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Title: Available Time
Subtitle: A Howard Hamilton Ride-Along
Author: J. C. De Ladurantey
Publisher: iUniverse
Pages: 330
Genre: Fiction / Crime / Thriller
Reviewed by: Jake Bishop

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Most novels that fall easily into the genres of crime thrillers or police procedural stories take a similar path. Heinous crimes are committed, sadistic villains are responsible, tough cops spend as much time fighting with their superiors as they do tramping through moral sewers to arrive at final solutions which often involve as much mayhem and murder as the original crimes they set out to solve. *Available Time* is not like that. It is something different by design. While tragedy, corruption, and death do play major roles, they are depicted with less luridness than most contemporary crime stories.

Credibility and restraint overshadow salaciousness. Character depictions focus more on mental and emotional aspects than physical qualities and behavioral eccentricities. This is a cop tale, yes, but one meant to illuminate as well as entertain.

Howard Hamilton is a ten-year veteran of police patrol in California. He likes his job, loves his family, and is relatively satisfied with his life. But his life changes monumentally when his wife is killed in a traffic accident. Author J. C. De Ladurantey deftly describes the emotional tsunami that washes over Hamilton as he learns of his wife's fate and has to come to grips with not only his all-encompassing grief, but that of his two teenage children as well. Their attempts to cope with a seemingly senseless tragedy form the spine of this story whose plot's tributaries branch off to include additional characters. One is a widow attempting to deal with the loss of her husband, a former police officer. Can she and Hamilton find consolation together? There is a nurse and a medical resident who finds what they weren't necessarily looking for in each other, but when she shares a secret that has haunted her for years, he is compelled to right a wrong which eventually pulls Hamilton into even more unfortunate circumstances.

Foremost at work within the pages of this novel is the interplay between the protagonist, those he loves, those he works with, and those he serves. It is the chronicle of a man who has to reach deep inside himself to find - not just the strength to carry on - but the emotional courage to step outside a role he has always found comfort in, and embark on something new and different. As he ponders what to do, he still has things he has to do; such as being a loving father to his children, a responsible partner to his coworkers, and the best policeman he can possibly be. In his journey, readers find echoes of decisions they have to make themselves. That's what makes this police procedural a life procedural as well.