

Hugo Duchamp Investigates: Les Noms Sur Les Tombes

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Hugo Duchamp Investigates: Les Noms Sur Les Tombes is the third volume in the series revolving around feisty detective Hugo Duchamp and his cases and returns the newly-injured detective to the spotlight in a new adventure. Hugo is still recovering from injuries sustained during the last case, but there's no rest for the weary when Dr. Irene Chapeau finds her life and career in turmoil and under threat. But the real action takes place not on the political playing field but in Montgenoux's graveyard, where "rest in peace" is about to be thwarted by a man intent on making the entire town pay for what it's done to him.

Friends lie, mirrors lie, and sometimes the scars of psyche and soul that are so well hidden from the world finally erupt in unexpected ways. Dr. Chapeau discovers this as danger escalates - and so do Hugo, Miriam, and others who become involved in her world as events edge ever closer to catastrophe. As Irene probes conspiracies, dubious associations, the death of men who may have known what the mayor was up to, and apparent suicides that are less easily identified as murders, Hugo and Irene find themselves caught in a web of intrigue and danger that increasingly casts them as prey in a dangerous game.

Political whitewashing and efforts by Hugo and others to keep the investigation in Montgenoux on track create a satisfying series of encounters between investigators, politicians and special interests forces. Hugo's personal life offers him a safe harbor against these disparate forces (*"Hugo wrapped his arms around Ben, his left hand going instinctively towards the curl on his forehead, the right wrapping around the scar on his hand. This was his safe place, when all the pieces between them became one."*) - but how safe will it remain?

Fans of detective sagas will find Hugo a savvy, unique character whose investigative prowess is equaled only by the changes affecting his personal relationship, which moves onto more solid ground even as his professional life seems to be dissolving: *"...the reason neither of us look to the past or look to celebrate it is probably the same reason that brought us together in the first place. But we aren't children anymore, it's time to put our phantoms to bed and look to the future. I'm tired of being alone. I'm tired of surviving my past. It's all irrelevant now, it doesn't matter anymore that my mother deserted me, or my father hates me, or even if I decide to see either of them again. I'm a man now. I'm an adult and it's only really since I met you that I've realised I've been hiding behind it all, using it as an excuse to keep people away from me. I don't need my father to love me. I don't even need to know why my mother deserted me anymore, she just did, the problem was hers, not mine, and I'm not even sure I care to know why anymore,"* he pulled Ben to him. *'I want to be truly happy, not just to believe I am. This house is a good place to start, I think.'*"

It's these personal moments and their presence within a murder mystery that challenges Hugo's standing in his new home which makes for a riveting plot about different kinds of commitments, including those that last beyond the grave. As the threats begin to strike closer to home, Hugo is on track to experience some of the greatest changes not only in his career, but to his set course in a life he's only finally committed to fulfilling.

One of the most striking features of Hugo Duchamp's mysteries is the dual focus on his life and personal struggles, which juxtapose nicely with each mystery he's involved in. In *Les Noms Sur Les Tombes*, just when everything seems to be coming together, they fall apart. A striking investigative pursuit wound within the struggles of a different kind of personal life make this a standout addition to the series, with a conclusion that leaves the door wide open for more, pulling readers in with a gripping emotional feel throughout that builds to a shocking crescendo and yet another twist in Duchamp's never-singular course in life.

D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review