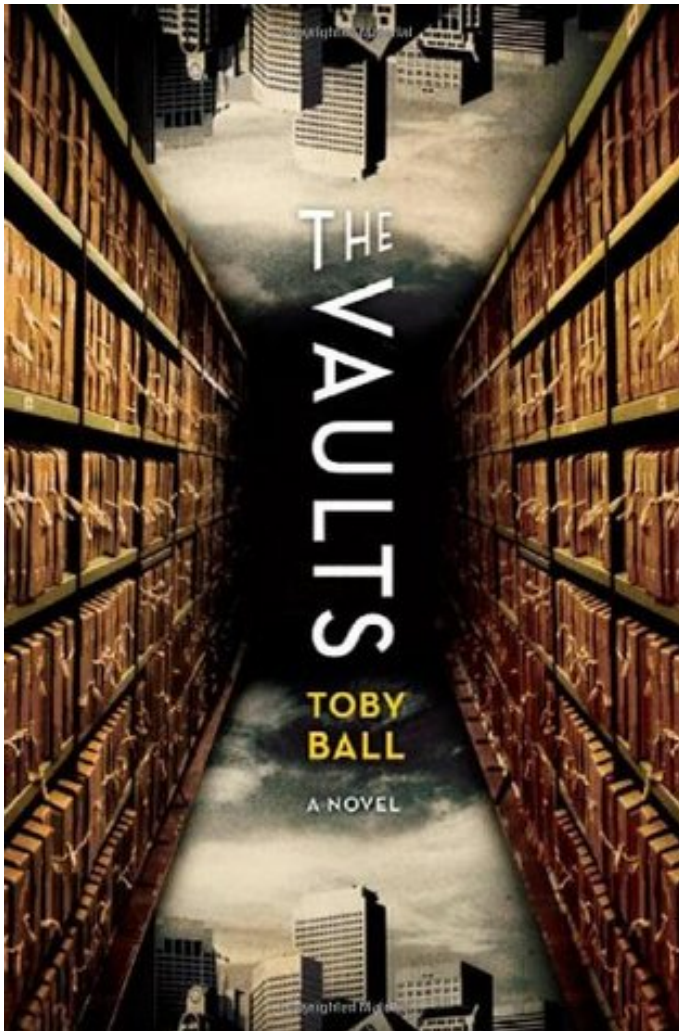

Toby Ball

The Vaults



Title: The Vaults

Author: Toby Ball

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Description

In a dystopian 1930s America, a chilling series of events leads three men down a path to uncover their city's darkest secret.

At the height of the most corrupt administration in the City's history, a mysterious duplicate file is discovered deep within the Vaults---a cavernous hall containing all of the municipal criminal justice records of the last seventy years. From here, the story follows: Arthur Puskis, the Vault's sole, hermit-like archivist with an almost mystical faith in a system to which he has devoted his life; Frank Frings, a high-profile investigative journalist with a self-medicating reefer habit; and Ethan Poole, a socialist private eye with a penchant for blackmail.

All three men will undertake their own investigations into the dark past and uncertain future of the City---calling into question whether their most basic beliefs can be maintained in a climate of overwhelming corruption and conspiracy

Insightful reviews

Ben: Great premise in the Orwellian crime noir tradition of *The Adjustment Bureau* and *Dark City*; middling execution.

Frances: Well, it's a crime novel. It's in a slightly alternate reality that predates the current day. It's a very fast and good read, with a beautifully set-out world. I would not call it steampunk. I definitely *would* call it noir.

(It made me sad I did not have a way to copy and paste stretches of text that were a page long and send them to some people I know who would really really like them.)

I am trying to think up a better review, and I will keep trying, but in the meantime I *highly* recommend you read it.

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Loaned to Ink 8/9/12.

Neil: This is a spooky period thriller set in "The City," a 1930s metropolis dominated by Red Henry, a corrupt former prizefighter who bullies his foes with the money of powerful business connections, the use of a secret police unit called the Anti Subversion Unit, and his own menacing physical presence.

As the novel opens, Arthur Puskis, the archivist in the Vaults, an underground library of files about the city's criminal history, discovers a strange anomaly in the files that only he maintains: a duplicate file for the same criminal, mostly identical except for two different pictures of the man in question. So begins inquiries that will uncover the Navajo Project, a shady plot involving certain criminals, their victims, and their families.

The story alternates between the views of Puskis, a sleazy but rugged private detective named Ethan Poole, and a reefer-smoking investigative journalist named Frank Frings. In short but atmospheric chapters, the three uncover different pieces of the conspiracy while also becoming wrapped up in the struggles between the labor union, a group of Polish businessmen that Mayor Henry is wooing, Henry's creepy bunch of ASU thugs, and dynamite-throwing anarchists.

I thought this was excellent. The pacing and suspense are strong, the characters are vivid and cinematic, and the plot unspools with great skill. Perhaps the end is not quite as strong as the rest, but it was still satisfying. I particularly liked the Puskis chapters. As a librarian, I was fascinated by his hermitlike existence in The Vaults, and his devotion to the organization and sanctity of their contents. In one subplot, Mayor Henry wants to convert the paper vaults to an early, flawed computer system, supposedly as an upgrade, but secretly to whitewash content that could reveal some of his evil doings. There are fascinating parallels here to the switch to digital archives.

This police state and its vaults are set in history, but have a timeless feel. This isn't just the story of these particular events, but a moody meditation on monopoly-dominated totalitarian states and the crimes they commit against human identity. Ball has made a first-rate debut.

Jaci: Arthur Puskis, the archivist, reveals exact documents with differing pictures within the municipal justice records...leads to investigation. A journalist and personal eye additionally investigate. enjoyed the writing however it took me fairly some time to plow through.p.14:"A critical mass of knowledge was once had to understand order."p.17: "Frank Frings strode quick in the course of the crowded newsroom of the Gazette, trailed through an assistant named Ed something."p.230: "Could this boy comprehend the plight of the newspaper artist who's changed by way of the photographer? That this loss takes one layer of humanity clear of the knowledge that individuals receive? photogrpah doesn't express an essence that may be proven in illustrations?"p.259:"He used to be trying to find a trend or a concept or a few form of organizing precept to give an explanation for the crime and evil that undergone his fingers on a daily basis and each week and each year."p.273:"Why do you bring together and shop that details while you are no longer hoping to glean the longer term from it? while you are no longer attempting to use the earlier to notify the choices made within the present?"

Lynne Perednia: Arthur Puskis has committed his lifestyles to the Vaults, the repository of all of the authentic documents of town on the top of its rough-and-tumble, pre-war days. The orderliness, the routine, the confirmed veracity of his paintings presents all his life requires. till the day he discovers a dossier has been duplicated.Ethan Poole is a difficult man attempting to redeem himself after a crooked profession within the ring. Now a PI, he blackmails corrupt urban leaders and loves a fiery union organizer.Top newspaper reporter Francis Frings, paramour of nightclub singer extraordinaire Nora Aspen, hears from a best urban chief who has had sufficient and is able to sing.This is the setup for Toby Ball's superb debut novel. The Vaults traces, in those 3 narratives, occasions set in movement by means of that replicate file, a blackmail case and a corrupt official's determination to come back clean. mix them with a headstrong, wrong criminal of a mayor and his efforts to get a bunch of Polish businessmen to signal a company contract, and the consequent crosses, counter crosses, last-minute

judgements and long-range plans lead to an engrossing tale that the unique Warner Brothers must have had the opportunity to movie in wonderful black and white. Ball retains every thing rolling in what might have been a tangled mess. Instead, the 3 storylines occasionally intersect, occasionally supplement every one other, to propel the motion along. There are poignant moments and acts of serious heroism, in addition to sorrow and regret. to assert extra approximately genuine plot issues could supply an excessive amount of away, and every one is easily worthy discovering. But suffice to assert that Ball has not just a skilled manner with plot, but in addition with characterizations either starring and walk-on. The Vaults is a throwback to a time whilst snappy discussion and private tales mixed to inform wealthy stories of winners and losers. the radical could remind readers every now and then of Jonathan Lethem and Loren Estleman, specifically their Motherless Brooklyn, continual urban and gasoline City. This is a wealthy tale that has room for orphans, stone-cold killers with Achilles heels, unswerving union strikers and not going farmers. It has the wealthy and the poor, the eccentric and salt of the earth. The Vaults additionally has the power to show philosophical and ask questions that visit the very center of what all the 3 protagonists holds such a lot dear. The merely challenge with completing The Vaults is that I want I hadn't even all started it yet, so i'll have the excitement of studying all of it over again. it truly is that good.

Jason Edwards: The Vaults is slightly this and little bit of that. little bit of noir, bit gothic. There's, ostensibly, a secret in there, but if it is printed at last, it isn't very whelming (neither overwhelming nor underwhelming). it has been some time because i have learn this, so forgive me if my evaluate turns out a piece thin, yet then, if I recall, the publication itself used to be a section thin. no longer that there is whatever mistaken with that. yet I received the sensation Toby Ball used to be drawing from his delight in numerous genres, rather than his adventure or maybe influence of these genres. the variation being, of course, that every person's amusement is predicated on cause so own as to be unrelatable in mere print. That's a really immense assumption on my part, and that i don't desire to offer the impact that The Vaults isn't worthy a rainy weekend and a number of other cup of tea. It is. but when you are looking for anything with loads of gristle and grit, it's your decision to select up whatever else. possibly you're keen on black and white movies-- this seems like the e-book model of a black and white film-- and never simply because black and white is retro, or hugely stylized. simply black and white simply because that is as complex because the expertise is. And if you happen to imagine that is a terrible analogy, at the very least i will be able to guarantee you the Vaults is healthier than my terrible review.

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