



BOOK CORNER

Television presenter Juliette Foster highlights some of the best books to come out of Surrey - and brings us a literary date for the diary

THE REVIEW

A Time to Prey

Author: Derek E Pearson
Publisher: GB Publishing
Price: £8.99 (Paperback)

REGULAR readers of *Surrey Life* will know that, up until recently, science fiction was one of my literary 'no-go' zones. I rejected the genre as a teenager after reading a couple of novels with creaky plots, dodgy dialogue and characterisations that were so bad I almost lost the will to live. Thankfully, Wallington's Derek E Pearson erased those negatives and his latest offering, with its visionary scope and veiled gallows humour, has kept me firmly entrenched in the sci-fi camp.

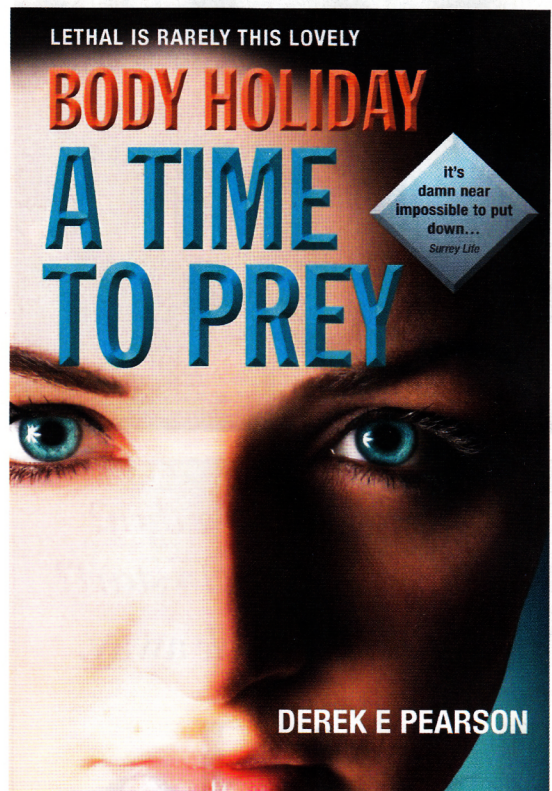
In a *Time to Prey* (the follow on from *Body Holiday* and *Shadow Players*), Pearson's galactic-sized imagination delivers a compelling image of a chic, high-tech society infused with a toxic strain that feeds on extreme violence. It's a disturbingly twisted vision of the future and Pearson's tough, unflinching narrative almost dares the reader to look away from the monstrousness. Don't, because Milla Carter, his feisty, sexy heroine, is the weapon of retribution.

Global showdown

Milla is on a mission and the story, which shifts between Japan, a Tibetan hotel, an Antarctic ice dome and a London sky tower, is the stage through which the final showdown against the creepy Body Holiday Foundation will be played out. Yet Milla knows that a business which generates dollars from selling extreme pornography and murder as 'quality entertainment', won't roll over easily. She'll have to use her lightening quickness and enhanced senses like never before if she's to outwit and annihilate both the Foundation and its hired assassin, Su-Nami. Part human/part machine, the sleekly-beautiful Su-Nami is the ultimate operator, for whom killing is a game and the spoils an edible feast.

The story skilfully charges its way towards a brutal, edge-of-the-seat climax with a rollercoaster rapidity and intense blasts of high-powered energy. There is blood, sweat, panic, rage and fear! Can Milla's telepathic powers win her the fight of her life? Will the Body Holiday Foundation survive the threat to its existence? Is there another potentially more dangerous enemy hiding in the shadows?

A Time to Prey is a gripping read that boldly and intelligently explores the vision of an ugly, amoral



future in which goodness must fight for survival. In this dystopian nightmare, privacy is non-existent, life is cheap, killers have fan clubs, while the only individuals who count for something are those with money. Milla's crusade has a biblical quality in which she is elevated as a force of hope against the corporate anti-Christ of the Body Holiday Foundation. Good will survive, but at what cost?

For anyone offended by swearing, violence and explicit sex then *A Time to Prey* won't be an easy read. Yet it's worth remembering that nothing about the content is gratuitous. Pearson is simply encouraging us to think about the type of future we could end up getting. The blunt 'in your face' tone of the narrative may be crude, but it works.

Do we want to live in a world built on mutual respect, or one where compassion and dignity, the qualities that make us human, are meaningless? I know which one I'd like. ♦