

***Bruce Von Stiers***  
***(4 Stars)***

Writing about certain elements of history can be definitely subjective at time. Authors of works on history sometimes will inject their own viewpoints or interpretations of certain events. But when an author uses factual events as a basic for fictional stories, that's a whole different arena.

That brings me to what this review is about. Several months ago, a book of short stories was released that deals with five specific times in history. The book is titled ***Burn Marks: A Strange Time For Letters***. It was written by **Robert D. Rice II**.

Rice took a few incidents in history and revolved stories around them based on letters. These fictional letters, as pertaining to each story, were written by someone either directly, or indirectly involved in the historical incident. This was definitely a view on historical fiction that I had never encountered before.

In the story, *The Fort Worth Star*, the reader is introduced to Dallas on November, 22, 1963. This is the day that President Kennedy was assassinated. The reader is also introduced to Marguerite Oswald, the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald. The reader gets a glimpse of who Marguerite was and her thoughts and actions on that fateful day. Let's just say that she wouldn't qualify for a Mother of the Year award. There are also a few other characters that play supporting roles in the story.

There is another story titled *The Conductor*. The story deals with someone who has advanced knowledge of Abraham Lincoln's assassination and how he handles it.

*Deja Blue* revolves around the Leopold & Loeb kidnap and murder case. It seems that a young woman named Deja had known Nathan Leopold. Was she just a casual acquaintance, a friend, or was she somehow connected to the case. Could Deja have been the

mastermind behind the kidnapping and murder of young Bobby Franks?

*Ethel – Letters of Innocence* is about Ethel Rosenberg. It moves Ethel from her days as a high school senior to her meeting and interacting with Julius, who ended up becoming her husband. And the betrayals and being set up. The story includes letters that Ethel writes to Santa about her life and thoughts. A final short letter is shown that Ethel wrote to her sons on the day of her and Julius's executions.

My favorite story in the book is *The Jumper*. Siobhan Mello was not exactly a rising star in the FBI, but she was doing okay. That is until one day, when there was a bomber who hijacked an airplane. He's holding the plane for ransom. Even though it isn't stated, the hijacker is D.B. Cooper. Siobhan is taken in for questioning by other FBI agents. They think she's in on the crime because the bomber had mentioned her name. The story moves through the process of Siobhan trying to prove her innocence and get to the bottom of things. The story has a very surprising ending which is why it's my favorite of the book.

*Burn Marks: A Strange Time For Letters* is a very good book. Rice took incidents from history and made interesting narratives surrounding them. Could someone have prevented Lincoln's assassination? Were the Rosenbergs set-up? And did D.B. Cooper act alone? Those thoughts, and more, ran through my mind as I read the stories in the book.

*Burn Marks: A Strange Time For Letters* is available on amazon.com and other book retailers.