

## Lightning Men

Thomas Mullen

Mullen's historical crime novel *Darktown* introduced readers to Lucius Boggs and Tommy Smith, two of the first black officers hired by the Atlanta Police Department in 1948, and Denny Rakestraw, a young white officer sympathetic to their plight. The author returns to these characters amidst the racial powder keg of the postwar South in this superior sequel, set two years later. Black families have begun moving into formerly all-white neighborhoods (Smith's sister among them), terrifying community members and attracting the attention of both the Klan, whose members include Rake's brother-in-law, and a contingent of Nazis reasserting themselves after the war. Meanwhile, Boggs and Smith are again confronted by their limitations within the department as the investigation into a moonshine smuggler threatens to implicate fellow officers, and they will have to decide how much they are willing to skirt those limitations to preserve their humanity and protect their families. **VERDICT** Morally complex and boasting more finely drawn characters, this outstanding follow-up to *Darktown* deepens Mullen's portrait of pre-civil rights America and deserves a place on every suspense reader's list. Here's hoping for many more installments.

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