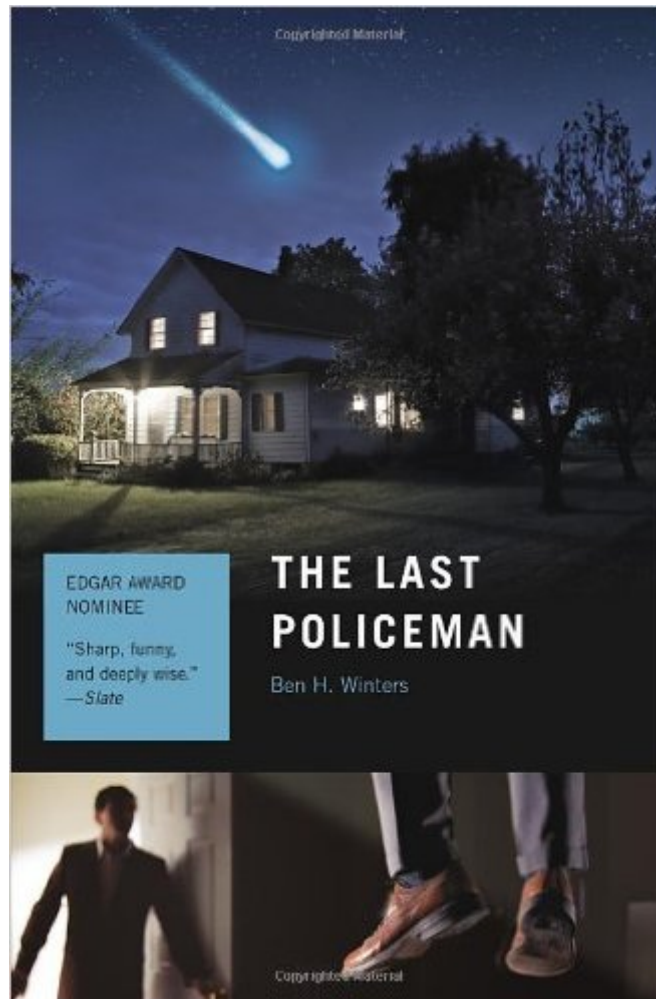


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# The Last Policeman: A Novel (The Last Policeman Trilogy)



## Synopsis

"[The] weird, beautiful, unapologetically apocalyptic Last Policeman trilogy is one of my favorite mystery series." — John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Paper Towns* Winner of the 2013 Edgar Award Winner for Best Paperback Original! What's the point in solving murders if we're all going to die soon, anyway? Detective Hank Palace has faced this question ever since asteroid 2011GV1 hovered into view. There's no chance left. No hope. Just six precious months until impact. The Last Policeman presents a fascinating portrait of a pre-apocalyptic United States. The economy spirals downward while crops rot in the fields. Churches and synagogues are packed. People all over the world are walking off the job—but not Hank Palace. He's investigating a death by hanging in a city that sees a dozen suicides every week—except this one feels suspicious, and Palace is the only cop who cares. The first in a trilogy, *The Last Policeman* offers a mystery set on the brink of an apocalypse. As Palace's investigation plays out under the shadow of 2011GV1, we're confronted by hard questions way beyond a cœwhodunit. • What basis does civilization rest upon? What is life worth? What would any of us do, what would we really do, if our days were numbered?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In six months, the scientists announce, an asteroid is going to hit the earth and end life as we know it. That's the premise for this clever, enthralling novel. Knowing that death will arrive in six months has lots of people simply walking off their jobs. Heading out to enjoy whatever hours remain or fulfill

a Bucket List of places to see. Not Palace, however, the main character, who has always wanted to be a police detective and now has his chance. Concord, New Hampshire has become a 'hanger town'. People who chose suicide rather than endure what may be a horrific death after the asteroid hits. One of these hangers is Peter Zell, who apparently commits suicide at McDonald's. But Palace refuses to accept Zell's death as yet another suicide. Instead, he starts investigating. Zell, it turns out, seems to have been a rather likable fellow, a quiet nerd who worked for an insurance company, alphabetized his cereal and had few friends. Everyone, including the medical examiner, agrees that Zell is a suicide. The fact is: no one else seems to care. About anything much, in fact, now that the end is so near. What really draws you into the book is the way the author spins out the background of what happens when everyone knows death will come in six months. For example, the government has frozen the prices for restaurants. So why would anyone bother to show up and make the food and serve it? The \$1,000 tips. People respond to the looming catastrophe by "doing all sorts of things, for motives that can be difficult or impossible to divine clearly. In recent months the world has seen episodes of cannibalism, of ecstatic orgies; outpourings of charity and good works; attempted socialist revolutions and attempted religious revolutions; mass psychoses ... People are building rocket ships, people are building tree houses, people are taking multiple wives, people are shooting indiscriminately" (pp 114-5) in public places. In a world that is soon to end, in a world in which there seems no real point to anything anymore, why should Palace take what time he has left to try and find out what happened Zell? The facts lead Palace to the reason for Zell's death. Also there is a second mystery involving a relative of Palace's, one that might spin out through the next book in this series. This is a clever mystery, with a satisfying conclusion. Best of all, it appears to be the first in a trilogy.

Hank Palace is not amongst the norm when he finds out the world is going to end due to an asteroid hitting earth within the next six months. The norm all abandon their jobs and spend what time they have left with their families and living out their dreams. Hank is a police officer and although the world is ending, the crime has not stopped, and he refuses to abandon his job of protecting his community. In fact, he's consumed with solving a murder, that is being said to be a suicide, but Hank believes otherwise, he believes it was cold-blooded murder. I loved *Bedbugs* by Ben Winters, and in fact it was one of my favorite books of last year, so that being said I had extremely high expectations of this book going into it, and I think because I built it up so much it felt a bit flat for me. I was really hoping the end of the world/post-apocalyptic aspect was going to be the main focus, but instead I felt like it was more about Hank solving the mystery behind the

suicide/murder. That being said, I'm still a huge fan of Ben Winters writing, his writing style is phenomenal, and although this book wasn't really my cup of tea, I know for the right reader this could be a five-star book. His writing draws you in, and for those that like true-crime/mystery novels, I think you would love this book.

"What would you do with just six months until the end of the world?" This, apparently, was the question that Ben H. Winters put to various pundits while preparing his book, *THE LAST POLICEMAN*. The question suggests science fiction, almost the classical "What if..." scenario. Yet, Winters's book is ultimately a fast-moving, psychological mystery that--while never engaging with them deeply--forces the reader to contemplate some of the oldest existential questions: Does death give life meaning, or is it that which negates it? How should I live my life? Can I be saved? Albert Camus famously asserted that there was only one true philosophical question: Why not suicide? This is the burdensome question that all of Winters's characters must grapple with when the scientific community confirms that the planet will likely be destroyed by an imminent collision with an asteroid in six months' time. Camus's answer to the question was not for the weak-willed: the "absurdist" hero must reject suicide and embrace his existential situation, no matter how absurd it may be. For many of Winters's characters, the task proves too much, and so Hank Palace, the young detective who narrates the story, finds himself called to a series of suicides. Most of the investigations are perfunctory, bureaucratic affairs. But one of them just does not feel right: no suicide note, no cellphone, a brand new designer belt used to rig a noose....As the investigation unfolds it is clear that Palace is not just looking for a killer; he is also looking for meaning, purpose. The victim, who Palace tells us he likes, is almost a mirror reflection of himself: ordinary, orderly--not quite OCD, but close. He even dresses the same as the victim (both men have several suits of a single color). One gets the impression that Palace needs to prove that his victim was murdered in order to save himself from suicide. After all, and again like the victim, he has little to live for save an estranged sister and a self-imposed moral imperative to carry on. The similarities between the two men are uncanny. Ultimately, Winters is more the writer than the philosopher, however, and I don't think that he explores the psychological implications or philosophical questions nearly as much as his readers might have liked. This is perhaps because his narrator is not particularly bright (though the author clearly is). Still, if nothing else, Winters does invite the reader to contemplate serious existential questions, and, in an age hellbent on distracting us from them, this should count for something. A good writer, I think, will ask the big questions, and Winters is definitely a good writer. But he is not yet a great writer; a great writer will try to answer them. For this reason, four stars

instead of five. A thoroughly enjoyable existential mystery ... almost.

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