



A Drink Before the War: A Novel (Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro Series)

By Dennis Lehane

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As richly complex and brutal as the terrain it depicts, here is the mesmerizing, darkly original novel that heralded the arrival of Dennis Lehane, the master of the new noir—and introduced Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro, his smart and tough private investigators weaned on the blue-collar streets of Dorchester.

A cabal of powerful Boston politicians is willing to pay Kenzie and Gennaro big money for a seemingly small job: to find a missing cleaning woman who stole some secret documents. As Kenzie and Gennaro learn, however, this crime is no ordinary theft. It's about justice, about right and wrong. But in Boston, finding the truth isn't just a dirty business . . . it's deadly.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Lehane's assured debut avoids several common first-mystery flaws before stalling on a less ordinary one. Patrick Kenzie and Angela Gennaro, two young, smart-mouthed Boston PIs, are hired by a trio of prominent macho politicians to find a State House cleaning woman who may have purloined some important "documents." The pair quickly learns that Jenna Angeline has no documents. She does have a son and a husband who lead rival black street gangs, an angry sister and a photo of one of the pols with her husband in a hotel room. While helping Patrick, Jenna is gunned down in a hail of Uzi fire; gang war is quickly declared, and the two detectives aim for a plan that will avenge the innocent and punish the guilty. Lehane leaps right into the action; more gradually, we learn about Pat's abusive father, Angie's abusive husband and the attraction smoldering between the two principals. The light tone and whipsaw banter, however, can't carry the pace when the action later slows in this mystery that starts with a bang and goes on shooting-but doesn't hit the bull's eye.

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From Library Journal

In this first novel, set in Boston, violence swirls around narrator Patrick Kenzie and partner Angleo Gennaro. This intrepid investigative duo are hired by two state senators to locate a black cleaning woman who filched several sensitive "documents." They find her easily enough, but the items she took, which point to child prostitution and political corruption, cause gang warfare and murder. Lehane's minimal use of literary references helps establish character, as do his frequent allusions to child abuse and wife battering. Rough and tumble action for a high energy, likable pair.

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From Booklist

Newcomer Lehane shows plenty of promise in his first book about a PI duo from the mean streets of Boston. Play-rough, talk-tough Patrick Kenzie and smart, feisty Angie Gennaro don't take no lip from nobody when they're on a hot case, and their latest is hot all right. When two well-known U.S. senators ask Patrick and Angie to recover some confidential documents they believe were stolen from their office by cleaning woman Jenna Angeline, the detectives think their job will be a piece of cake: find the woman, tell the senators where she is, and let them take it from there. But of course, the case isn't that easy, and before they're finished, Patrick and Angie tackle gang warfare, corruption, prostitution, blackmail, and murder. Lehane offers slick, hip, sparkling dialogue that's as good as it gets, a plot that rockets along at warp speed, and the wonderfully original, in-your-face crime-solving duo of Kenzie and Dimassi. A terrific first novel and, one hopes, the beginning of a superb series. *Emily Melton*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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