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*Don't Fear the Reaper* by Stephen Graham Jones (review)

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Stephen Graham Jones, *Don't Fear the Reaper*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2023. 450 pp. Hardcover, \$27.99; Paper, \$18.99; e-book, \$12.99.

The second novel in Stephen Graham Jones's (Blackfeet) fictional series Indian Lake Trilogy, *Don't Fear the Reaper*, continues to follow the events of Proofrock, Idaho, after the devastating Independence Day Massacre. The narrative, unlike in the first novel (*My Heart Is a Chainsaw*), cuts between multiple perspectives of the citizens of Proofrock as they are once again thrust into terror. Jones introduces the character Dark Mill South as the new antagonist to the arguable "final girl" Jade (Jennifer) Daniels, and the two proceed in a bone-chilling spiral of conflict until the novel concludes. Dark Mill South, a serial killer with a hook for a hand, represents the perfect catalyst to once again wreak havoc on Proofrock. Jade, traumatized from the events of the previous novel, deals with the aftermath of spending four years in custody following her murder of her sexually abusive father, Tab. Readers are immediately plunged in the novel's first chapter into following a mysterious yet devastating blood trail that continues to confound until its final pages. Jones is successful in weaving a narrative that feels fully fleshed out and earned, one that will allow readers to accept some of the major twists and turns the novel has to offer.

*Don't Fear the Reaper* extends Jade's journey to identify the new "final girl." Those unfamiliar with this trope should be aware that Jones interacts with and examines major points of the trope in the novel through Jade's commentary. A key signifier of this trope is being the focal point of a murderous entity extinguishing unsuspecting youths in a close community. A major plot point is Jade's identification of the final girl, who continually changes as events transpire. Readers of *My Heart Is a Chainsaw* will be familiar with this storytelling device, as Jade previously utilized her slasher film knowledge in the first installment to solve the mysterious deaths surrounding Indian Lake. Involving the reader in the uncovering of a wide variety of slasher tropes, a trademark of Jones's, lets the reader feel engulfed in the sweeping fury of the chain of events while dropping nods to slasher film fans. Jade switches between being called Jennifer and Jade throughout the novel to signal her denial of her "slasher girl"

identity in what appears to be a coping mechanism for the trauma she experienced in the first novel. Furthermore, Jones's use of a multitude of perspectives throughout the novel helps advance the plotline in exciting ways as many of the events happen in rapid succession. For example, a gory gym scene presents the perspective of each dying gym member as the murderer kills them one by one.

Jones, a celebrated author in Indigenous and horror literature, incorporates a wide range of supernatural elements in his novel. At times these elements allude to Indigenous folklore, such as the ethereal white elk that exacts revenge on the citizens of Proofrock, and a suspected return of the prequel's undead lake witch, Stacey Graves, an Indigenous urban legend within the novel who possesses supernatural strength and fury. By fusing Indigenous supernatural elements with slasher fiction, Jones once again redefines the horror genre. Ending his novel on a cliffhanger, Jones sets up his final installment to this trilogy by leaving readers wondering what will come next to haunt the ever-traumatized Proofrock.

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