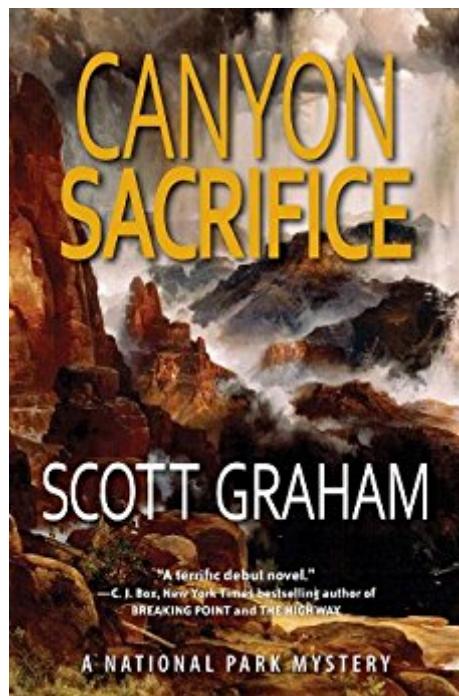


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Canyon Sacrifice (National Park Mystery Series)



Synopsis

Canyon Sacrifice brings the rugged western landscape, the mysterious past of the ancient Anasazi Indians, and the Southwest's ongoing cultural fissures vividly to life. A deadly struggle against murderous kidnappers in Grand Canyon National Park forces archaeologist Chuck Bender to face up to his past as he realizes every parent's worst nightmare: a missing child. "Graham has created a beautifully balanced book, incorporating intense action scenes, depth of characterization, realistic landscapes, and historical perspective."¹ **REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE** "This riveting series debut showcases Graham's love of nature and archeology, simultaneously interjecting some serious excitement. Graham is to be commended for weaving together several cultures into one story. Recommend to readers who enjoy Tony Hillerman, Nevada Barr, and C.J. Box's Joe Pickett series."² **LIBRARY JOURNAL** "A gripping tale of kidnapping and murder...in a style similar to mysteries by Tony Hillerman."³ **ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL** "Graham has created a story [of] richness and depth...Graham's comfort and familiarity with his subject make the story an enjoyable read."⁴ **DURANGO HERALD** "A riveting mystery...Graham takes readers intimately into the setting, his knowledge of the places he writes about apparent at every turn."⁵ **DURANGO TELEGRAPH** "A terrific debut novel..."⁶ **C.J. BOX**, New York Times bestselling author of *Stone Cold* and *Breaking Point* "The real star of this engrossing mystery novel is the Grand Canyon itself. Scott Graham clearly knows the territory. Graham delivers a glorious portrait of one of the most compelling landscapes on earth, a place that can kill just as easily as it thrills. This is a topnotch read."⁷ **WILLIAM KENT KRUEGER**, New York Times bestselling author of *Tamarack County* "Canyon Sacrifice delivers it all and then some."⁸ **MARGARET COEL**, New York Times bestselling author of *Killing Custer* "Bring an extra⁹ large bowl of popcorn while you read *Sacrifice* in one sitting."¹⁰ **C.M. WENDELBOE**, author of *Death on the Greasy Grass* "In this gripping, imaginative mystery set in Grand Canyon National Park, ancient Anasazi culture collides with the modern world in the most unexpected of ways. Like Tony Hillerman, Scott Graham uses his deep knowledge of the region to fashion a thrilling, compulsively readable story."¹¹ **FRANK HUYLER**, author of *The Blood of Strangers* "As unpredictable and twisty as a switchback trail plummeting into its depths, Graham's thriller sucks you into the mysteries of the canyon and the story of an unsuspecting family whose lives will never be the same."¹² **TED BOTHA**, author of *The Girl With the Crooked Nose* "Graham deftly weaves a first¹³ rate mystery through the caves and canyons and winding roads of the Grand Canyon. If you've been, you'll immediately be drawn into the story. If you've never been, this may be your motivation to buy the ticket! I can't wait to read which national park he

tackles next!"—TRICIA FIELDS, Hillerman Prize–winning author of Scratchgravel Road

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Customer Reviews

This is not a bad book for a first effort. Graham uses his setting effectively. In fact his descriptions of Grand Canyon reminded me of Craig Childs' work. Like everyone writing about the people and culture of the region, Graham and many reviewers give a nod to Tony Hillerman; however he's no Hillerman or Childs. The exposition is clunky, the characters, except for the kids, not believable, and I have real problems with any mother who would marry and trust her children's lives to a man after such a brief acquaintance. And did I miss something? The Anasazi are ancestors of Pueblo Indians, thus the name Ancestral Puebloans, not ancestral Navajos. If that story interests you read Craig Childs' House of Rain.

Emblazoned across the front cover of CANYON SACRIFICE is "A National Park Mystery." You might be forgiven for wondering if this was a new Nevada Barr mystery, written under an alias. However, the designation "debut novel," also on the front cover, might set you straight. In any case,

although Anna Pigeon does not appear anywhere in the novel, Scott Graham has clearly set his sights on Barr's territory, and he's done a rather phenomenal job of it. The novel has the same mix of character-driven and plot-driven mystery that Barr does so well. In this case, our sleuth is not a park ranger, but rather an archaeologist who has made his name by searching for Native American artifacts before national park projects get underway. Chuck Bender has always been something of a loner, but just before the book opens he has met and married a much younger woman who comes with a ready-made family. Much of the book is concerned with Chuck's adjustment (or lack thereof) to his new family. In the process, the reader comes to know Chuck very well, and this is a great set-up for a new series. Chuck has brought his family on a camping trip to Grand Canyon National Park, where he has overseen several archaeological projects over the years. His new family is trying to get to know him, but just as he's starting to make inroads into the mom-and-two-daughters family he has married into, one of the daughters is kidnapped. The kidnapper may be the girl's estranged father, or it may be someone who is targeting Chuck, or it may be part of a plot that casts suspicion on Chuck's new wife. Chuck struggles with the possibilities as he attempts to rescue the girl and find his place in the family at the same time. The author is an amateur archaeologist, and the historical knowledge about the Anasazi and about archaeology in general is in plain evidence. It is woven well into the plot, however, so the reader does not ever feel as though (s)he's sitting in a lecture hall. Rather, when the information is supplied, it is to further the plot and/or provide substance to Chuck's role as an archaeologist. I was pleased to learn more about the Grand Canyon and the Anasazi while at the same time being deeply engaged in the action. I've visited the Grand Canyon, and I felt as though I was right back there while reading *CANYON SACRIFICE*. The writing about the location brings it into clear focus so that I now feel as though I have visited even the remote backcountry areas of the park that I could never actually see in person. Graham has created a beautifully balanced book, incorporating intense action scenes, depth of characterization, realistic landscapes, and historical perspective. I am looking forward to reading the next in the series, *MOUNTAIN RAMPAGE*, when it is released. This review first appeared at www.reviewingtheevidence.com.

I agree with other reviewers. The characters are not believable-how does a mother marry a man after a very short acquaintance? And then her child disappears and she lets this man direct all her actions in searching? Also, some of his descriptions of the temperatures on the South Rim are not very accurate. These people are not likable and their actions do not make any sense. I may read the next book to see if the characters improve. This is not Nevada Barr or Tony Hillerman or Pamela

Beason.

The writing was good, great descriptions of the area. Too much unnecessary information made the story confusing. I understand that fiction is just that...fiction, but really?? Some of this book was more than unbelievable. The characters were not likeable and the relationships seemed forced. Since this is a first book in the series I may give the author another chance by reading book two. I'm hoping for better character development and less unnecessary information.

I'd prefer more content to the story and less bragging about how well the author knows the engineering of the setting. Also don't approve of the digs at the Navajo characters who in real life have a lovely sense of humor, and a lyrical language. Either this author has an axe to grind or the has some kind of superiority complex, and we don't need either when their are so many good southwestern authors about these days.

A page turning, adventure packed novel about one of the seven natural wonders of the world! Detailed descriptions of Grand Canyon geology, South Rim and Anasazi Pueblo history add to intrigue of Canyon Sacrifice. The character development of protagonist Chuck Bender was compelling and I will await future installments.

I read a sample of this book, and figured it would be a nice book to take on a trip. I read a little bit more and couldn't put it down. The action is nonstop . It's both a great mystery/thriller and a great book on the archeology of the Grand Canyon. I couldn't put down this great story. I finished it before the trip ever started!

A promising debut, and I enjoyed reading this. But the series went downhill from here to the point where I haven't finished book 2 and may not find the energy for book 3. Still, this one is worth a read.

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