

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: July 1, 2020

★ **Squeeze Me.**

By Carl Hiaasen

Aug. 2020. 352p. Knopf, \$28.95 (9781524733452)

Hiaasen's latest foray into South Florida offers both an absurdist view of tomorrow's headlines (it's set in "postpandemic America") and a welcome reprise of the outrageously surrealistic tropes that first established the author as the Hieronymus Bosch of crime fiction. This time, though, the unhinged bad guys include the "crude-spoken commander-in-chief" (referred to by his Secret Service moniker, Mastodon) and a gaggle of Botox-infused, martini-swilling women who call themselves the Potussies and swear "brassy loyalty" to their president. Hiaasen's plot kicks into gear when one of the Potussies, Kiki Pew Fitzsimmons disappears from the president's Palm Beach pleasure dome, Casa Bellicosa, on the same night that a giant python is found on the grounds. "Wildlife-relocation expert" Angie Armstrong is certain that Kiki is now residing in the python's midsection, but that explanation won't fly at the Casa. An alternate theory emerges, embraced by Mastodon and the Potussies: Kiki was abducted by an illegal alien. The plot gets crazier from there in a manner that we might once have seen as exaggerated for effect but that, today, sounds like a White House presser. Among the many pleasures in this rampagingly funny satire is the reappearance of one of Hiaasen's much-loved characters, the wily Skink, former Florida governor turned Everglades hermit, who joins forces with Angie and Mastodon's fed-up wife, Mockingbird, to inject a dash of hope into the Boschian landscape.

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Hiaasen's satire is sure to get more off-the-book-page attention

than usual.

— *Bill Ott*