

BAD BONES

Also by Sam Ingrassia:

The Right Stiff

What Would Johnny Dent Do?

Somebody Followed Me

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THE RIGHT STIFF

“Fast-paced, riveting...hilarious.”

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“...Readers will reach the tale's conclusion in stitches, hoping to see Charlie McGinley stumble into more literary and film-worthy adventures.”

US Review of Books

RECOMMENDED by US Review of Books

WHAT WOULD JOHNNY DENT DO?

“...Ingraffia's second Charlie McGinley mystery is a brisk and breezy read...McGinley is an eminently likable protagonist...A very amusing mystery with enough genuine peril to keep readers intrigued.”

Kirkus Reviews

BAD BONES

A Charlie McGinley Mystery
with bullets, babies & bebop

by

Sam Ingrassia



Blue Telescope Publishing

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“Lay these bones in an unworthy urn, tombless, with no resemblance over them.”

—William Shakespeare

Henry V

CHAPTER ONE

It started out like an ordinary day...like so many awful days do.

A single cloud wandered across the sky.

It was warm for the first week in October. The morning news said it would reach sixty-eight degrees by noon. Beads of sweat formed on Charlie McGinley's forehead as he dug the hole. It was tough going. The ground was clay-based and rocky. The breeze that had made the leaves of the aspens flutter a few minutes earlier, had stopped.

Charlie wiped his forehead with the sleeve of his flannel shirt and took a swallow of water from a plastic bottle.

He listened to the quiet. On the ranch you could hear things: A breeze. The flutter of a bird's wings. A road runner skittering through the brush.

A blue jay landed on the split-rail fence. The fence cordoned off the front yard from the rest of the property.

The bird tilted its head and stared at Charlie.

Charlie heard a train whistle and checked his watch: 10:28. It was the Southwest Chief. The train that ran from Chicago to LA. There would be ten, maybe twelve cars. A silver-and-blue snake lumbering up the steep grade. It was headed for Raton Pass. Elevation 7,834 feet.

Charlie took another swallow of water.

He had a bad feeling. He didn't know why. He'd had it since he woke up.

Maybe it's just nerves about having our second kid...

The train whistle sounded again.

Charlie checked his watch. If he hurried, he could catch the Chief in Albuquerque. In three hours, he'd be hundreds of miles away.

That was Charlie's usual MO. When the going got tough, Charlie got going. People covered for him because he was funny and charming and smart.

Charlie drank some water. He looked over at the Japanese maple in its black plastic pot. *How am I gonna handle two kids?*

Charlie'd grown up in LA but never felt at home there. As a gawky teenager, with more zits than face, he figured when he grew up, he'd find where he belonged. It hadn't happened.

Coyote Falls, New Mexico, was one of those dots on the map his father used to call a "Nine O'clock town." He'd say, "At nine o'clock they roll up the sidewalks." Who would believe a guy like Charlie, who grew up in a city of almost four million, would end up in a town with 757 residents? And now he didn't even live in the town. He was out in the country, on his ranch.

The train whistle, now far off, sounded again.

Charlie's hands were sweating. He dried them on his jeans. He took a sip of water and looked at the maple again.

The jay tilted its head and stared at Charlie. It screeched.

Charlie put down the water bottle. "Sorry, pal, no habla bird talk."

The jay didn't smile.

"What can go wrong? I'm just digging a hole in my front yard."

Charlie took a deep breath. *The bad feeling is just nerves about the kid. Perfectly normal. It doesn't mean anything.*

Charlie started to dig again.

The metal blade of the shovel clanked, hitting something buried in the baked hardpan.

"Probably another rock," Charlie said to the jay.

It screeched.

As the maple waited patiently to be put in the hole, Charlie brushed away dirt to see what the shovel had struck.

It was a human skull.