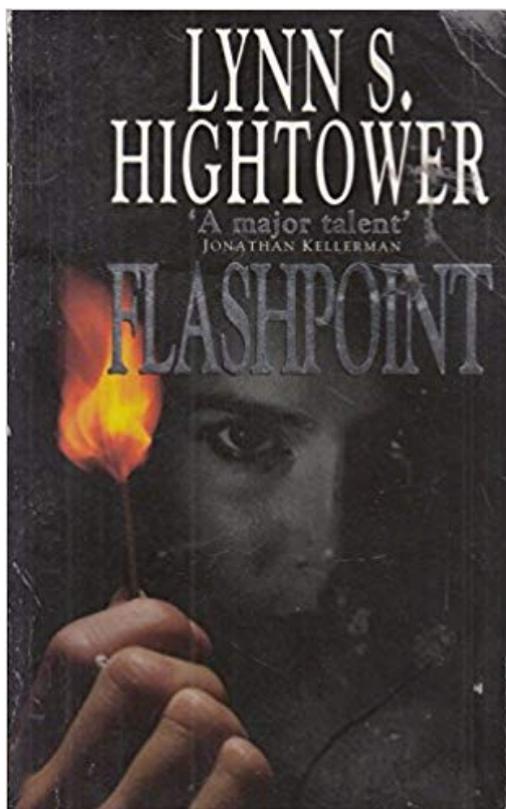


Flashpoint *by* Lynn Hightower



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Author: Lynn Hightower

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Investigating the murder of a Cincinnati college student, workaholic cop Sonora Blair uncovers the workings of a female serial killer and realizes that she has become the next target. \$20,000 ad/promo.



Reviews of the *Flashpoint* *by* Lynn Hightower

kinder

First time I read this author and found it very intriguing. I will read one of the Sonora Blair books in the future.

Malahelm

One of my favorite all time reads! Great psycho & cop chase set in the bluegrass area of Kentucky.

Hystana

Open Road Integrated Media and NetGalley provided me with an electronic copy of this book, in exchange for an honest review.

Police Specialist Sonora Blair is called to a scene in the middle of the night, only to find something of a nightmare. A 22 year old college student, Mark Daniels, was handcuffed to the steering wheel of his brother's car and purposefully set on fire. Before his untimely death, Mark indicates that a blonde woman was responsible for his demise. The seemingly well planned and executed crime does not appear to be the work of a first time killer, leaving the police in a scramble against the odds to bring the killer to justice before anyone else gets hurt.

Flashpoint is a well paced novel with a good plot. I like the main character Detective Sonora Blair, as her mental toughness and intelligence are coupled with empathy for the victims and their families. The only problem that I had with this book had to do with Sonora's single parenting of her two children. She has a network of helpers in place, but she also leaves her kids alone in the home while a serial killer is on the loose. As Sonora is likely a target, being that she is one of the faces of the investigation, it would seem that she would be more careful with her loved ones. The quick ending to this book does not leave much room for any meaningful resolution. It is also not really a mystery, but is more a thriller because you know the perpetrator early on and are just waiting for the reasons why. I recommend this book to readers who enjoy psychological thrillers and do not mind that the element of surprise is largely absent from the pages of Flashpoint.

Andriodtargeted

"Anybody talk to a doctor?"

"Guy came out of emergency and talked to the brother."

"Hear what he said?"

"Just that they were very concerned with Mark's condition, and were doing all they could."

"S***. Mark won't make it then. They're already hanging the crepe."

Sonora Blair is one of the most kick-ass female detectives to hit the shelves in a very long time. Lucky me, I read it free, thanks to Net Galley and Open Road Integrated Media. The original publication date was 1995, and so the initial publishers must have dropped the ball big-time when it came to promotion, because I know this is the kind of story that resonates with large numbers of people, especially women. And I am glad to see it being resold by Open Road, because they know how to do the job right.

So back to Sonora. No wait, let's go back to Hightower first. What a total bad-ass when it comes to setting! I loved seeing her enter the home where her children were asleep, and the explosion of naked Barbie doll parts in her daughter's room. I loved the moment when her elderly dog had an accident in the living room, and she was so distracted by the hundred other things, personal and professional, all colliding at once, that it was not even the first thing she took care of once she found it.

So we have two interesting threads here. One is the problem. A killer out there has murdered a man by handcuffing him to the steering wheel of a vehicle and setting fire to it...and him. It's grisly business, but Hightower doesn't overwork the detail to where it triggers my "ick" button; in other words, although it's terrible, it is never so terrible that I just don't want to read it anymore. And the problem just becomes thornier and trickier the longer she works on it. Clues drop here and there, and the stakes go up.

The other thread is Blair's personal life, and the problems she faces in dealing with home and work. It sounds like a tired old song when I put it that way, but like any really skillful writing, it sounds brand new when the author rubs her own brand of English on it and sends it spinning.

After having read several hundred mystery, crime fiction, police procedural, and thriller novels—okay, if I had starting keeping track sooner, I know it would be well over a thousand—there

are a handful of devices that are so frequently used that my eyes auto-roll when I see them utilized. I was watching for them. But Blair never gets tossed into the trunk of anybody's car; she never gets the phone call saying the killer has her kids; there is never a moment when we realize she has been framed for the killing herself, and has to solve it to save her own butt. I'm not saying a great writer can't get away with any of those; there are some Grand Masters out there that have done it and before my eyes could make the full roll, they were glued back to the page. But once someone reaches into that worn, soiled bag of tricks, it becomes a lot harder to engage me, and I was delighted that Blair never went there.

Her facility with setting is consistently brilliant throughout the book.

One tiny odd bit: for the first chapter or two, I was convinced that Blair was African-American. When she turned up blonde later, I had to mentally reinvent her. It didn't take long though, because I was riveted and had to get back to the story.

For fans of outstanding detective fiction, this is a must-read. Order it now for yourself, or as a gift for someone you know will love it.

Authis

A man burns to death in a car. His body is found handcuffed to the steering wheel. Evidence suggests that the killer is a woman. The police nickname the killer "Flash." Sonora Blair and Sam Delarosa of the Cincinnati police lead the investigation.

Most of the novel's focus is on Sonora. She is a reasonably well developed character, with two kids, a dead ex-husband, and a thing for the brother of the murder victim. Unfortunately for Sonora, the killer also has a thing for the murder victim's brother, creating an interesting rivalry between killer and cop.

As Sonora learns more about the killer, so does the reader. Lynn Hightower doesn't waste time with nonsensical profiling or lengthy character biographies that cause so many thrillers to drag. We learn enough about the killer to make her interesting and credible -- she isn't a novice at the murder game -- while maintaining a sense of intrigue about the killer's motivation as the investigation advances.

A brisk pace and clear prose make this an easy story to read. Some of the scenes are chilling. My only objection to the story is that a lone killer manages to cause a fair amount of mayhem under the noses of cops who, budget problems notwithstanding, would certainly make a stronger effort to protect the family members of a fellow officer. In fact, the killer wanders all over Cincinnati, going to obvious places, and the police can't seem to be bothered to keep an eye out for her.

I didn't buy much of the ending, which again depends upon remarkably incompetent police work so that Sonora can have some alone time with the killer. What I do like about *Flashpoint* is its steady pace, its decent characterization, and its surprisingly strong prose. The plot is the novel's weakness, but *Flashpoint* is enjoyable for its strengths.

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