

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ One-Shot Harry.

By Gary Phillips

Apr. 2022. 288p. Soho, \$26.95 (9781641292917)

The versatile Phillips first hit crime-fiction fans' radar more than 20 years ago with his superb Ivan Monk series (*Only the Wicked*, 2000) starring a Black PI in Los Angeles. More recently, Phillips has written stand-alone thrillers, comics, and old-school adventure, along with editing several fine anthologies (*Politics Noir*, 2008). His roots in the pulp-paperback era have always enhanced his work, as has his ability to portray the multifaceted ordinary lives of Black characters, often in inner-city L.A. Both of those through lines are present in his latest effort, featuring Black photographer and reporter Harry Ingram in 1963 L.A. After Korean War vet Harry's "foxhole buddy," white jazzman Ben Kingslow, dies in a suspicious one-car accident, Harry decides to do some nosing around, following a trail that leads to an all-powerful group of conservative white businessmen. Meanwhile, his burgeoning love affair with Anita Claire, a campaigner working to elect Tom Bradley as L.A.'s first Black mayor, draws him into left-wing politics (and preparations for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s upcoming Freedom Rally). In addition to the rich history here, Phillips vividly captures the sights and sounds of the era (jazz and blues on Central Avenue) as well as the ubiquitous racism and police brutality that threatened everyone in the Black community. Ingram emerges as a particularly satisfying, no-nonsense hero whose bullshit detector spares no one. Happily, the open-ended conclusion suggests there's more to come.

— *Bill Ott*