

# KIRKUS REVIEW

## CONNECTED

A Case of Unique Proximity

by [David Random](#)

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Two brothers are connected to a murder—in divergent ways—in this novel.

At the beginning of Random's tale, there's a body, a weapon, an eyewitness, and a confession. Harvard psychology professor Olek Janko died in his apartment from knife wounds inflicted by Gary Vaughn. Gary confesses to the homicide, which his brother, Maynard, witnessed and reported to the authorities. What veteran police lieutenant Joe "The Bull" Antonelli thinks will be a clear-cut case turns bizarre when "attractive and ambiguously ethnic" Detective Cassandra "Cassie" Navarro reveals that the Vaughn boys share a connection more profound than brotherhood: they are conjoined twins. Maynard is a soft-spoken, articulate, and presumed innocent witness to a murder, and Gary is the coldblooded killer. The Vaughns, joined at the abdomen, had been part of a twin study Janko was conducting; now Antonelli summarizes: "We have a confessed murderer, but we have an apparently innocent man attached to him." Courtroom scenes present a riveting debate as to the degree that conjoined twins can be independent—is it just a physical condition, or if one twin has a mind to kill, how involved psychologically is the other in that decision? And if he can't be punished without penalizing Maynard, did Gary commit the perfect crime? During their investigation, Antonelli and Cassie interview Janko's estranged wife and research assistant, Christina Cole, who seems more concerned with the twins than with her dead husband.

The story moves quickly, and Random is able to craft a plot that sounds far-fetched on the surface but becomes poignantly believable. Descriptions are rich: "A black sky salted with stars" and "The brothers were looking in two different directions at once—like a lizard whose eyes work independently of each other." Smart dialogue fills quick-paced scenes, and accounts of Boston's North End are vivid (cannoli, anyone?). Strong women and players of various ethnicities fill the pages. lead character Antonelli is a bit of a sexagenarian dandy, with his hand-tailored suits and gold-embossed cuff links.

A winning twin spin that combines an ethical conundrum with a police procedural.



# Pacific Book Review

Pacific Book Review Star



Awarded to Books  
of Excellent Merit

**Title:** Connected  
**Author:** David Random  
**Publisher:** LitFire Publishing  
**Genre:** Fiction / Mystery / Crime  
**Reviewed by:** Jake Bishop

## Pacific Book Review

Some murder mysteries are entirely focused on finding out who the real killer is. That's why they're called whodunits. Others are focused on just how the crime was committed. While still others are intent on creating the seemingly perfect crime, then proving it wasn't perfect. David Random's *Connected* doesn't make any of the above techniques the crux of his narrative. Rather, he has created a compelling mystery that seems to put justice under the microscope by asking the question, is it sometimes impossible to punish the guilty without also punishing the innocent?

Joe is a Boston cop close to retirement. His partner, Cassie, is both striking and smart. He has thoughts about making their relationship something more than just professional. She's keeping her feelings under wraps. At least until the strangest case of their partnership is resolved. The case involves a murder. Twin brothers are involved. One brother has already confessed to the crime. The other brother is claiming total innocence. Under most circumstances, that in itself wouldn't be exceptional, but under this circumstance it most certainly is. The brothers are conjoined twins.

When two people share the same body, how can one do something that the other isn't somehow involved in? It's plausible the experts say. Even conjoined twins are actually two separate minds and two separate personalities within one bodily structure. But then the real question arises. If one really is guilty and the other innocent, how can you punish the one without punishing the other?

Random weaves that question and others into an intricate tale that is part mystery and part police procedural. First Joe becomes fixated on the case. Then Cassie does too. Their police superior wants them to abandon it, saying they already have a confession and it's for the courts to work out. But Joe can't let it go. Together the partners set out to uncover everything they can about the crime, the motive, and the two-in-one brothers at the center of it.

The author does an exceptional job of exploring Joe and Cassie's relationship without slowing the pace of the unfolding mystery. He is an author confident of his story and how to tell it. The environs of Harvard, Cambridge, and Boston almost become characters themselves as the hunt for answers goes on. This is a yarn longer on intellectual energy than adrenal stimulation, but it is no less compelling for it. Car chases and shootouts are non-existent, but suspense is still palpable due to Random's ability to ask big questions and supply surprising answers. He's a first-rate writer and storyteller. If you're into uncommon tales told well, by all means get *Connected*.

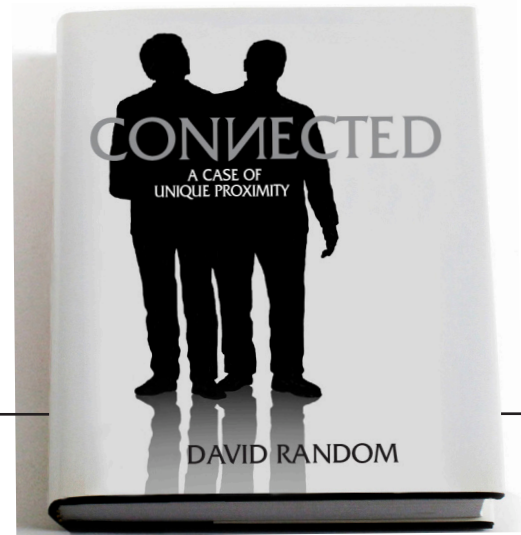
# US Review of Books

*Connected: A case of Unique Proximity*

by David Random

LitFire Publishing, LLC

Book review by Joe Kilgore



***“Don’t miss this one.”***

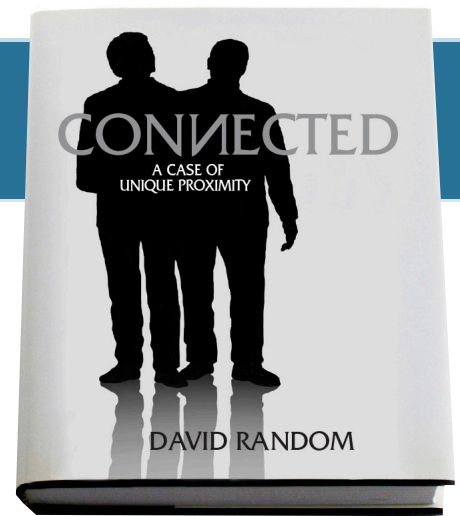
With the countless number of mysteries that are written and published year after year, it’s almost impossible to create one that really seems unique. But unique feels like the perfect word to describe this murder mystery involving conjoined twins.

Boston is the locale, and Harvard is the scene of the crime where a bizarre killing has taken place. A professor has been murdered. One brother has confessed, but the brother attached to him is saying he had absolutely no knowledge of what was about to happen before it happened. If you think that produces some really vexing legal problems, you’re right. If one brother is innocent, and one is guilty, how do you punish the guilty without also punishing the innocent?

America’s system of laws is based on punishing guilt and doing everything possible to make sure an innocent man isn’t punished. But what do you do when the guilty and the innocent are literally inseparable? In addition to the aforementioned quandry, author Random adds a layer of romantic interest. Joe, the detective in charge of investigating the case, is secretly falling for his partner, Cassie. Will their partnership get even more personal and will their investigation uncover anything to help untangle the profound legal dilemma?

Random’s tale is written crisply and well. Nothing seems overdone. He lets the story tell itself without imposing a signature prose style. His characters feel real and their behavior honest. Dialogue is sharp and credible. Within the well-worn genre of crime fiction, he has managed to create a story that feels fresh and new. And like the best of mystery writers, he definitely has surprises in store. Don’t miss this one.

**Recommended by the US Review**



## Connected: A Case of Unique Proximity

**Author:** David Random

**Publisher:** LitFire (284 pages)

**ISBN:** 978-1-63524-834-0

Paperback, hardcover, and e-book

Available at:

[www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

[www.BarnesAndNoble.com](http://www.BarnesAndNoble.com)

*Connected is a wholly absorbing and spellbinding mystery from the start.*

A unique spin on the common police procedural, *Connected: A Case of Unique Proximity* by David Random is an exciting page turner.

Harvard psychology professor Olek Janko has been brutally murdered. It is seemingly an open-and-shut case: the murderer has confessed, and an eyewitness has corroborated his story.

Initially unsure why he is summoned for the case, veteran police detective Joe Antonelli, better known as “The Bull” because of his large stature and tenacity, discovers that the murderer and the eyewitness have a special bond: Gary and Maynard Vaughn aren’t just brothers, they’re conjoined twins.

With this unprecedented set of circumstances, the legal system struggles to determine a fair verdict that doesn’t require the incarceration of an innocent man. Just when it seems clear that no adequate verdict can be reached, an unexpected discovery changes the course of the case.

Not just because of its novel concept, *Connected* clips along nicely, exploring the legal nuances of its truly bizarre case. The plot is believable, with Joe and his protégé Cassie adhering to solid detective work in order to establish the facts and reach their conclusions. The text is also an intriguing look at the inner workings of a sometimes flawed legal system, with insightful commentary on the daily stresses and frustrations that those involved with the law endure for the sake of complete transparency.

Language is alive with concise details and vivid imagery. Scenes and characters are established quickly yet integrate seamlessly into the text. Random’s knack for exposition is clear from the start. Maintaining plot so well also adds to the effectiveness of the story, with no clunky introductions to get in the way of the investigation at the heart of the story.

Dialogue keeps with the quick pace of the book, too, and is always useful and necessary. Even seemingly benign conversations become important, both establishing impressive foreshadowing and developing character motives. Once introduced, characters are easy to distinguish from each other, with good characterization aiding the text as well.

Though it’s seemingly clear from the book’s opening who committed the murder, *Connected* is still a gripping mystery, supplying more questions as the story unwinds. Details that initially seem unimportant resurface later with amplified meaning, throwing the validity of the whole case into question.

*Connected* is both aesthetically pleasing and well designed. Chapter breaks are chosen well, parlaying the drama of the text. Random avoids the tired approach of ending each chapter on a cliffhanger, instead opting to gradually build off of each section break to a place where a suspenseful moment is especially effective.

*Connected* is a wholly absorbing and spellbinding mystery from the start.



# HOLLYWOOD

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## Book Reviews

**Title:** CONNECTED

**Author:** David Random

**Publisher:** LitFire Publishing

**Genre:** Crime

**Reviewed by:** Megan Russell



**Awarded to  
Books of Excellent  
Merit**

## Hollywood Book Reviews

It is increasingly difficult in the information age to tell a crime story which is both original and captivating. David Random has pulled off such a daunting task with great success in his work *Connected*. What seems to be a typical detective story turns into a complicated narration of ethics and survival. The plot is anything but overused or tired. There's been a murder and the main suspect is in custody and has confessed to the killing. It seems like a cut-and-dry legal case. The problem? He is a conjoined twin and the other brother has claimed innocence. Facing a moral dilemma, Random takes the reader deep into the legal system and exposes some harsh truths of true bodily autonomy.

Fast-paced, smart, and thrilling, *Connected* gives the reader enough knowledge of detective work and the legal system without bogging down the writing with stale information. Dynamic and powerful, this is a story that somehow finds the balance between literary craftsmanship and the feeling of watching a high-stakes television drama. The reader will never question Random's knowledge of the genre as it is clear he has done his research. The twists of the plot are unexpected but not totally out of the blue. Skillful readers will applaud themselves for catching the clues throughout the story. Still, even with the foreshadowing and excellent narrative the story still surprises and shocks even the most enthusiastic reader.

Those interested in detective narratives will eat this story up with no problem. In fact, I had my own inklings about the ending but I kept reading because the story was so thrilling I just had to find out if I was right. This is the mark of a truly great crime novel. I was able to push through the beginning to get to the juicy parts. I would love to see a little more variation in Cassie's character as she was one of my favorites. In the end, this is an excellent in-depth crime novel featuring sympathetic characters and a lot of open-ended questions.

For a genre that desperately needs refreshing stories, Random succeeded in delivering a work of fiction that aims to push the genre of crime-writing into the future. The plot expressed in this book is impeccable and every potential pitfall is expertly avoided. If Random decides to write more crime stories in the future he should do so with great certainty of his skills.