

From Publishers Weekly

It's an eye for an eye -- obsessive hatred, relentless pursuit and coldblooded revenge for irrevocable loss -- in this hypnotic sequel to Smith's highly praised 1989 western, *Buffalo Nickel*. That novel was enhanced by insight into the halting assimilation of Native Americans into modern society in the early 20th century. Here, Smith constructs a neo-western psychodrama as he revisits secondary characters from *Buffalo Nickel* to bring full circle an unscrupulous banker's murderous scheme to rob an oil-rich Native American of his birthright. Just months after the death of David Copperfield, the young Kiowa oil baron turned "Hollywood movie Indian," his assistant, Wilbur Smyth (aka Will Hunter), comes to El Paso to avenge the loss of his wife, Babette, who also died in the explosion of Copperfield's sailboat. Hunter locates the banker's hired assassin, then begins to stalk and seduce the banker's 17-year-old daughter, Sissy, planning to take her hostage, torture and kill her in retribution.

The complex plot gradually unfolds against the divergent cultures of Oklahoma and Texas oil country, the Mexican border town of Juarez and Hollywood. during the Roaring Twenties. Shadowy images of good and evil, undercurrents of bigotry, greed and betrayal emerge from the loosely linked vignettes that make up the narrative. Hunter's rage contrasts with Sissy Kale's childlike vulnerability, even as she is determined to be treated as a mature woman. Smith falls somewhat short of his ambitions. He sometimes fumbles control of the narrative voice and the fractured timeline. Once the plot comes into focus, however, it moves inexorably to a stunning irony on the final page.

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