

Roger Smith's *Mixed Blood* is a noir thriller set in Cape Town, South Africa. Ex-marine Jack Burn fled there with his young family (he and his wife Susan have a four-year-old, Matt, and she is pregnant with their second child) on the run from U.S. authorities. When his gambling habit left him in deep debt to the wrong people, Jack was coerced into assisting in a bank robbery that led to the death of a cop.

After a series of coincidences propels two brown men '*cooked on speed*' into a home invasion, Jack kills them but hides the bodies, unwilling to involve local police who might discover his identity. This causes a rift with Susan, who almost loses the new baby and ends up in hospital. She is determined to take the children back to the United States and face the consequences.

The most sympathetic character in the story is Benny Mongrel, a forty-ish gang member who's '*been in and out of jail since he was fourteen.*' The only thing Benny has ever loved is the old mongrel, Bessie, who has been assigned to him for his job. Benny has the night shift on a building site as a watchman, and sees what goes down with the American family at the residence next door.

The most unsympathetic player in this drama is a very corrupt and violent Cape Town cop, Rudi Barnard, '*a dinosaur who'd somehow managed to escape the ice age of apartheid's end.*' Rudi is sought by Special Investigator Disaster Zondi and needs cash to make a new life for himself. Rudi follows the trail of the two dead gangsters to the Burns, and finds out who Jack really is.

There's a kidnapping, a ransom demand, and serious collateral damage. Jack Burns desperately seeks Rudi, with Benny's help. And Disaster Zondi trails them both. It's clear that this will not end well for most of those involved - and it doesn't. If you like thrillers that are heavily noir, then you'll appreciate *Mixed Blood*.