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WEEKEND BREAK



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New thriller features unlikely pair of friends

By ZOË BUCHLI
For The Astorian

Looking to hunker down with a suspenseful thriller during these chilly winter months?

Astoria author William Dean's second novel, "The Ghosts We Know," hit bookshelves last month. The page-turner follows a pair of unlikely friends as they set out on a mission to take down a predator wreaking havoc on their small Oregon hometown.

The book closely follows Dean's debut novel, "Dangerous Freedom," which was released in August. Like its predecessor, the novel is largely inspired by people from Dean's life.

In the debut, Dean focuses on figures encountered throughout his career as a journalist, but this time he turns the lens on personal connections. The protagonists in Dean's latest work take after his father, Leo, and one of his father's close companions and often parallel the relationship they had.

"It's a thriller, but it's also a story of redemption and friendship," Dean said.

The plot follows two aging veterans, Harry and Friedrich, as they work to put a stop to a child predator tormenting their small town.

"They decide to rid the town of this dangerous predator who is targeting children," Dean said. "The police are getting nowhere, and panic spreads throughout the community. So they decide to take matters into their own hands and launch their own investigation."

Throughout the process, the two often find themselves in the crosshairs of some sinister people.

Dean describes the book as a more ambitious storytelling endeavor than "Dangerous Freedom" since the story is delivered from the perspectives of two protagonists instead of just one.

Dean's father enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1944 during World War II with hopes of fighting the Nazis, Dean said. The elder Dean flew dozens of missions over the Pacific Ocean in a B-29 bomber. Decades later, he befriended a Bavarian man who, while not aligned with the Nazis, served on Germany's side in the war, even while he was sure that Germany would lose.

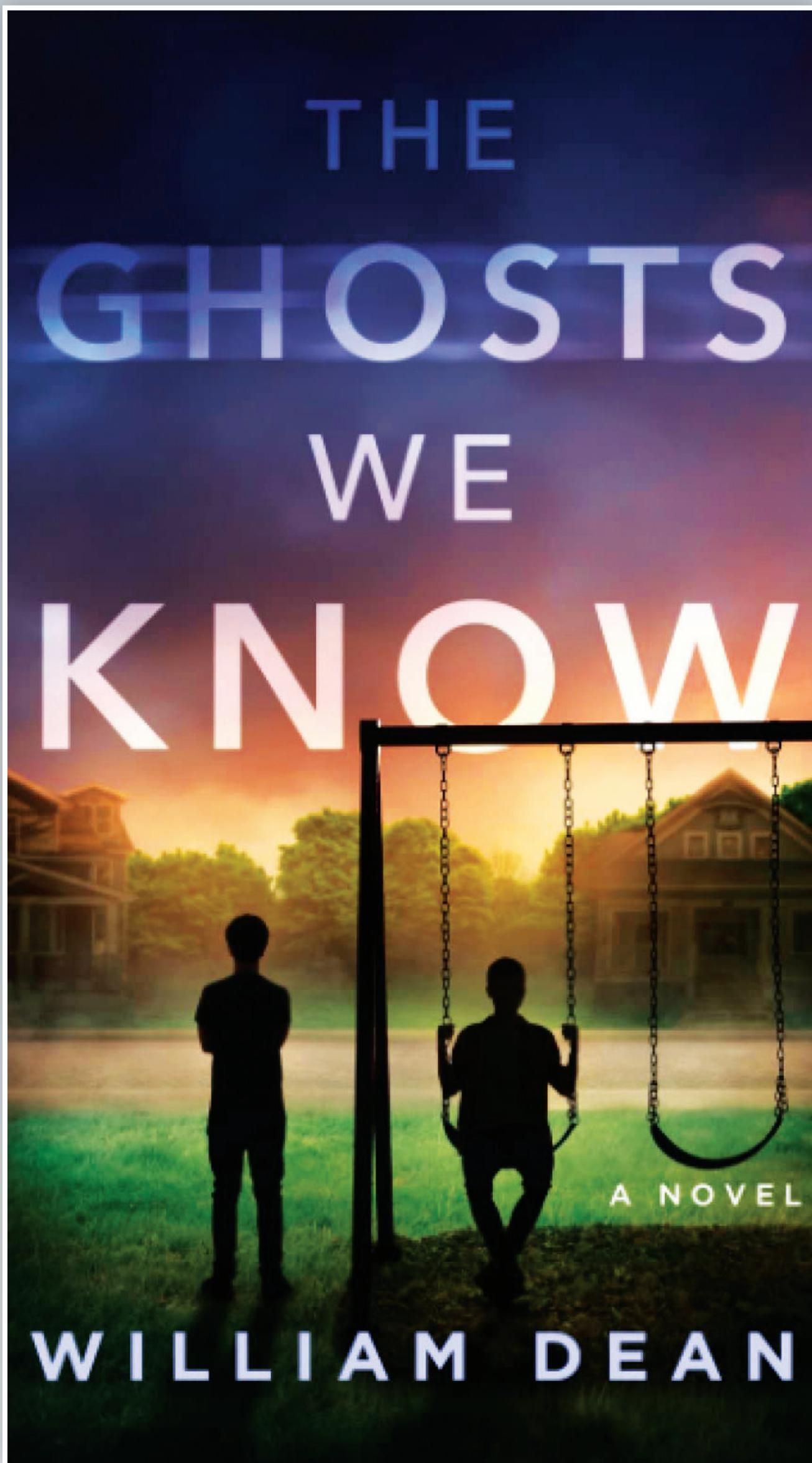
"It was amazing for me to see them become an inseparable pair," Dean said of his father and his friend.

Dean's father passed away about a decade ago. He was reluctant to talk about the war, his son said. "When we were younger, me and my brother were always begging him for stories, but we could never get him to tell us about it," Dean said. "He didn't want to talk about it, he just said, 'I did my duty, and that was it.'"

Much of what Dean later found about his dad's pursuits and accomplishments, including Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross awards, came from written records and citations.

"They would really only confide in each other," Dean said, adding he thinks his father would be proud of the book but certainly would not have helped with the writing process.

The book's lead characters share this reluctance to tell war stories, except to one another.



'The Ghosts We Know' is by Astoria author William Dean.

When he's not writing, you can find Dean becoming more active in the Astoria community. Since moving to the North Coast just over a year ago from New York, he's bought a house, joined a local mystery writers group and started writing a beer

column for Coast Weekend.

On top of that, Dean already is underway penning a third book. Although in its infancy, Dean has a grasp on the plotline, which will follow current events. He hopes it could hit the press in the next year or so.

Because of a COVID surge, book tours and signings are now limited, but Dean plans to get "The Ghosts We Know" into local retailers. Copies can also be ordered on Amazon in both print and e-book formats.

WILLIAM DEAN'S FATHER ENLISTED IN THE U.S. ARMY IN 1944 DURING WORLD WAR II WITH HOPES OF FIGHTING THE NAZIS, DEAN SAID. THE ELDER DEAN FLEW DOZENS OF MISSIONS OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN IN A B-29 BOMBER. DECADES LATER, HE BEFRIENDED A BAVARIAN MAN WHO, WHILE NOT ALIGNED WITH THE NAZIS, SERVED ON GERMANY'S SIDE IN THE WAR, EVEN WHILE HE WAS SURE THAT GERMANY WOULD LOSE. 'IT WAS AMAZING FOR ME TO SEE THEM BECOME AN INSEPARABLE PAIR,' DEAN SAID OF HIS FATHER AND HIS FRIEND.