

DOOM CREEK

ALAN CARTER

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sergeant Nick Chester has dodged the Geordie gangsters he once feared, is out of hiding and looking forward to the quiet life. But a new battleground looms and a new threat lurks, and Nick suddenly finds himself working on a cold-case murder and investigating a scandal-plagued religious sect. As local and international events spiral reach fever pitch, Chester finds himself up against an evil that knows no borders.

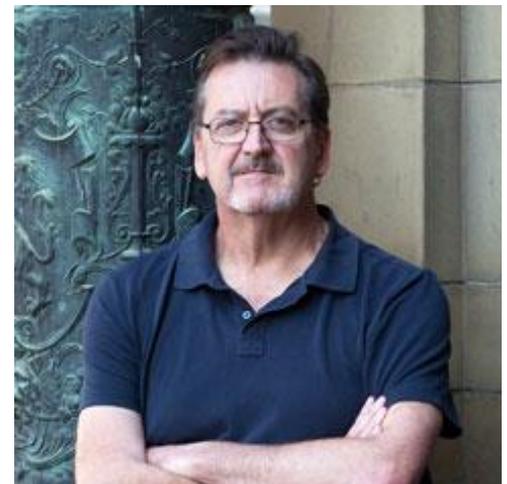
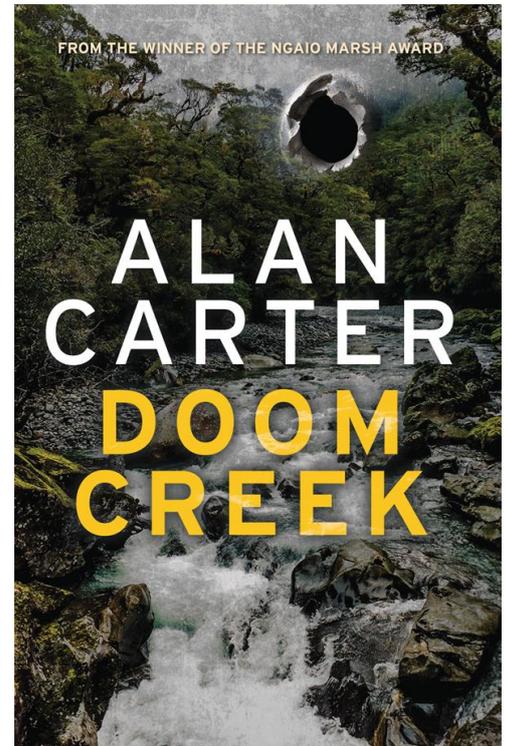
This is the second Nick Chester novel, but can be read as standalone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Carter was born in Sunderland, UK. He immigrated to Australia in 1991 and now lives in splendid semi-rural semi-isolation south of Hobart, Tasmania. He is the author of five previous novels: the Fremantle-set Cato Kwong series *Prime Cut* (winner of the Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction), *Getting Warmer*, *Bad Seed* and *Heaven Sent*. His New Zealand-set *Marlborough Man* won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Best Novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do crime novels intersect with current affairs and the preoccupations of our times, and what do you see as their role in commenting on real life?
2. Do you think crime fiction can 'predict' what is coming in the same way that science fiction or speculative fiction does, or does crime fiction just iterate different examples of the dark side of human nature over and over?
3. What do you see as a crime writer's role in curating reality for us?
4. Are there elements in this story that make it a particularly New Zealand one or is the setting irrelevant?
5. What effect does the illness of Nick Chester have on the plot?
6. Why do you think the author chose to give Brandon Cunningham a daughter (Chelsey, deceased) and a nephew Melvyn Cody? What dimensions do they add to his character?
7. What is Cunningham's MO in inserting himself into the community? Is it a strategy that works?
8. *Driving down to the hospital, I'm thinking what a flimsy and fragile thing the rule of law is. Traffic lights. Pedestrian crossings. Right of way. Truth. Justice. Start to peel them away, ignore them, flout them, negate them and pretty soon you have chaos at every intersection. Is that what they call the End Times? Keegan is right. Even if we think we know who the bad guys are, we still need to go through due process and collect the evidence. Without that there's nothing.* (p. 203) What do you think the law is for? Is the legal framework of a place like New Zealand sufficient to deal with people like Brandon Cunningham, Georges LeBlanc and James Bryant?
9. How can / should a country like New Zealand accommodate people like James Bryant who is *practically a refugee* (p. 245)? Why has he hired a man like Brandon Cunningham to do his work for him?
10. In what ways do Cunningham, LeBlanc and Bryant differ from each other?
11. Is Thomas Hemi's ultimate response to 'law and order' understandable?
12. Do you think that Georges LeBlanc deserves what he gets?
13. In what ways do 'old-fashioned' police investigation techniques (making lists and ticking things off, piecing clues together, interviewing people, careful observation) still play into the success of an investigation?



14. Could Nick Chester have brought about a different outcome in the showdown at Deep Creek?
15. Latifa says: '*Consortium? I looked them up. They're petty fossickers. Clueless bottom-feeders. They play the poker machines, bet on the gee-gees, trash the environment for a quick buck. Anything but get a real job ... If our lot put in a Treat claim over the area, people would be jumping up and down about the threat to their backyards. These jokers? Nobody bats an eyelid.*' (p. 235) Does Latifa have a point? What do you think this novel is saying about gold prospectors in general?

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

You seem to have a good nose for oncoming crime waves (the rise of Doomsday preppers and Americans creating boltholes in this instance) – or are you just documenting what you see in New Zealand and elsewhere right now?

When I began writing this book, Trump had just been elected and the NZ immigration enquiry websites crashed with the traffic from the US. The same happened after Brexit. Then the stories emerged of Peter Thiel (a Trump associate who was given his NZ citizenship in an eleven-day turnaround) and fellow billionaire bolters. The preppers, the private militias, it was all out there over the period of putting together this novel. The more recent apocalyptic events do add a certain currency to the story.

Do you think you would have written a different kind of novel if you had begun to do so after the Christchurch massacre in March 2019, Covid-19 and the upsurge of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US in mid 2020?

I'm not sure the book would have ever got written if I started it now. Reality depressingly and scarily trumps fiction these days. *House of Cards* looked tame after the November 2016 US election. Christchurch, Covid-19 and BLM have been (still are) cataclysmic events but all, in their own way, foreseeable. It's not as if there were no warning signs during preceding years. Nowadays we seem to experience decades in weeks (particularly if you add in the last Australian bushfire season too) – it's as if history has been speeded up. As a writer in these crazy times I confess to occasionally feeling paralysed by it. Maybe a romcom next?

What's next for Nick Chester, and for Alan Carter?

Well (spoiler alert) at the end of *Doom Creek* we leave Nick Chester facing his own personal medical apocalypse. What's next? I could just say – who knows? But I'd like to think that Nick has a guardian angel watching over him and might yet live to fight another day. OK, confession time again – I'm well into the next Nick Chester and juggling that with another novel exploring a real-life murder mystery in my own family tree. Plus, of course, the next Cato, *Crocodile Tears*, where he is forced to work with some dodgy associates from the past.



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