

California prosecutor offers readers  
an intriguing and authentic legal mystery

Eric Ferguson's *Cold Record*  
published on September 15

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California prosecuting attorney Eric M. Ferguson's first novel, *Cold Record*, was published on September 15, 2023, and is now available as a paperback or e-book on Amazon and Kindle. The hardcover will be available by September 30. Authentic and atmospheric, it recounts the story of a murder trial in rural northern California and, years later, its unexpected epilogue.

A courtroom drama that evolves into an unpredictable legal mystery, Ferguson's novel reflects the justice system as he has found it to be over nearly two decades as a prosecutor: slow and imperfect, but also essential and idealistic, and a realm where professionalism and good intentions are not the exception but the norm. The central players in *Cold Record* are thoroughly human, yet skilled, competent, and ethical.

"If you're exhausted by legal cliches – win-at-any-cost DAs, deceptive defense lawyers, arrogant judges, conniving defendants – *Cold Record* is a perfect change of pace," said friend and fellow author Mike Goodenow Weber. "Eric Ferguson dares to present attorneys and judges as the professionals they are in the real world, and *Cold Record* is a great reading experience – rich in well-developed characters, tension, plot turns and a sense of mystery that is never contrived but organic to the story."

With an understated realism, *Cold Record* depicts both the investigation and trial of a haunting murder and the impact of the crime on all those it touches.

Andrew Rodarte, accused of killing 20-year-old Haylee Branch, is directionless, confined by his past, and capable of making a final, brutal mistake. Rodarte is prosecuted by Sonya Brandstetter, a determined and unwavering Assistant DA. His astute veteran attorney, Ted Stauber, is a man who has overcome his own crushing personal loss.

Brandstetter is assisted by primary narrator John Patrick Howland, far junior, whose own instincts for justice in time come to the fore. The judge steps back from the spotlight and rises to the occasion that is the trial. And through the victim's mother, Marta Branch, the reader is confronted with the most incalculable cost of murder – the price of loss, a survivor's pain that never goes away.

Though told from the DA and police perspective, and for its first two-thirds a courtroom drama, *Cold Record* is ultimately something more: a complex, real-world story that transcends the conventions of the legal genre, of victory and defeat, and even of guilt and innocence.

Eric Ferguson, a deputy district attorney in southern California since 2005, draws on his varied experience as a prosecutor, including the post-conviction litigation of murder cases.