

Eulogy for Peter James

Rheinbach, 18 October 2017

He was white, middle-aged, clean shaven, with a round face and glasses [...] looking even more ragged than usual, dressed in a shabby tweed jacket, crumpled shirt, tie askew, and badly creased grey trousers.«

That's the problem with quotes: Regardless of chapter and verse they always match. And you think it's our guest of honour tonight, whom I'm talking of, don't you? No, it's only one of his characters, Norman Potting.

Another phrase: »Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you.« (Act 3, Scene 4) Tonight!

That's better, isn't it? Well, I think Peter James heard that quote more than once, being one of the producers who brought William Shakespeare to the screen in Hollywood, in his case „The Merchant of Venice“ starring Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons.

And being involved with Shakespeare in your work is not too bad.

But – there is a huge difference between Peter and Will. Shakespeare never wrote a novel.

Peter did. In fact he did it so well that more than 18 million of his books now have been *published*. And *sold* of course, in Germany too, and some will be sold tonight I'm sure.

His novels have been translated into 37 languages, among them one of the most exotic languages ever – German. Just a fortnight ago »You Are Dead« was published by Fischer Verlag – »Dein Tod wird kommen«. So why are Peter's books selling so well?

There is only one answer to that simple question: Peter's writing is characterized by »sustained excellence« – words from *The Crime Writers' Association* when he received in 2016 its highest honour, the *CWA Diamond Dagger*. »excellence« – a point of view shared by our jury.

Peter has done exceptional work in describing daily police work, sometimes dull, always devoted. And – that's the main thing – his plots are always grip-

ping. When a new novel by Peter James arrives on your doorstep, close the door, pull down the curtains, stop talking to your spouse and read read read.

To honour your work, dear Peter, the jury of the *Rheinbach Crime Writers' and Sellers' Society* has decided to give you the first *Rheinbach Glass Dagger*. I have to explain.

Fortunately your crimes are only committed on paper. That's why we thought we should not add more paper to your pile of pages by giving you a kind of certificate in German.

We tried to find something completely different. Not a bunch of flowers even if that fits because they will be *dead* flowers in a couple of days. Not a cup which is an award for horses, cars and boats. Not a travel voucher which would be not too safe these days, travelling I mean.

We have been looking for something unique. And a dagger, even for a crime writer, speaks for itself. A dagger made of glass is the appropriate award for someone who killed dozens of people. On paper. The *Rheinbach Glass Dagger* refracts the light of Peter's work a thousand times. Coming from a town which has been famous for its glass industry for decades, the *Rheinbach Glass Dagger* reflects a similar craftsmanship. The teachers of the *Glasfachschule*, a technical college for glass, ceramics and media, made the dagger especially for tonight.

Dear Peter, on behalf of the jury it is my great honour to present the first *Rheinbach Glass Dagger* to you! Keep on killing! But don't use this dagger!

Winrich C.-W. Clasen