

Sacramento Book Review



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The Given Day: A Novel

By *Dennis Lehane*

William Morrow, \$27.95, 720 pages

Before and after World War I, the United States was a nation discovering who it was and what it represented. In this sweeping historical epic, Boston is a microcosm of the United States during this time. Social upheaval and violence, the Spanish Flu pandemic, corrupt political systems, cultural prejudices and cultural influences are major players in the lives of the Coughlins, a Boston-based Irish Catholic family, and Luther Laurence, an African American Boston transplant. On the

run from the Tulsa law, Luther left a wife and child behind in Tulsa, and once played baseball with Babe Ruth in a Ohio field. Paralleled and sometimes intertwining with the story of the great Babe Ruth, renowned author Dennis Lehane tells the bleak story of the times through Luther and the Coughlin family.

Thomas Coughlin is the Irish Catholic family's patriarch, police captain, leader of men, and entrenched in the politics running the police department and the city. His son Danny is also a policeman, but comes to believe in a system where the city pays its civil servants their due. Family rifts caused by political differences and ignited by romantic strife and violent social upheaval, explode with the onset of the Boston Police Strike of 1919, causing irreparable damages to

the relationships between Coughlin family members.

Longer, sometimes poetic, passages expound the nuances of the culture of the time and place, threading together fast-paced action sequences that lead up to the end of the strike—and new beginnings for Luther and Danny.

In *The Given Day*, acclaimed author, Dennis Lehane, conquers a new genre with finesse and depth, recreating a piece of history and bringing it to life with characters (real and imagined) molded by the culture surrounding them.

Reviewed by Jamie Engle

