**Between the Covers**

**Cruising, The Lure: The Novel of Death**

by Rich Grzesiak

Mitzel and Rich Grzesiak are switching columns this issue only.

For what reasons are homosexual men regularly targeted for murder? If you read the several books published in the past year which hang plots on gay murders, you’ll get plenty of false clues but no understanding.

Murders of gay men (murdered because of being homosexual) are central to Dress Grey (just out in paperback), Cruising (reissued in paperback), A Queer Kind of Death (reissued), Feltic Picano’s The Lure and, of course, Wm. Friedkin’s own screenplay for his $11 million movie of Cruising. I’ve read the shooting script of Cruising and want to include it in this round-up since the film opens (in saturation bookings) on February 15 and poses a threat to our public safety.

In The Lure, a number of gay men “on the circuit” in NYC’s disco-bath scene are murdered in brutal fashions. A straight college professor is recruited by police to go underground in the gay ghetto and finger the malefactors. He learns to “be gay.” The plot takes him on the rounds—tending bar in a backroom bang joint, rubbing bellies with top-line gay movers ‘n’-shakers, orgy baths, Fire Island, etc.

Though police speculate that a homosexual queer-basher is the killer, this turns out to be entirely false. Homophobia in this entertaining novel plays second fiddle to greed and political corruption. At least Picano provides credible motivation and assumes that, in such a world as he describes, gay men are killed by homophobic psychos.

Billy Friedkin’s Cruising has some remarkable parallels to The Lure. Picano has even observed in his Advocate interview that he suspects Friedkin of plundering galleys of The Lure during Friedkin’s mad rewrites of Cruising in the midst of the gay rebellion in NYC this past summer. One scene I suspect Friedkin literally lifted from The Lure occurs when straight-man posing-as-undercover-gay is confronted by his female lover (left behind while he’s on Assignment) who believes he is now actually homo and implores him To Be Honest About It With Her. The overall milieu of the movie Cruising is shared by The Lure—fucked bars, peep shows, Christopher Street clones, which were not around as institutions 10 years ago when the book Cruising first appeared. It was Dorothy Parker who said: “The only -ism they subscribe to in Hollywood is plagiarism.”

Steve Burns, the cop-character played by Al Pacino in the film Cruising, is a rookie flatfoot assigned to find the “chop-killer.” Shortly thereafter he does, with about as much detective work as, say, Lucy and Ethel ad lib an mishap birthday card. The Friedkin script provides no motive as to why the killer is selecting gay men as victims. He is simply another American “loner nut” with unresolved Oedipal problems. This makes for simplified screenwriting (flat characters, cheap TV cop-talk dialogue, no motivation for action) but it’s certainly further evidence of Friedkin’s greed to exploit an extremely important concern of homosexuals (our physical safety) without box-office sensationalism without promoting any understanding of why we are being killed.

Never in The Lure or in Cruising is someone killed by a homosexual Christian screaming “This is for Anita” or “Kill A Queer For Christ,” though this happens in our community. When daily headlines tell of politically-inspired anti-gay assassinations (Robert Hillisbrorough, Richard Heakin, Harvey Milk, Robert Opel, et al.), gayexplo pop media don’t want to offend their straight market with such a disturbing and critical truth.

Never is a gay guy in these works attacked and beaten (as was Dick Button) by a gang of streetcorner thugs with baseball bats out “to kill a fag.” Instead we are told that certain men kill queers because they are politically corrupt, are being paid to do it or have personal problems.

Friedkin is far more culpable than Picano in this matter. He has exploited a dangerous misrepresentation of how gay men in NYC live, and the wide distribution of Friedkin’s lies can only result in further increasing the assaults on homosexuals.

The biggest lie in Cruising is that homosexuals cannot and will not protect themselves. Our “choices” of hedonism and lifestyism make us acceptable marks for death. Our only salvation is the police who, as in Cruising, want to kill us too, given the opportunity. We are despicable and deserve to die, so sez Billy Friedkin’s script.

Picano is far more sophisticated. His homosexuals are organizing to oppose right-wing movements and police harassment. But their power comes from wealth and business persuasiveness. Money talks louder than the love that no longer dares not speak its name.

The wonderful irony here is that rioting by thousands of faggots in NYC during the “Cruising” shoot-

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Novel of death
—The Lure and Cruising
(Continued from page 11)

ing exposes the harmful lies of these fic-
tions: a) homosexuals are interested in
their safety and will organize to ensure it,
and b) like with Stonewall, it will be street gay
and 'the little people' who will put
themselves on the line first—not
the bankers, account execs, and
property developers.

The Lure is a fanciful concept
stylishly executed (as you'd expect
from a craftsman like Picano) and
has little to do with our reality. I
read it as such. The world the book
depicts is a fantasy to me in that it
has more to do with The Money
Ghetto than The Gay Ghetto.

Friedkin's script for "Cruising" is
a different kettle of fish. All the
horrible things you've heard about
it are true. The final version of the
movie will probably be even worse
than we can expect. "Cruising"
shows every simple-minded homophobe
How To Kill A Fag. It exploits
our lives and advertises our con-
dition as fatal. It invites reac-
ctionary violence against us. By
coming out, according to Friedkin,
we must passively accept our own
murder. The film implicitly en-
dorses crimes against us and goes
out of its way to demonstrate that
we have no redress. It can only
encourage anti-gay violence.

If you or someone you know is
beaten, robbed, attacked, threat-
ened or harassed while cruising,
I urge you to report it. Wing
should not bother to ask the names of the
perpetrators. I can answer that for you
right now: "It's Billy Friedkin
whodunit."

Williamsport
activist

Jailed by
homophobes

(Continued from page 4)

had spoken several times to Ser-
geant Wilson although Wilson de-
nied having heard of him.

The future of HOW is unclear.
according to Maneval. "I'm going
to maintain a very low profile for
quite awhile and I don't know
what's going to happen to the
group."

He said the attacks on his home
have hurt the group's membership
attendance which at one point was
25 people. "The members have
seen what happened to me and
have all gone back into the closet.
We have literally no organization
left because of this."

Nevertheless, Maneval said he is
going ahead with plans for the or-
ganization's next scheduled meet-
ing on Wednesday, January 2. For
more information on the group,
Maneval said to write to HOW c/o
P.O. Box 1072, Williamsport, Pa.
17701.