



'A Dangerous Breed' tells a tale of crime in the Puget Sound

Seattle native Glen Erik Hamilton may live in California now, but the protagonist of his Van Shaw series is firmly planted in the Pacific Northwest.

"A Dangerous Breed," published this week, is the fifth book in the series. In it, Shaw is compelled to dig a little further into his family history.

Shaw never knew who his dad was, and his mom died when he was just 6 years old — so he was raised by his grandfather, a professional thief.

It was an unconventional childhood to say the least, giving Shaw an intimate familiarity with the do's, don'ts and how-to's of society's underside.

As a young man, Shaw tries to break with his past by becoming an Army Ranger but as previous books in the series demonstrate, his past has a way of catching up with him, time and again.

Back in Seattle after dealing with some unpleasant business in Oregon (the subject of "Mercy River," the previous book in the series), Shaw has just received an envelope addressed to his mother — it's an invitation to her 30th high school reunion. His mom had been pregnant with him in high school so this gets him wondering if his dad might have been someone from her class.

His preliminary investigation — involving access to government files obtained under the counter — points to a certain man who also comes from criminal stock, and whose vague business registration, firearm purchases, dual passports (American and Russian) and frequent travel to Russia and former Soviet bloc countries bear all the hallmarks of one who is carrying on and perhaps expanding his family's business.

But Shaw's ad hoc genealogical investigation is interrupted by some unbidden business when he is asked by a friend to do a favor.

This puts him in the wrong place at the wrong time, and suddenly a South Asian extortionist is demanding that Shaw mastermind the heist of a Seattle biotech firm. The man has some very frightening goons in his employ and is ready to sic them on Shaw's nearest and dearest friends if he does not comply.

Despite his upbringing, Shaw really has been trying to live his life on the right side of the law. He fears that he is being roped into an act of domestic terrorism. So he assembles his own motley band involving a couple of his grandpa's old associates and others, and tries to outwit his blackmailer.

But that is just the beginning. An almost dizzying sequence of car chases, boat chases, covert meetings, glittering galas and stealthy break-ins has Shaw gallivanting all over the Puget Sound region, from high-tech to lowbrow.

There are many twists to this plot, along with a fair dose of violence and brutality — although that does not go unexamined. There are also the steamy beginnings of a love story and an ongoing contemplation of the nature/nurture theme.

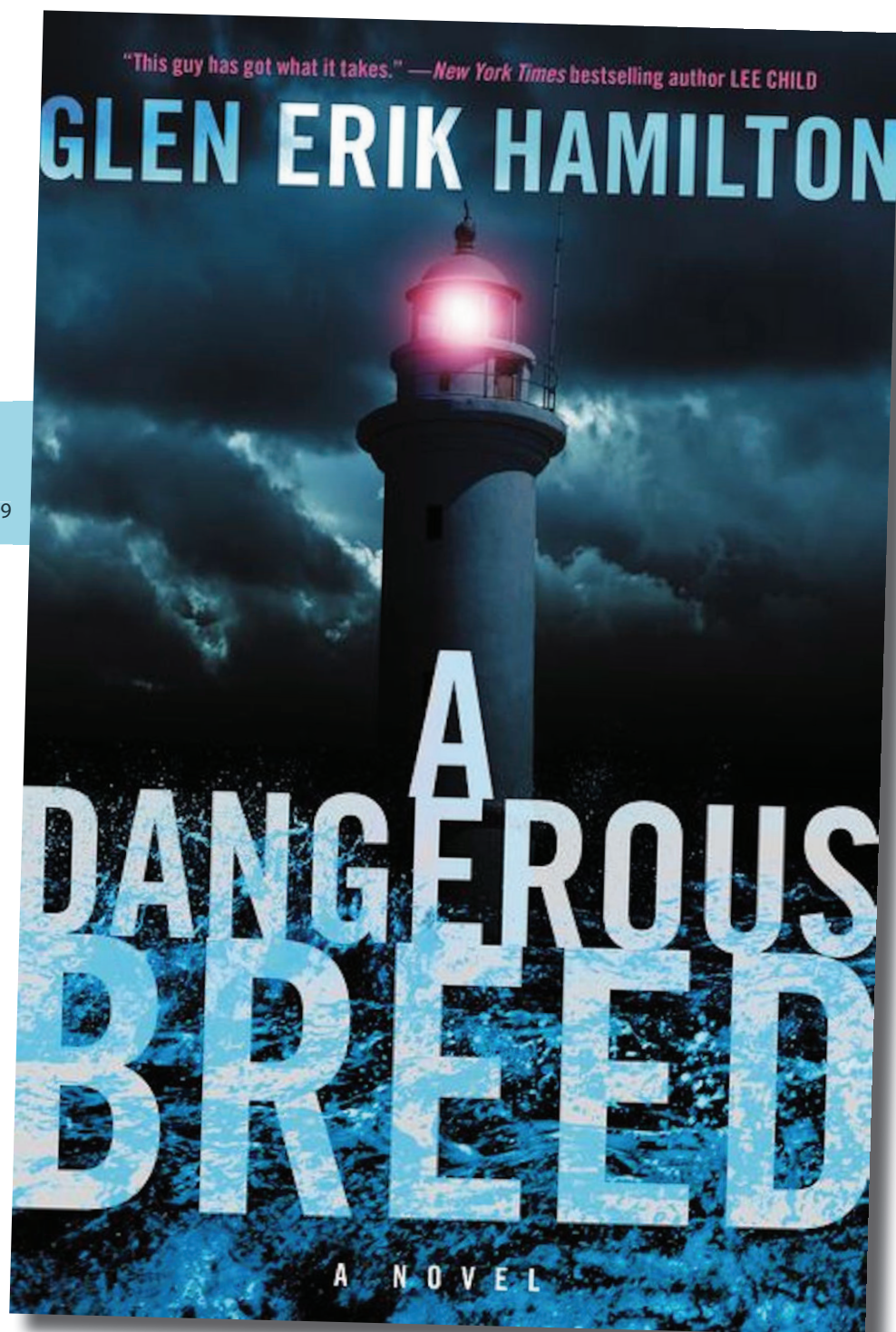
"A Dangerous Breed" is complex and riveting.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com.

This Week's Book

'A Dangerous Breed' by Glen Erik Hamilton

William Morrow and Company — 430 pp — \$27.99



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