

# **TRUE RECKONING**

## **By Gene Mitchell**

### **LOGLINE**

The young boy had a dream: To be a football quarterback. But his father destroyed that dream, forcing the son into the brutal life of a prizefighter. The son knew he had to win every fight because the consequences of “losing” went far beyond the boundaries of the ring. As years passed, a war raged between the imploding father and the brooding son; two men on a collision course. And in the end every monster has to die...

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### **SYNOPSIS**

Like such vintage predecessors as Clint Eastwood’s UNFORGIVEN, Larry McMurtry’s HUD and more recently THERE WILL BE BLOOD, TRUE RECKONING is that rare American saga that chronicles one man’s struggle to overcome a past marred by fits of violence, abuse, and excessive drinking.

Set in the 1970s in the timeless Northern California region that extends from the Great Sacramento Valley to the western slopes of the Sierra Nevadas (the “North State”), TRUE RECKONING is a powerful examination of human frailty, the multi-faceted impact of mental and physical abuse, and a rural patriarch’s descent into madness.

Story proper begins on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1977, in the midst of the North State’s worst heat wave with Matt O’Neill, a past-his-prime heavyweight, about to leap from the back of a speeding pickup. A collision with a jackknifed 18-wheeler kills everyone on impact, save for Matt who escapes with his life.

On the heels of the accident, Matt’s father, Francis O’Neill – an explosive alcoholic rancher – is found dead, brutally beaten, in the basement of a saloon. All evidence points to Matt who reportedly has no recollection of the night in question, and he is subsequently indicted for murder.

A newly appointed Assistant D.A., Bruce Koons, possessing Ivy League credentials, foresees no difficulty in securing a conviction since Matt can be placed at the scene; had strong financial motive – inheriting 38,000 acres of land – and worse, Matt has resolved himself to laying claim to the crime.

But things take an unexpected turn when Pete Rudin, an unassuming country lawyer, senses there’s more to the story, and refuses to accept Matt’s admission of guilt. Matt remains inexplicably defiant until the sagely lawyer causes him to revisit dark memories of the past that unlock the door to Matt’s psychological prison and the night in question.

By the time the trial runs its course and the truth of Matt’s life comes to light, the jury is left with the most difficult job of all: To decide a man’s fate based upon the rule of law... or based upon their moral conscience. What hangs in the balance is the true reckoning.