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Eclipse by Richard North Patterson, St. Martin's, 2009

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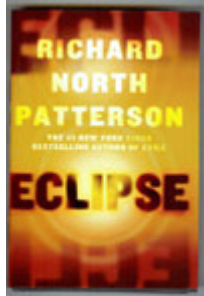
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Recommended Readings



Eclipse

by Richard North Patterson, St. Martin's 2009

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

Inspired by the true story of the human-rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa's arbitrary tribunal in Nigeria about 15 years ago, *Eclipse* is a can't-put-it-down, geopolitical legal thriller, akin in some ways to Patterson's last novel, *Exile*. The setting of *Eclipse* is a fictional West African country, Luandia, with a corrupt military government, a brutal dictator and vast oil reserves. The idealist-activist is Bobby Okari, a Mandela-like figure who stands accused of murdering three oil workers. Okari, while espousing non-violent protests and working to secure freedom for his countrymen, has become a thorn in the side of the dictator, General Savior Karama, who has become enormously wealthy because of Luandia's dealings with PetroGlobal, a giant U.S. oil company. Damon Pierce, a California lawyer who knew both Okari and his wife Marissa when they were students at Berkeley, goes to Luandia to defend Okari in what turns into a mockery of a trial. Like most novels of this genre, the action is fast-paced and the plot is twisted; unlike many of this genre, the characters are well-developed and the writing is both evocative and provocative, especially when it comes to the delicate balance between the industrialized west, oil-rich developing countries, big business, the planet's eco-system and human rights. While you will enjoy the ride, as almost no one writes better trial scenes than the former attorney Patterson, you will be left with questions about the world's lust for oil and the effects that lust has on many impoverished people.

- Judi Morrel is associate professor of mathematics at Butler University.