

# FEATURES

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## Thriller: fast and loose

"Harlequin," by Morris West. William Morrow and Co. \$7.95

"If you don't like the beans, don't open the can." grows an underworld connection in Morris West's latest thriller, *Harlequin*. It is good advice to his potential readers. The beans are international terror, political corruption and financial intrigue in a world

No mere coincidence, this. Once recovered, Harlequin et company set out to exonerate themselves, prove Yonko the framing, ambitious liar that he is, and restore the bank's image in the world market. Paul Desmond, narrator of the book and Harlequin's right-hand man, soon discovers an unbelievable international code of deceit and violence. He finds that his gang can't

integrity are quickly shattered in the cold, selfish world. But although he becomes disillusioned and cynical, he cannot embrace the political creed of terror, so he leaves the banking world to the Yonkos and the assassins who will always remain.

*Harlequin* is not the highly-touted thriller it is advertised to be, but neither is it boring. It is only loosely compelling, a diversion novel to be read in paperback late at night in the Holiday Inn or between flights at the airport. It reads quickly, because it moves quickly.

And it moves quickly because of its style: all verbs and no adjectives. As in any thriller, speed is the key element, which results in hard-nosed, rapid-fire dialogue. Every character is revealing important secrets or making a quick deal, so that the book reads like a polished, terse cross-examination:

"You're an idiot," said George Harlequin mildly.

"I know it. You can have my head on a dish if you want it."

"I'd rather have the facts, Jose."

West's attempts at simile are pure terror in themselves: "Bankers are like sea anemones"; or "Kruger thinking was like a stone crusher masticating gravel."

In addition to his rapid, unadorned use of words, West further entices the Book of the Month Club patrons with a parade of international characters and places. He moves his exotic pawns in a global game of intrigue which would leave any home-bound housewife drooling with disbelief and envy. Such extravagance also permits him to pepper his bare-bones prose with cliché phrases in foreign tongues.

The most worthy element of *Harlequin* is its theme. How far can law be manipulated and perverted when it is ineffectual and when "great corporations have no morals" outside the law? It is a sobering thought, a chilling world, when death is a banal event, an expedient means to an unfulfilling end.

Morris West has written 11 other books, including *The Shoes of the Fisherman* and *The Salamander*, the predecessor to *Harlequin* which was also in the thriller mold. Such a mold often depends on mere action, and not substance, for its sales, wasting valuable insight for sheer spectacle, as West wrote in this book, "Politics and money make a very explosive mixture." He lights the fuse to this particularly relevant theme, but it just makes a lot of noise and finally fizzles out. With a smooth resolution to such a bleak web of terror, West himself emerges as the harlequin, leaving us teased and amused but unsatisfied.

### Book review

with weak laws and weaker morals.

The book follows George Harlequin, sensitive, civilized and eminently likeable owner of an established Swiss bank, who is near death in a Los Angeles hospital; as the story begins. While he lies helplessly, Basil Yonko, evil mastermind of the computer firm that programs the bank's operations, makes two moves: he bids to buy out Harlequin's bank, and he reveals that his computer check-up shows that Harlequin has embezzled \$15 million from his own bank.

fight clean and win against a world full of dirties: it is terror for terror.

Desmond encounters a host of dubious characters—Israel agents of death, Arab liberationists, Zionist journalists, distrustful FBI men, other greedy bankers and hit men—who are all hungry for slices of money and power. Corpses pile up on both sides in his world of computerized genocide as the tale races to a predictable conclusion. It is easy to identify with the anxieties of Desmond, who is the most human character in the book. His lightly-held principles of

## Y to offer courses

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA will be offering a large selection of craft courses this semester. Many of the popular classes from past years are being continued, and several new courses have been added. Prospective students may enroll at the YMCA office on Spring Lane.

**Basic Jewelry Making:** Monday, 7-9 p.m., beginning March 25th for 8 weeks. Y-Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Batik:** Monday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 13. Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Bridge:** Monday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 13 for 8 sessions. Y-members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Children's art:** Saturday, 10-11:30 a.m., beginning January 18th for 8 weeks. Members: \$12.50. Non-members: \$17.50.

**Guitar:** Tuesday, 7-8 p.m., beginning January 14 for 8 weeks. Y-Members: \$10. Non-members: \$15.

**Gymnastics:** Thursday, 4-5 p.m., beginning January 13 for 14 weeks. Members: \$20. Non-members: \$25.

**Re-evaluation counseling:** Wednesday, 9 a.m.-noon, beginning January 15 for 8 sessions. Y-Members: \$25. Non-members: \$40.

**Hatha Yoga:** Several classes beginning January 13 for 8 weeks. Members: \$12. Non-members: \$17.

**Interior decorating:** Monday, 7:30-9:30

p.m., beginning March 24 for 8 weeks. Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Beginning bridge:** Wednesday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 15. Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Karate:** Several classes have already begun.

**Ladies physical fitness:** Tuesday and Thursday, 7-8:30 p.m., beginning January 14 for 12 sessions. Members: \$9. Non-members: \$14. Babysitting will be provided for \$1 per session.

**Needlepoint:** Monday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 13 for 8 sessions. Members: \$14. Non-members: \$19.

**Painting:** Tuesday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 14 for 8 sessions. Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Painting:** Tuesday, 10 a.m.-noon, beginning January 14 for 8 sessions. Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Pottery:** Several classes have begun for 14 sessions. Y-Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

**Quilting and Patchwork:** Wednesday, 7-9:30 p.m., starting January 15 for 6 sessions. Y-Members: \$16. Non-members: \$21.

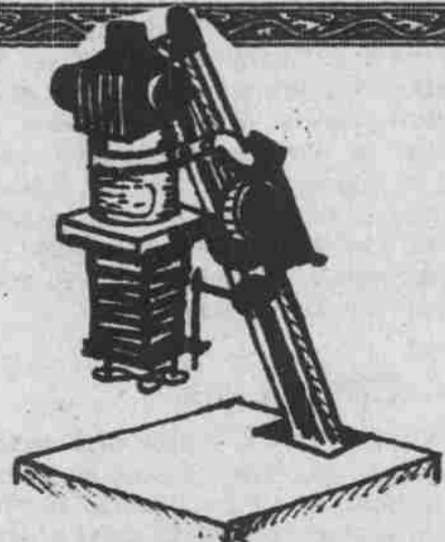
**Tapestry:** Tuesday, 7:30-9:30 p.m., beginning January 21st. Members: \$20. Non-members: \$25.

All classes except for interior decorating and needlepoint will be held in the University Presbyterian Church.

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