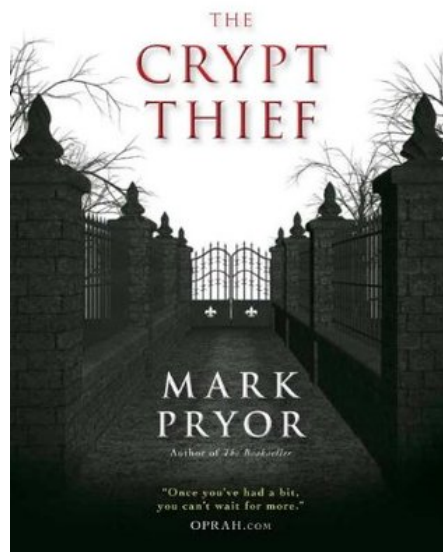


*A Hugo Marston Novel*



## **The Crypt Thief: A Hugo Marston Novel**

*Mark Pryor*

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# The Crypt Thief: A Hugo Marston Novel

*Mark Pryor*

## **The Crypt Thief: A Hugo Marston Novel** Mark Pryor

It's summer in Paris and two tourists have been murdered in Père Lachaise cemetery in front of Jim Morrison's grave. The cemetery is locked down and put under surveillance, but the killer returns, flitting in and out like a ghost, and breaks into the crypt of a long-dead Moulin Rouge dancer. In a bizarre twist, he disappears under the cover of night with part of her skeleton.

One of the dead tourists is an American and the other is a woman linked to a suspected terrorist; so the US ambassador sends his best man and the embassy's head of security—Hugo Marston—to help the French police with their investigation.

When the thief breaks into another crypt at a different cemetery, stealing bones from a second famed dancer, Hugo is stumped. How does this killer operate unseen? And why is he stealing the bones of once-famous can-can girls?

Hugo cracks the secrets of the graveyards but soon realizes that old bones aren't all this killer wants. . . .

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## **The Crypt Thief: A Hugo Marston Novel Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Crypt Thief: A Hugo Marston Novel for online ebook**

### **Kelly Coyle-Crivelli says**

Have a serious crush on this detective Hugo Marston, even if I do have to spend time with him and a serial killer stealing body parts from the Père La Chaise, it is still time well spent-- very well spent!

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### **Kristina Cowan says**

I first read *The Bookseller*, and I found it so engaging, I quickly picked up *The Crypt Thief* next. Here, as in his first work, Pryor does a good job of tightening tension with each scene, and through character arc.

Protagonist Hugo Marston is a modern-day Cary Grant, beloved by his friends and coworkers. I especially appreciated seeing his friendships deepen with Tom and Capitaine Garcia. That Tom would turn to alcohol and drugs to deal with the stress of his work is believable. That Hugo would strive to help his friend stop turning to them is another reason to appreciate his character. When Garcia's life is threatened, Hugo goes to great lengths to preserve his friend, even when he believes all is lost. He's a good guy, one we'd all like to have on our side if we were in a dangerous situation.

As others have indicated, the use of expletives is excessive. I could do without them. This book had more gore than *The Bookseller*--I skipped a few passages. The theatre of the readers's mind is stronger than even images on TV. While I appreciate that the author was trying to show us the mind and actions of a serial killer, I could've done without the raw scenes.

I did appreciate the depth of character revealed in the villain, Villier. I grew to understand what prompted his behavior, and I even had some empathy for him. While Villier is vile in form and function, he remains human. A foil for Marston, to be sure, shown through graceful prose.

Pryor skillfully layers description and narrative summaries into the action. He does a great job with dialogue, especially between Tom-Hugo, Claudia-Hugo, and all of the other characters.

I plan to read more of Pryor's books.

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### **Scilla says**

A couple are shot at night in the Pere Lachaise cemetery. The killed man is the son of an important American Senator and supposed to begin interning at the Embassy. Hugh Marston, as head of Embassy security, is called to help the French police. One strange thing is that the security cameras do not show the killer getting into the locked cemetery and he didn't kill like the usual assassin or terrorist. The reader soon learns the killer calls himself the Scarab, and he continues to get into the cemetery and steal the bones on a Moulin Rouge dancer. Then he goes to a small cemetery near the village of Castet and desecrates the grave of a local

farmer. The police soon find that the killed girl was Pakistani and came to Paris under a false passport with the son of a known terrorist, Al Zakari. Hugo manages to find out how The Scarab is getting into cemeteries, but catching him is another thing. With the help of Tom, his CIA friend, his Paris police friend Garcia, and Claudia his girlfriend Hugo learns more about the Scarab. The reader also follows along with the Scarab as he gets ready for the final moment. The book is very exciting and keeps the reader on his or her toes.

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### **Sharon Mensing says**

When a debut book is as strong as the first Hugo Marston mystery, *THE BOOKSELLER*, one always wonders whether the sophomore attempt will live up to that high mark. In this case, with *THE CRYPT THIEF*, Pryor has proven that his first success was not a fluke. He brings both the seedier side and the diplomatic halls of Paris to life every bit as successfully as he did in the first Hugo Marston book.

The story of the eponymous crypt thief, the Scarab, drives the narrative this time around. He scuttles through the tunnels under the streets (and cemeteries) of Paris, collecting bones and more for a mad project. As Hugo builds his knowledge of the scarab, the scarab builds his of Hugo, and they work their way toward their suspenseful final meeting. It all begins with a murder of a young American and his Palestinian girlfriend, a dancer at the Moulin Rouge. The American's father is a high-powered politician, Senator Norris Holmes, who is anxious to believe his son was killed by a terrorist rather than as senseless "in the wrong place at the wrong time" collateral damage. While Holmes wages a war against terrorism, Hugo works with Garcia from the local police to track down the Scarab.

Hugo, an ex-FBI agent and now chief of security at the American embassy in Paris, combines forces with his old friend and CIA agent, Tom, and with his sometimes reporter girlfriend, Claire, as he tracks the Scarab through the streets and tunnels of Paris. As he digs into the Scarab's background, he finds himself traveling to rural France to understand the poor and remote existence the killer lived as a child. Throughout the book, regardless of where the action is taking place, Pryor does an amazing job of dropping the reader right into the locale. His descriptive language is beautiful. Equally fine is the manner in which each character emerges as a fully realized individual.

Although I had read the first book and had thus acquired the background to this one, I don't think it would be hard to jump right into the series with book two, *THE CRYPT THIEF*. Pryor weaves the backstory into the present seamlessly, making it possible for a new reader to appreciate the series while not annoying a continuing reader by rehashing old events.

I have only one problem with this book, and that is that it is newly published and I know I have a wait before Pryor can write another one. I'll be first in line to get that next one, though.

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### **reea says**

Tavaly olvastam a sorozat bevezető kötetét, és nem titok, hogy egyből egymásra is találtunk. Nem volt tökéletes, de igazi, hagyományos alapokra építő modern krimi kaptam, ezért kiváltképpen örültem a folytatásnak.

## Lance Charnes says

Author Pryor's series hero Hugo Marston, chief of security for the American Embassy in Paris, makes his second appearance in this novel. If you read the first one ( *The Bookseller* ), you know what's in store. I didn't. Some of the author's stylistic decisions left me cold. Add to this a genre that's never been my favorite and you'll understand my rating. As they say, your mileage may vary.

The setup: near Jim Morrison's grave in Pere Lachaise cemetery, someone kills the son of an American senator and a young Egyptian woman who's not what she initially seems. This someone also makes off with half the bones of Jane Avril, one of Toulouse-Lautrec's favorite dancers at the Moulin Rouge. Our Hero is sucked into the investigation. Needless to say, it becomes far more complicated than anyone at first imagines.

The prose is clean and reasonably unfussy. Pryor's descriptions set the scenes nicely and show a practical knowledge of and affection for the byways of Paris. He drizzles in enough observed detail to make us feel like the characters are in some reasonably authentic version of the City of Lights without beating us over the head with the Eiffel Tower. The story's pace is brisk and the plot points fall efficiently (if a bit conveniently); I finished this in two shortish sessions.

Hugo is one of those honorable, upright, square-jawed heroes who'd be played by the young Gregory Peck or Van Johnson in the 1940s movie. He's a bit of a throwback, in other words. This also implies that, like in some of those 1940s crime flicks, the supporting characters are rather more interesting than the hero, though not necessarily less typey. There's the Plucky Girl Reporter (Myrna Loy, playing French), the Stalwart Local Cop (Claude Rains), the Roguish Secret Agent Sidekick (Joseph Cotton, or Fred MacMurray in his bad-boy phase), and the Avuncular Worldly Boss (Leo G. Carroll, perhaps?).

Why all the 1940s references? Perhaps because I kept seeing this play out in black-and-white on my mental movie screen. While ostensibly set in the present day, it has a lost-in-time quality, especially in the first half. The dialog is heavy with the kind of snappy banter that doesn't happen in the real world (and most all the protagonists are equally quick with a *bon mot*) but was common in 1930s and 1940s films. The characters exist in a world in which Hugo having to pay for his buddy's prostitute is an amusing episode and not the immediate precursor of him losing his security clearance and undergoing an IG investigation; one in which smart men in smart suits can settle the affairs of man and state over a pastis in a café in the middle of the day. I kept waiting for Hugo to slip on his snap-brim fedora and to carry a Luger instead of a Glock. Incidental talk about terrorism and rendition ends up sounding anachronistic.

Did I mention this is also a serial-killer yarn? Yes, it is, which I was only dimly aware of going into this. Serial-killer stories are *not* among my faves; I've never found complete nutters to be especially interesting. The villain in this story is definitely a complete nutter and has some rather unpleasant hobbies. If you like this sort of tale, you'll likely find much to like in *The Scarab* (Our Villain), and if not, you may share my reaction. You may also be a bit put off by the juxtaposition of Our Heroes' witty banter and Our Villain's slicing-and-dicing; in places it seemed like a marriage of *The Thin Man* and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Don't get me wrong; *The Crypt Thief* isn't a bad book. I think what we have here is a mismatch between story and reader; I got something other than what I thought was on offer, and as such couldn't forgive it ills I might

otherwise let pass in something more to my liking. If you like serial-killer stories served up with less blood and set in places other than Los Angeles and New York City, you could do worse than this one. This might even be a four-star read for you. For me, however, it's a strong three stars, and I think I'll wait for the film adaptation to show up on TCM.

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## **Paul says**

I quite liked Pryor's first Hugo Marston novel, *The Bookseller*. A biblio-mystery set in Paris? My favorite things together in one novel! Pryor's evocation of Paris continues strong in the second novel of the series, *The Crypt Thief*, but he loses, alas, the rare book focus and has Marston tracking a psychopathic tomb robber. Pryor offers a well-paced, action-filled novel with strong characters – the problem is, I just don't enjoy those thrillers whose point of view switches back and forth between the crazy serial killer and the cop who's chasing him/her. If you like that sort of thing, upgrade my rating to four stars. As for the rest of us, let's hope Mr. Pryor brings back the rare book angle.

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## **Steven Z. says**

Paris, a late summer evening when two unsuspecting tourists in search of Jim Morrison's grave site in the Pere Lachaise cemetery are murdered. So begins Mark Pryor's second installment of his Hugo Marston series, *THE CRYPT THIEF*. Marston, a former FBI profiler and chief of security at the American embassy in Paris is called into the ambassador's office and told that one of the murder victims is Maxwell Holmes, the son of a US senator who was about to begin an internship at the embassy; the other is an Egyptian woman named Hanna Elserdi. Later the action shifts to another cemetery, nine hours from Paris in the small town of Castet where the night watchman, named Duguay is murdered. It seems that all three murders were committed by the same man.

It turns out that the Egyptian girl is Pakistani, from Karachi and her real name is Abida Kiam. She had traveled to Paris with Mohammad Al-Zakiri, the son of a prominent mullah in Pakistan whose views were pro-al-Qaeda and Taliban. His alias was Pierre Labor, an Egyptian-Frenchman. Marston argues that the murders might all be a coincidence and not acts of terrorism, something that Senator Norris Holmes cannot accept.

The author does a nice job reintegrating characters from his first novel, *THE BOOKSELLER*. We become reacquainted with Tom Green, Marston's wisecracking and unpredictable former CIA operative who still consults for the American intelligence agency. Capitale Raul Garcia of the Paris Police Department returns to renew his relationship with Marston when they worked on solving the murder of Max, a poor bookseller who sold books from his kiosk along the Siene River. Marston's former lover/girlfriend, Claudia, a newspaper reporter reenters his life as she covers the cemetery murders. Soon, Marston will learn that in addition to the murders, a crypt has been robbed of the skeletal remains of the famous dancer, Jane Avril who had been buried over seventy years ago.

Early in the novel a number of questions confront Marston. First, what is the relationship between the murdered American and the woman who accompanied him and the crypt robber? Second, what role does international terrorism play in his investigation, if any. Further, when a number of crypts are broken into to steal the bones of dead can-can girls, is it related to the overall investigation or is it something even more

bizarre occurring, particularly when the killer is leaving an Egyptian scarab beetle at each murder scene. It becomes a race to the next cemetery to prevent what seems to be a serial killer from taking more lives, and “bones.”

As one reads on one gets the sense of Pryor’s views of terrorist threats and how they germinate. The treatment of Al-Zakiri by CIA operatives, who act first, then investigate thoroughly is important as it provides evidence as to why the United States is seen so negatively in the Islamic world. Marston’s measured approach is one that the author believes the US should take when dealing with a possible terrorist threat. Pryor also raises the issue of a free press during an investigation that could lead to a terrorist attack. What role should journalists play, particularly when their actions could endanger people? It is a tough call, but common sense should prevail, but at times that is not the case.

Pryor provides a well-crafted story, though his character development is weaker than his first Marston novel. But the intrigue created by the grave robber/murderer will keep the reader’s attention. The story is complex and eerie at times and should not be read right before you go to sleep, however despite what seems to be a predictable ending, the book is worth the read.

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### **May says**

I'm glad I finished it, but not all that enthusiastic about the plot. I enjoyed Hugh, Tom and Claudia enough to keep reading. Hoping Mark Pryor's next book is more like his excellent THE BOOKSELLER.

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### **Amanda says**

4 stars but knocking it down to three stars because of the f-bombs and other language that Tom uses (good heavens! the man has a foul mouth). Language is a tricky thing for me; honestly, I find the words stuck in my head and the next thing I know they are coming out of my mouth \*sigh\* NOT a good thing for a children's librarian or who is a believer.

Debating about keeping on with the series because of this. \*double sigh\* This is why adult books are so tricky; I would rather read kids' books and ya books. Don't run into this issue as much (though with ya books, it's still a factor), and kids/ya books are usually better written than most adult books!

Anyway, *The Crypt Thief* is full of action and twists and danger and bad people and favorite returning characters and ooh la la Paris. I don't know though if this is enough of a lure to bring me back.

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### **Paul says**

In this book, the second in the Hugh Marston series, Marston encounters a villain with a warped plan that compels him to kill. The book opens when a young couple surprises this killer and he shoots them. One of the couple is the son of a US Senator, hence Marston's involvement.

While the Senator pursues a terrorist angle, Marston is convinced that the killer is something different. The robbery of the bones of a long dead dancer indicates he is correct.

This was a fast read and like all of the books in this series so far, protagonists are realistic and likable, dialog flows well, and the story line moves quickly even when it stretches credibility. A well written crime thriller.

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### **Pegasaurus Horsfield says**

2nd Hugo marsten mystery is an easy reading suspense novel with enough twists to keep your interest. The villain the Scarab robs graves for particular bones.

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### **Dail Sams says**

This second novel in the Hugo Marston series is a gruesome tale of a twisted young man who becomes a serial killer for the specific purpose of collecting bones and other body parts for the resurrection and reuniting with his dead mother in a weird ceremony of fire. His first victim is the son of a U.S. senator who wants to have a great deal of control over the investigation, complicating Hugo's life.

In spite of the Senator's interference, with the help of Tom, Claudia, and Garcia, Hugo tracks the killer over a several day period of time, always missing him, until the very end when the killer plans to use Hugo in his final rite to rejoin his mother.

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### **Denise Covey says**

Another fabulous Hugo Marsden mystery penned by Mark Pryor. Set in Paris, with many well-known landmarks playing 'extras' in the story. Loved it.

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### **Anna says**

A good mystery at least for the first half of the book, it lost a lot of steam after they figured out the who and why of the killer and just sort of fizzled out at the finish. More language than I care for and a decidedly sad side plot, but a really decent leading man with courage, and a great deal of kindness if not always the most common sense.

Popsugar 2017 advanced: a book with an eccentric character

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