

From [Booklist](#)

This winner of the Private Eye Writers of America Best First Private Eye Novel competition is about as noir as it gets. How noir is it? It's set in a post-apocalyptic-seeming wrong side of Pittsburgh in 2001. The hero rents one half of a friend's basement; a sheet divides him from the other tenant, who is constantly at work, splicing actresses like Audrey Hepburn into film clips in which they're tortured. The guy who hires the hero for some private-eye work is a brown-toothed drunk whose house could win a Hoarders competition. The hero, Dexter Bolzjak, whose high point was playing goalie in high-school hockey, has PTSD from being kidnapped and beaten the night he lost the state championship eight years ago. He works in a warehouse and tries to keep the trauma at bay. The drunk throws some hundred dollar bills at Dexter and begs him to locate his old love, a Gloria Swanson-ish former actress. True, absorbing grit; but it may make you ache for soap. --Connie Fletcher