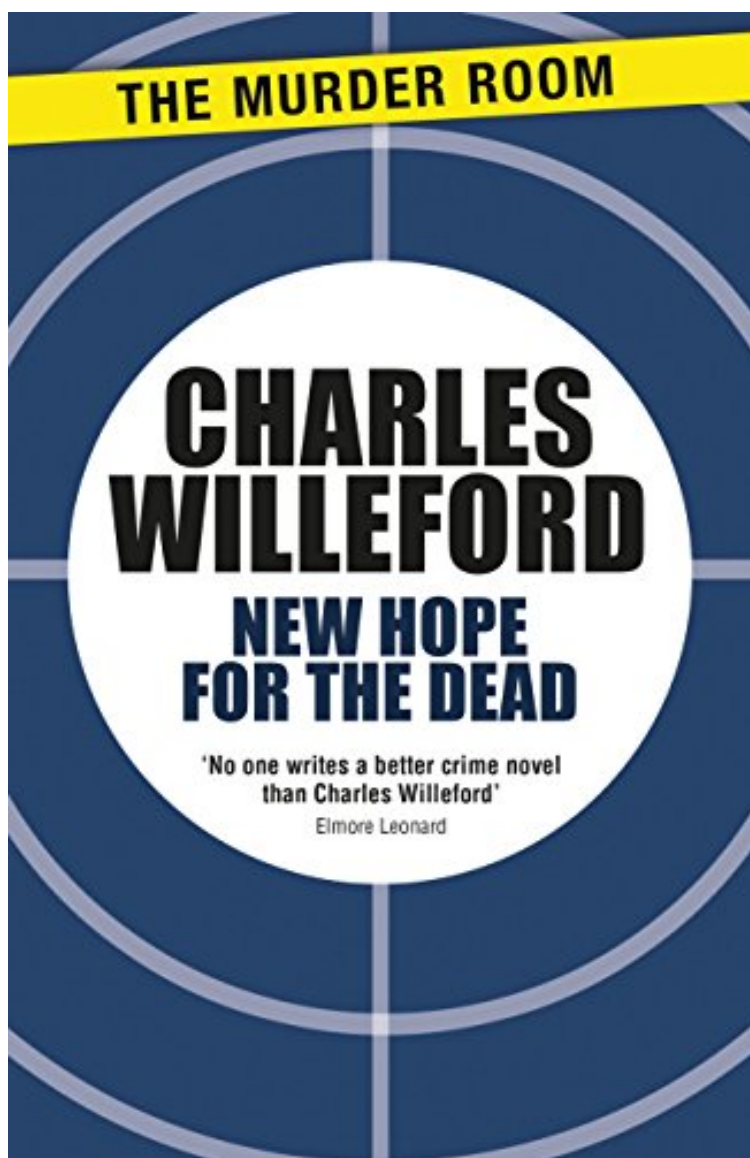


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New Hope for the Dead (Hoke Moseley) (English Edition)



Par Charles Willeford
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur'No one writes a better crime novel than Charles Willeford' Elmore LeonardIn an expensive Miami neighbourhood, Sergeant Hoke Mosely, Homicide Division, is called to investigate the lethal overdose of a young junkie. But what seems like a routine OD gives Moseley cause to doubt - particularly when he meets the dead kid's stunning stepmother.And with his two teenage daughters dumped on him by his troublesome ex-wife, a new beat partner struggling with an unplanned pregnancy, and fifty cold cases to solve, it starts to feel like this little matter of a dead junkie and his beautiful stepmother might

just be the answer to Hoke's prayersExtrait1 "CRAP," Sergeant Hoke Moseley told his partner, "is the acronym for finding your way around Miami." He glanced at Ellita Sanchez as he shifted down to second gear, and waited for her to nod. She should know that much already, having been a police dispatcher for seven years, so there was no need to explain that C stood for courts, R for roads, A for avenues, and P for places. It didn't always hold true that courts, roads, avenues, and places all ran north and south. Sometimes they looped in semicircles and wild arabesques, especially the roads. Hoke's major problem with Ellita was making conversation. He never knew exactly what to tell her or what to take for granted, even though he was the sergeant and she was the new partner. She seemed to know almost everything he told her already, and she had only been in the Homicide Division for four months. Some of the things Hoke knew from experience and had tried to explain to her--like the fact that junkies sometimes rubbed Preparation H on their track marks to reduce the swelling--she knew already. CRAP was one of those oddities that very few cops knew about, and he really hadn't expected her to say, "I know." Perhaps, he thought, her two-year A.S. degree in police science at Miami-Dade Community College was actually worth the time and money she had invested in it. At any rate, she was getting more sensitive to his moods. She just nodded now, instead of saying "I know," and this had begun to irritate him visibly. And something else was bothering Sanchez. Her pretty golden face was more somber lately, and she no longer smiled as broadly in the mornings as she had at first. Her quiescent moodiness had been going on for more than a week now. At first, Hoke had attributed it to her period--if that's what it was--but a week was a long time. How long did a period last? Well, whatever it was that was bothering her, it hadn't affected her work. Yet. One thing Hoke knew for sure: He hadn't done anything to offend her. If anything, he had bent over backward to make her an equal partner--subject to his directions, of course. He almost always explained why he was doing something. But Sanchez was, first of all, a woman, and she was also a Latin, so perhaps there were some sexual and cultural differences here and he would never really know what was on her mind. Sometimes, though, when he wanted to make a humorous comment, the way he had with his old partner, Bill Henderson, and then took a look at her, with those huge tits looking voluptuous and maternal in the loose silk blouses she always wore, he held his tongue. Having a female partner in the car instead of Bill wasn't the same. Maybe he should let Sanchez drive the car once in a while. But that didn't seem right either. The man always drove, not the woman, although when he and Bill had been together, Bill had driven most of the time because he was a better driver than Hoke, and they both knew it. For all Hoke knew, Ellita Sanchez was a better driver than either Bill or himself. Tomorrow, then, maybe he'd let her drive--see how it worked out "The next street," Sanchez said, pointing to the green-and-white sign, "is Poinciana Court." "Yeah," Hoke laughed. "And it's running east and west." They were looking for an address in Green Lakes, a Miami subdivision built during the housing boom of the mid-1950s when the developer was looking for young families with small children, for Korean war veterans with \$500 saved for a down payment and jobs that paid them enough to afford a \$68-a-month house payment. These had all been \$10,000 houses then, with thirty-year fixed mortgages at 5 1/2 percent interest. That wasn't expensive, even then, for a three-bedroom, one-bathroom house. Today, however, these same houses in Green Lakes, now thirty years old, were selling for \$86,000 and more, and at 14 percent interest rates. Many similar housing areas in Miami, depending upon their locations, were slums now--but not Green Lakes. The wide curving streets and avenues, named as well as numbered, were lined with tall ficus trees and Australian pines. There were "sleeping policemen," painted yellow, every hundred yards or so, road bumps that didn't let a driver get into high gear. Many owners, as they prospered, had added bathrooms, "Florida rooms"--glass-enclosed porches--garages, and carports, and most of the homes, if not all, had their backs and new Florida rooms facing man-made square lakes, with water the color of green milk. The lakes were originally rock and sand quarries, and much too dangerous for swimming (at least a dozen people had drowned before the Green Lakes Homeowners' Association had banned swimming altogether), but the lakes had Dade County pines and jogging paths around their borders, and in the evenings there would usually be a cooling breeze sweeping across the water. As neighborhoods go, Green Lakes was a nice place to live. The subdivision was close enough to Hialeah for most shopping purposes, but far enough away to avoid the Latin influx, and still much too expensive for a lot of black families. These conditions would all change with time, of course, but when they did the houses would probably appreciate to \$100,000, and variable interest rates would be sitting in the low twenties. The residents who lived in Green Lakes now were lucky, and they knew it. The crime rate was low because of an effective Crime Watch program; there hadn't been a homicide in this subdivision for more than two years. Hoke spotted the blue-and-white squad car parked in front of the house. The hatless harness officer was leaning against a ficus tree at the curb, smoking a cigarette and

talking to two teenage girls. The girls, wearing tank tops, jeans and running shoes, kept their ten-speed bikes between themselves and the cop. As Hoke pulled to a stop behind the police car, the radio in the blue-and-white crackled. Aggressive birds sang back from the trees, and sprinklers whirred on a nearby lawn. A few houses down, a dog barked from behind closed doors. As Hoke and Sanchez got out of the car, the officer, a Latin with square-cut sideburns down to and even with his dark eyes, moved away from the tree and told the two girls to get moving. They rode away for about a hundred yards, stopped and looked back. "Sergeant Moseley," Hoke said. "Homicide." He glanced at the officer's nameplate. "Where's your hat, Garcia?" "In the car." "Put it on. You're under arms, you're supposed to be covered." Garcia got his hat from the car and put it on. The hat looked two sizes too small resting on his abundance of black curly hair. He looked ridiculous in the small cap with its scuffed visor, and Hoke could see why the man didn't want to wear it. On the other hand, he could also get a decent haircut. "Where's the decedent?" Hoke asked. "In the house. Officer Hannigan's inside." Sanchez started toward the house. Hoke indicated the two girls who were inching back, pushing their bikes. "Don't let a crowd gather. Before long, gapers'll show up, so keep 'em across the street." Officer Hannigan, a rangy blonde in her early twenties with purple eye makeup and coral lipstick, opened the door before Hoke and Sanchez reached the front porch. She had licked or gnawed most of the lipstick from her long lower lip. "Don't you have a hat either?" Hoke said. "It's in the car." She flushed. "Besides, Sergeant Roberts said it was optional whether we wore hats or not." "No," Hoke said, "it's not an option. Any time you're wearing a sidearm, you'll keep your head covered. If you want me to, I'll explain the reasons why to Sergeant Roberts." "I'd rather you didn't." "Where's the decedent?" "Down the hall, in the small bedroom across from the master bedroom. We didn't go into the room, but I looked at it--the boy, I mean--from the door. He's an OD all right, and was DOA as reported." "That's very helpful, Hannigan. Let's go into the dining area, and we'll see what else you can tell us." The living room, except for two squashy, lemon-colored beanbag seats, was furnished with antique-white rattan furniture, with yellow Haitian cotton cushions on the couch, the armchair, and the ottoman. There were vases of freshly cut daisies on three low, white Formica-topped tables. The beige burlap draperies were closed, and three circular throw rugs, the same color as the draperies, were spaced precisely on the waxed terrazzo floor. The dining area, which held a round Eames pedestal table and four matching chairs, was curtainless. The open vertical Levolors filled the room with bright morning sunlight. A blue bowl in the center of the table held a half-dozen Key limes. "All right," Hoke said, as he sat at the table, "report." "Report?" "Report." Hoke took a limp package of his specially cutshort Kools out of his jacket pocket, looked at it for a moment and then put it back. Sanchez, unsmiling, stared at the young woman but did not sit down. Hannigan clutched her handbag with both hands and cleared her throat. "Well, we received the call on the DOA at oh-seven-thirty. I was driving, and we started right over. There was a mix-up, I guess, and at Flagler we got another call to abort. But just a few minutes later, before I could find a turnaround, we were told to continue." "Do you know why?" "No. They didn't say." "There was a boundary dispute, that's why. A block away, on Ficus Avenue, the Hialeah boundary begins. So at first they thought the DOA should go to Hialeah instead of Miami. But after they rechecked the map, Miami won the body. We would have preferred, naturally, to give it to Hialeah." Hoke took out his notebook and ballpoint. "Who discovered the decedent?" "The boy's mother, Mrs. Hickey. That's Loretta B. Hickey. She's divorced, and lives here alone with her son." "What's the dead child's name?" "He isn't a child. He's a young man, nineteen or twenty, I'd say, offhand." "You said 'boy' before. How old are you, Hannigan?" "Twenty-four." "How long you been a police officer?" "Since I graduated from Miami-Dade." "Don't be evasive." "Two years. Almost two years." "Where's the mother?" "Now?" "If you keep twisting the strap on your handbag, you'll break it." "Sorry." "Don't be sorry; it's your purse. The boy's mother." "Oh. She's next door with a neighbor. Mrs. Koontz. The young man's name is . . . was Jerry Hickey. Gerald, with a G." Hoke wrote the information in his notebook. "Has the father been notified?" "I don't know. Joey, Officer Garcia, didn't notify anyone, and neither did I. Mrs. Koontz might've called him. But we were just told to--" "Okay. Unlatch that death grip on your purse and dump the contents on the table." "I don't have to do that!" She looked at Sanchez for support, but Sanchez's disinterested expression didn't change. "You have no right to--" "That's an order, Hannigan." Hannigan hesitated for a moment, chewing some more on her lower lip. With a shrug, she emptied the handbag on the table. Hoke poked through the contents with his ballpoint, separating items that ranged from a half-empty package of Velamints to three wadded balls of used tissues. He picked up the ostrich-skin wallet. Tucked between a MasterCard plate and Hannigan's voter's registration card, in a plasticene card case, were two tightly folded one-hundred-dollar bills. "That's my money," she said. "I won it at Jai alai last night." "Did Garcia win, too?" "Yes! Yes, he did. We went

together." "Sit down." Hoke indicated the chair across the table as he got to his feet. "Put your stuff back in your purse." Hoke opened the front door and beckoned to Garcia. As Garcia ambled toward him, Hoke fanned the two bills in his left hand, and extended his right. "Let me see your share, Garcia." Garcia hesitated, his brown face mantling with anger. "He wants to see our Jai alai winnings!" Hannigan called shrilly from the dining area. Garcia handed over his wallet. Hoke found eight one-hundred-dollar bills, folded and refolded into a tight square, behind the driver's license. "That what you call an even split, Garcia? Eight for you, and only two for Hannigan?" "Well--I found it, not Hannigan." "Where?" "In plain sight, on top of the dresser. I--I didn't touch nothing else." "You and Hannigan are assholes. Stealing a ten-dollar bill is one thing, but don't you think Mrs. Hickey would miss a thousand bucks and scream to the department?" Garcia looked away. "We--we figured the two of us could just deny it." "Sure. The way you did with me. Ever been interrogated by an Internal Affairs investigator?" "No." "You're lucky then you didn't try to lie to me. Now hustle your ass next door and get Mrs. Hickey. Bring her back over here." "What--what about the money?" "The money's evidence." "What I mean, what about me and--?" "Forget about it. Try and learn a lesson. That's all." Hoke returned to the dining area. "Hannigan, we're going to examine the body. While we're in the bedroom we can't watch the silverware and you, too, so go back to your car and listen to the radio." The concrete-block-and-stucco house had three bedrooms and one bathroom. Two of the bedrooms were half the size of the master bedroom. The bathroom could be entered from the hallway, and also from the master bedroom. At the back of the house there was also a Florida room that could serve as a second living room, with glass jalousies on three sides. The back lawn sloped gently to the square milky lake. A sliding glass door led from the master bedroom to the Florida room, and across the hall from the larger bedroom was the spartan room occupied by the dead Gerald Hickey. Mrs. Hickey's bedroom held a round, unmade king-sized bed, with a half-dozen pillows and an array of long-legged nineteenth-century dolls. There was a pink silk chaise longue, a maple highboy with a matching dresser and vanity table, and a backless settee. The vanity table, with three mirrors, was littered with unguents, cold creams, and other cosmetics. The round bed was a tangle of crumpled Laura Ashley sheets in a floral pattern not observed in nature, with a wadded lavender nightgown-and-peignoir combination at the foot of the bed. Sanchez picked up one of the long-legged dolls. Hoke sniffed the anima of the owner--Patou's Joy, perspiration, cold cream, bath powder, soap, and stale cigarette smoke. "You ever notice," he said, "how a woman's room always smells like the inside of her purse?" "Nope." Sanchez dropped the doll on the bed. "But I've noticed that a man's bedroom smells like a YMCA locker room." "When were you"--Hoke started to say "inside a man's bedroom" but caught himself--"inside the Y locker room?" "Revue de presse" "A top-notch crime novel... both tough and funny." - The Washington Post "No one writes a better crime novel than Charles Willeford." - Elmore Leonard "Pure pleasure... Mr. Willeford never puts a foot wrong." - The New Yorker "Nobody writes like Charles Willeford... He is an original funny, weird, and wonderful." - James Crumley