

REVIEW

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The Painted Man. Masterton, Graham (Author), Apr 2008. 224 p. Severn, hardcover, \$28.95. (9780727865960).

A fortuneteller and her police artist daughter-in-law try to stem the rising tide of violence as a serial killer wreaks mayhem in the Midwest.

In a Cincinnati whose citizens wear trainers instead of sneakers and caps with peaks instead of brims, nothing may seem surprising. So when Molly Sawyer paints flowers on canvas only to have them appear in pots on her patio, her chain-smoking mother-in-law Sissy barely bats an eye. But when a maniac hacks a realtor to pieces in the elevator of the Giley Building downtown, Sissy senses greater danger. Even as detective Mike Kunzel asks Molly to interview Jane Becker, who rode the fatal elevator with George Woods but survived the attack, and try to come up with a sketch of the killer, Sissy pulls out her trusted DeVane cards, whose pictures seem strangely unfamiliar to her even though she relied on them to foretell the future as recently as *Touch and Feely* (2006). And the cards don't lie, forecasting carnage on a grand scale. Office workers, shoppers at a local mall, even lawmen meet their grisly ends in elevators, on pedestrian bridges and in parking garages, until even the densest denizens of Cincy realize it's safer to stay home. Still, the monster—dubbed the Red Mask by the local press—doesn't stop, threatening everything Sissy holds dear.

This disturbing concoction blends metaphysical musing with old-fashioned blood and guts. Not for the faint-hearted.