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**David Goodis**

**Nightfall**



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Author: David Goodis

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## Description

“An almost perfect book, spare, balanced, and inexplicably moving.”—Geoffrey O’Brien

Jim Vanning has an identity crisis. Is he an innocent artist who just happens to have some very dangerous people interested in him? Or is he a killer on the lam from his last murder—with a satchel worth over \$300,000 in tow?

Relentlessly focused, *Nightfall* may be David Goodis’ most accomplished novel. It is a fiendishly constructed maze, filled with unpredictable pitfalls and human predators whose authenticity only makes them more terrifying.

**David Goodis**(1917–1967), a former pulp, radio, and Hollywood script writer, is now recognized as a leading author of crime fiction. Besides sojourns in New York City and Hollywood, he lived primarily in Philadelphia.

## Insightful reviews

Jeff: *Nightfall* (1947) This is David Goodis’s third novel, written the year after his breakthrough suspense novel *Dark Passage* (1946). Jim Vanning is a commercial artist living in Greenwich Village. He has a legitimate Madison Avenue job creating art for advertisements, but he’s also in hiding because he’s wanted in Wyoming for the murder of a man who led a robbery of \$350,000 from a bank in Seattle. Needless to say, he’s wanted, both by the police and by the bank robbers because after he killed the bank robber in self defense, he hid the money. But he can’t remember where the money is hidden because he has something called “regressive amnesia” because he associated the bag of cash with killing a man. How is he diagnosed within the novel? Well, Fraser, a NYC cop who is following him to find out what happened to the cash, also happens to study psychology; he’s got Freud and Jung and Horney and Menninger on his bookshelf at home. Fraser also senses, because of his psychology background and keen intuitive sense, that Vanning really isn’t guilty of the murder.

The story has a rotating third person attached viewpoint as it goes back and forth between Vanning and Fraser. There may also be a scene or two told from the point of John or Sam or Pete, the three bank robbers who are looking for him to force him to take them to the money. They capture and torture him for a while, but Vanning finally escapes, and, in the end, helps Fraser get paid to the desperadoes.

Stylistically, this is an interesting book. Like Goodis’ other books, the novel has oneiric (dream-like) qualities. In more than one scene Vanning goes so deeply into the past that he has conversations and experiences things that never happen. There’s also a scene where Fraser is observing Vanning with binoculars and has a conversation with Vanning that, well, never actually happens. It’s an odd stylistic device for a pulp crime novel, but one that other fifties pulp writers, Jim Thompson in particular, used occasionally. And Goodis does it during key scenes, such as the one where Vanning is being tortured by Sam and Pete, or later when he rescues Fraser from Sam and Pete.

The happy ending is pretty much telegraphed, and John, the head bad guy, turns out to be very obliging about being caught and imprisoned and even makes sardonic remarks to and about

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Vanning during the climactic scene. It's an odd piece, to be sure, but I kind of enjoyed it.  
10/21/13

Jennifer: A fast-paced noir detective story, this one boils along nicely with a confused and haunted narrator who's trying to escape a murder that he is unable to prove was self-defense. Maybe not the most classic of noir stories, as both the narrator and the love interest are less jaded and more innocent than one would expect of the genre, but it also includes a wonderful character in the form of the detective trailing the narrator. He's trained in psychology and is thus a sort of early version of a profiler--the relationship between him and the narrator is tense and interesting.

John McNee: My heart began to beat a little faster as soon as I started reading this book.

'Nightfall' is the first work I've read by Goodis in over a decade, but I could remember the sensation, that unease that comes with knowing something bad is about to happen.

It was there in this book, where something bad has already happened to contract artist Vanning long before we meet him, but are certain to get worse. Matters of murder and a lost satchel of money have left him in a bind, hunted by cops and crooks and on the cusp of meeting a woman who might be his salvation or his ruin.

A lot of this is familiar territory to fans of David Goodis. Noir to their core, his books returned again and again to themes of broken, desperate men battling to stay one step ahead of a dark fate.

As a result, his writing is often described as 'bleak' or 'hopeless', but that's not true. Perhaps one of the cruelest twists meted out to his protagonists is that there is hope. Last chances for happiness and love are dangled in front of our hero just long enough to inspire him to action. In a narrative where every character's motivations are constantly in question these same chances are frequently snuffed out only to be reignited (however modestly) a few chapters later.

It's a slim book, with the action moving at a brisk pace. Things move so quickly in fact - especially near the climax - that the story suffers a little. A little more room to breathe in the final pages (which recall the exposition-heavy fast-talking monologues that frequently closed out detective pictures) would have been nice, but some might call this nitpicking.

Prose is frequently poetic, but always spare. Goodis can't have been getting paid by the word. It's remarkable, however, that while his language is restrained and unsentimental, he picks his moments to make big emotional statements, reminding us that the loneliest, darkest hours of night come just before the dawn.

Josh: Vanning – a sufferer of condition is put within the excellent and unforgiving flawed guy scenario. Touted as a murderer, thief, and artist (yep there's a few legitimacy to the protagonist), Vanning is the vintage case of a guy caught among a rock and a difficult place. At the run from the legislation and a gang of financial institution robbers, Vanning lives a existence

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jam-packed with paranoia and mistrust. In his mind, he's blameless of the crimes he's accused - his activities vindicated by means of situation but there's a sophisticated cloudiness to the believability of his mantra. Like many different Goodis novels, 'Nightfall' questions the lead characters sincerity and nation of mind. You by no means rather understand in the event that they are sincere or are feigning innocence to masks sinister motives. This stems precise for Vanning, the comely Martha, and Fraser – the guy with whom Vanning stocks a cat and mouse relationship. The brazenly insecure and semi-obsessive cop, Fraser is grounded simply via his spouse who seems the spine of his sanity and manhood for that matter. With one eye on Vanning and one other at the reward, Fraser acts as a lone wolf reminiscent of extra traditional PI than police (minus the hard-boiled persona). It takes a great author to awaken reader emotion, and Goodis is a smart author - i actually disliked Fraser whereas i used to be really involved for the future health of Vanning. That said; the characters on my own weren't rather sufficient to champion the story. The plot used to be more than enough and the general experience of chasing fact was once accomplished well, but the discussion fuelled via unimaginable personality feelings (Vanning falling too simply in love for instance) spoiled what used to be a superior premise. In 'Nightfall' the legal point is secondary with human interplay the first driving force – had the discussion and believability been a bit extra polished this would've labored well, but it simply did not hit the best notes yet was once nonetheless relaxing to read. three stars. This evaluate is from 'Nightfall' which appears to be like in David Goodis: 5 Noir Novels of the Nineteen Forties and 50s: <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/12...>

Nick Jones: If David Goodis is considered one of my favorite American pulp writers it truly is mostly as a result of his Nineteen Fifties mystery *Down There*. evening Fall used to be his moment novel and has the various anticipated parts of the pulp or noir novel, yet they're by no means pulled right into a gratifying shape. James Vanning, a standard Joe, is unintentionally thrown into the center of a legal enterprise, the normality of his lifestyles is grew to become upside down, all defense destroyed. this can be long ago of the unconventional and we're informed the again plot in 'flashback'. That previous pulp standby, amnesia, is helping with the plot mechanics. within the now of the unconventional Venning is hiding from the gangsters, who imagine he has their loot, and the cops, who imagine he's a murderer. yet he's being watched by way of a cop who thinks there's extra to the tale than the reputable version. after which the gangsters tune him down and seize him. As continuously with Goodis, romantic love is the redeeming factor. however the ethical barriers stay great and clear: there's not one of the murkiness that i admire approximately pulp.

Franky: this is often a type of novels that's tough to check with out giving freely spoilers, so I'll attempt to simply provide remark concerning the book. Goodis' protagonists and antiheroes have a fashion of wavering among noticeably diversified paths amid lifestyles forces propelling them in the direction of one final choice. there's continuously a grey sector within the antihero the place we will be able to see that whereas he's fallible, he's aware of the realm approximately him, even philosophical, and this offers him a feeling of nobility. Such is the case with *Nightfall's* protagonist, Jim Vanning, a 30-something guy who's in particularly a combination with a few unruly, thuggish forms whilst dusk begins. apparently Vanning has a past. Or does he? anything a couple of murder, Colorado, a damaged down vehicle and an incredible score, \$300,000. those are the pieces, yet there's rather a lot of figuring and unraveling to be performed to determine simply how issues went down. fascinating approximately dusk is

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Goodis' means of following Vanning in the course of the process the plot, moving from prior stories of the occasions in Colorado, after which coming again to the current time. The entire whereas there's a point of ambiguity within the air, a feeling that we're given a few proof yet no longer all is being revealed. In the course of the process the narrative, we, in addition to the numerous different characters, try and take in the id of Vanning and are available to a few conclusions approximately who he rather is. Vanning's personal experience of disillusion and skepticism even hold him within the dark, as he's attempting to discover his precise self as well. At one end, we have now the thugs who wish solutions concerning the lute. On the different end, we now have Vanning. However, in the midst of every little thing is a gorgeous girl named Martha (we aren't really definite whose aspect she is on), and a cop named Fraser. Fraser thinks he has Vanning figured out, yet he wishes solutions as well. dusk is dark, yet has extra of a cerebral, psychological, understated aspect to it. something you could continuously expect out of Goodis: a personality pushed novel that truly digs in to at least one personality and not shall we go. This version additionally has an exceptional advent that discusses a lot of Goodis' different works in addition to his life.

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