

MATTHEW KLEI

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THE BALTIMORE SUN

>>> **Con Ed**

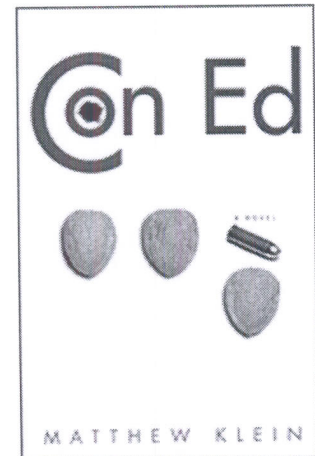
Matthew Klein

Warner / 320 pages / \$23.99

The dirty secret of con artist novels is that to work well, they should be less about the con and more about the artist. Finding a way to make the reader care about a criminal whose primary goal is to rip off others can be exceedingly difficult, but Matthew Klein, in his American debut, has the best possible asset at his disposal: a commanding, wry voice equally comfortable with one-liners as it is with introspection and character development. Fifty-something Kip Largo is out of jail, out of options and out of time, especially when he finds out his barely-adult son, Toby, is in trouble, thanks to a few wrong decisions involving the Russian mob. So when a lovely named Lauren approaches Kip with the opportunity to swindle her husband, of course he's going to take it. Klein sets up the elaborate con and its double-crossings, dizzying schemes and betrayals, but never loses sight that the real story is how Kip and Toby relate and react to each other as men who failed in their responsibilities and in living the honest life - and whose sacrifices take them in surprising directions.

Sarah Weinman reviews crime fiction monthly for The Sun

Review published on March 4, 2007



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