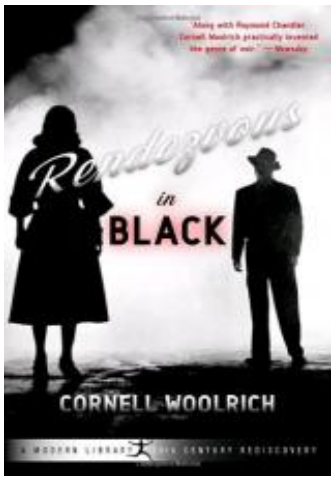
Rendezvous in Black

by Cornell Woolrich



About the Book

On a mild midwestern night in the early 1940s, Johnny Marr leans against a drugstore wall. He's waiting for Dorothy, his fiancée, and tonight is the last night they'll be meeting here, for it's May 31st, and June 1st marks their wedding day. But she's late, and Johnny soon learns of a horrible accident?an accident involving a group of drunken men, a low-flying charter plane, and an empty liquor bottle. In one short moment Johnny loses all that matters to him and his life is shattered. He vows to take from these men exactly what they took from him. After years of planning, Johnny begins his quest for revenge, and on May 31st of each year?always on May 31st?wives, lovers, and daughters are suddenly no longer safe.

Discussion Guide

1. Critics in Woolrich's day considered him the "king of the thriller." Would you agree?

2. Rendezvous in Black was a radical departure from the detective stories popular in Woolrich's day. What sets it apart?

3. In the essay "Cornell Woolrich: Psychologist, Poet, Painter, Moralist," Francis Lacassin states that the reader identifies with the main characters through Woolrich's elements of "the noble or pathetic." Is Johnny pathetic or noble? Is he in fact the hero or the victim?

4. Woolrich described his writing as a "form of subconscious selfexpression." Some critics have interpreted this statement as Woolrich using his own fanciful crimes as therapy for his personal problems and have gone so far as to suggest that Woolrich's readers view the story in the same light. Is this nontraditional detective story cathartic in any way? If so, how?

Author Bio

Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich was an American novelist and short story writer who sometimes wrote under the pseudonyms William Irish and George Hopley.

His biographer, Francis Nevins Jr., rated Woolrich the fourth best crime writer of his day, behind only Dashiell Hammett, Erle Stanley Gardner and Raymond Chandler. A check of film titles reveals that more film noir screenplays were adapted from works by Woolrich than any other crime novelist, and many of his stories were adapted during the 1940s for *Suspense* and other dramatic radio programs.

Critical Praise

"Along with Raymond Chandler, Cornell Woolrich practically invented the genre of noir."

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