaped pipe and silently staring into the flames.

The shine of the fire reflected off his face and dried the film of mud that clung to his leather and sheepskin foot coverings. The aroma of his manly smells from the day's labour, made more pungent by the heat of the fire, drifted up his nostrils but was quickly overpowered by the recent release of steamy fumes by the cow that lived in the corner of the one room cottage.

He could feel the breeze sneaking through the gaps in the closed shutters, and it reminded him of the dust and winter repair needed to the exterior of the fire wall. A job for the summer after scotching had been done though. He watched a spark fly out of the fire and bridle light a piece of straw, forcing the English Marriot to reposition itself to a safer distance from the fire. The flames were quickly extinguished by the dampness of the trodden straw and the wet earthen floor, which at times flooded with the Spring rains. All the while his, a frisky rat ferret shared himself off one corner of the hearth, one eye on his master and one on the dry earth, his favour as hunting spot where he could be assured of a scratch and pea, a reward for the creature of a pest.

His wife silently stirred the potting in the cauldron, ensuring that added grain didn't stick to the bottom. The patted rabbit started last night added a wealthy protein to the mix, a treasured prize.

The smoke from the fire mixed with the sweet aroma of Thomas' pipe tobacco, which filled the room that was perpetually smoky. They didn't have a chimney and it was far too early in the season to open the shutters at night. He wondered one day if he would have a chimney.

'Skulduggery's' cult status earns it a spot as a periodical in the prestigious Historical Times in the US

Featured in [Northern Life](#) magazine's March/April Book Club alongside notable titles such as Tom Hindle's 'The Murder Game,' Wilbur Smith's 'Nemesis,' and Katie Flynn's, Sunday Times bestseller, 'A Rose and a Promise,' 'Skulduggery' has achieved further recognition. It now graces the pages of the prestigious [Historical Times](#) magazine in the United States as a monthly periodical. Additionally, the novel holds a prominent position on the front cover of 'Living in the Past' in the Authors' Porch Magazine (US). Its allure even extended to the members of the [Beauty and Lace Book Club](#), who awarded it a stellar five-star review.

admiration for the suspenseful plot, declaring 'Skulduggery' a must-read, particularly for fellow enthusiasts of historical fiction mystery with a twist.

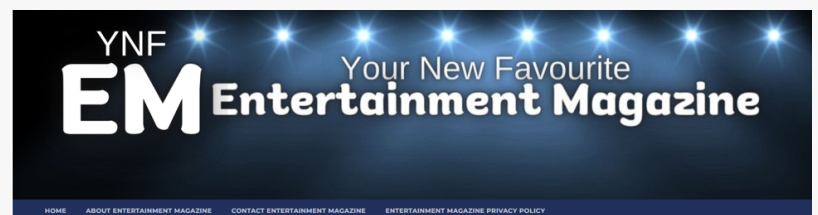
Step into the captivating world of 'Skulduggery,' where a family of isolated copyholders finds themselves thrust into a web of danger that threatens their very existence. Set against the tumultuous backdrop of the English Reformation, this meticulously researched historical mystery unfolds with a cast of both lovable and despicable characters, immersing you in a fully realized world that's both utterly believable and fantastically unbelievable. While you may not find the novel adorned with award stickers on the bestseller table at your local bookstore, this novel promises to be a hidden gem waiting to be discovered by those seeking a unique and engrossing literary experience.

At its core, 'Skulduggery' is a meticulously crafted historical fiction mystery novel that weaves together elements of suspense, adventure, and historical accuracy. Set against the backdrop of a bygone era, the novel introduces readers to a world of political machinations, clandestine societies, and characters with hidden agendas. Its appeal lies not only in the captivating storyline but also in the author's ability to immerse readers in a vividly portrayed historical setting.

A key element in the creation of a cult following is the emotional attachment fans develop for the object of their admiration. 'Skulduggery' masterfully taps into this phenomenon by offering readers a rich and immersive experience within its historical narrative. The characters' struggles,



The novel gradually found its audience through word of mouth, media attention, and the passionate advocacy of its growing fanbase



Second Edition Of Paul Rushworth-Brown's Skulduggery To Be Released February 2023

BOOKS | HISTORICAL FICTION

FEB 6, 2023 | Book, Edition Of Paul, Released February 2023, Rushworth-Brown's, Second, Skulduggery To Be



As with many cult classics, 'Skulduggery' aligns itself with the ethos of underground culture

triumphs, and complexities resonate deeply with readers, fostering a sense of kinship and connection. The emotional engagement creates a strong bond among fans, who proudly identify themselves as part of the exclusive 'Skulduggery' community.

The novel's journey from obscurity to cult status is closely tied to its association with a niche market within the historical fiction mystery genre. While mainstream historical novels might adhere to well-trodden paths, 'Skulduggery' takes a bold and unconventional approach. Its deviation from conventional norms attracts readers seeking a fresh perspective and a break from the predictable. This niche appeal contributes to the sense of exclusivity that defines cult followings.

As with many cult classics, 'Skulduggery' aligns itself with the ethos of underground culture. Its eccentricity and anti-establishment spirit make it stand out, attracting readers who relish the idea of being part of a literary movement that defies the norm. The novel's uniqueness becomes a rallying point for fans, who celebrate their shared appreciation for this unconventional masterpiece.

In the entertainment industry, the term 'sleeper hit' perfectly encapsulates the unexpected success of 'Skulduggery.' Lacking high-profile endorsements or flashy launches, the novel gradually found its audience through word of mouth, media attention, and the passionate advocacy of its growing fanbase. Its success defied conventional expectations, proving that a story's narrative strength, approach, and novelty can often surpass the need for star power or extravagant production.

In the end, 'Skulduggery' stands as a testament to the enduring power of narrative and the unpredictable nature of literary success. As it continues to charm new readers and grow its cult following, the novel exemplifies the magic that happens when a compelling story finds its way into the hearts of those who appreciate the extraordinary in the ordinary. 5 *****

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