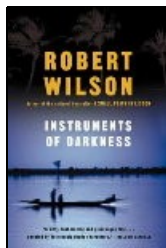


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**Book Review**  
**Instruments of Darkness**  
*A Bruce Medway Mystery*  
by [Robert Wilson](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer  
Posted: May 16, 2006

Sometimes it's a small detail that makes you realize a writer knows what he's doing. For me it was this sentence from a street scene in Cotonou, Benin: "Split fruit, dizzy with flies, lay spattered in the middle of the

road."

*Instruments of Darkness* is the first of a series of hardboiled detective stories that take place in West Africa. Like the others (I've read all but one), it is well constructed and exceptionally well written.

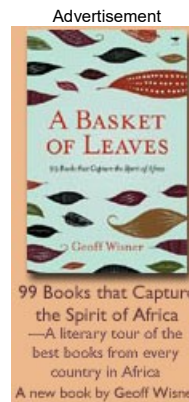
Bruce Medway, the hero of these tales, is an ex-employee of a shipping company who has found a more interesting but less lucrative life as a fixer in West Africa. "I collect money for people," he explains, "some of which is late, more of which is very late and most of which is so late it's stolen. I organize things for people — offices, transport, labour and contacts. I negotiate. I manage. Occasionally I find people who've lost themselves, some of them accidentally, others on purpose."


In *Instruments of Darkness*, Medway has been hired to find Steven Kershaw, a fellow expatriate. Kershaw is a talented painter — to judge from the murals on the walls of his deserted house — and a man with some unusual sexual habits. What follows is a fast-moving crime novel with glimpses of modern-day Africa better than you'll find in most "literary" novels.

Wilson has an uncanny ability to stud his narrative with sentences that make you smile, including variations on the Raymond Chandler one-liner. "My clothes clung to me like a bore at a party," says Medway, and a few pages later, "I sipped a second beer after the first had shot over my larynx like a white water river." Even better, he knows how to construct a satisfying noir, complete with tough broads, sleek *femmes fatales*, a body in a swimming pool, and some seriously scary individuals.

**About the Reviewer**

[Geoff Wisner](#) is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at [www.geoffwisner.com](http://www.geoffwisner.com).



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—Mahatma Gandhi