

*Burn Marks* is a literary presentation of five short stories holding many compelling features that make each uniquely attractive gems. Before the reader even embarks on reading these tales, each story's title offers a tantalizing, succinct description of its premise, as in 'Ethel—letters of innocence - Letters to Santa Claus en route to the electric chair' or 'The Jumper - She's a fighter who won't take crap from anybody.'

Lured by these intriguing snippets of description, the reader delves into back stories and tales that take real historical events and turn them upside down for greater reflective consideration and value.

Take 'The Fort Worth Star', for example, which takes place on November 22, 1963, the day of Kennedy's assassination. The nation is preparing for Thanksgiving, not a tragedy.

After setting the scene in Texas, Rice diverts to a fun description of a woman settling in for a rest on the couch...a woman whose son happens to be Lee Harvey.

Rice's propensity for humor is injected into even this serious setting as Marguerite Oswald, along with the rest of the nation, experiences an unprecedented national disaster: *"In a house that had seen kinder days, Marguerite Oswald sat with Egypt on her lap. She and the dog struggled to get cozy, on a lumpy couch that would've been hauled to the curb, if only she had the wherewithal to replace it. She didn't, and it had survived the Department of Sanitation men's collection for another week. It wasn't terribly uncomfortable. However, if one sat on a specific corner there was a steel coil that was apt to take one's temperature. Postscript on the couch: too many butts ruin everything."*

As a timeline of events from the shooting captures the political, social, and psychological responses of the times, readers are treated to the story of a mother who knows all too well what her sons are capable of.

Unlike popular media accounts of historical events, Rice takes on the challenge of describing life-altering moments from the perspectives of

individuals who are just a bit outside the normal investigative path. This lends both a literary and reflective atmosphere to the intersection of American history and fiction, drawing readers into bigger pictures and more engrossing insights than might be anticipated by their subjects.

The five short stories in *Burn Marks* defy neat categorization, so suffice it to say that readers of good literature who enjoy diverse tales of historical fiction, psychological growth and suspense, and humor will find each story packed with food for thought and delightfully well-crafted characters based on real-world dilemmas: a combination of approaches that results in superior reads easily digested, but not easily forgotten.