

Down River
Book Query
By Peter Houlahan

“Down River” is a contemporary, suburban novel that follows the intersecting lives of four neighboring families over a single summer as they face a series of bizarre crises that change their lives in ways they could never have imagined. While initially victims of events beyond their control, their stubborn personalities, bad decision making, and an abundance of absurd misunderstandings leads them into the dark worlds of child pornography, racial hate crime, sensationalist media, rape and murder.

A third-person narrative cycles through the points-of-view of five major characters, each of whom appear in and influence the three major, interwoven plotlines running through the novel. The story shifts between third person and first person narratives with some parts told entirely through the use of newspaper clippings, interview transcripts, police reports, personal correspondence and other documents generated by the events themselves. Although complex, fast-paced and ever-changing, the novel is organized and written with clarity so that the reader is never as lost as the characters seem to be within the tangle of their own lives.

“Down River” is an exciting, plot-driven novel with unique and compelling characters. Each short chapter is a shocking game changer. The writing style is informal, contemporary and consistently humorous, although not at the expense of the characters, whose situations are anything but funny.

About the Writer

Peter Houlahan is a published fiction writer, freelance journalist and book review contributor to the Hearst newspapers and AP wire. He holds an MFA in fiction writing from Sarah Lawrence College. A first-person account of his experience as an EMT first-responder at the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012 ran front page in Los Angeles News Group and Hearst papers across the country in the days following the tragedy.