

Medicine Meets Fiction in Dr. Michael Godin's New Book, *The Big Prick*



Author of *The Big Prick*, Dr. Michael Godin

By Paul Bean

Photo by Dr. Michael Godin

What did John Keats, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Michael Crichton have in common? The answer is that they all went to medical school before becoming famous writers. From Anton Chekhov to Khaled Hosseini, there is a rich tradition of doctors who went on to become celebrated authors. Richmond's own Dr. Michael Godin is doing his best to join them. His debut novel, *The Big Prick*, received excellent reviews and has been selling steadily in bookstores and on Amazon since its launch in mid-September.

"It was something I have always wanted to do," says Dr. Godin. "I've written dozens of scientific articles and several surgical textbooks. I love practicing medicine and I think I've got plenty of years in me to do it. But when I lay down my scalpels and syringes, I'd like writing to be my second career."


Medical drama takes center stage in Godin's novel as we follow protagonist Nick Jordan's entry into surgical training. The story is set in 1980's San Diego at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. The title refers to what every surgeon feared most at the time: getting cut or stuck during surgery and infected with HIV positive blood. That was the big prick, and at that point in time it was often a death sentence.

Sharing little with the brick-sized tomes in the reference section, Dr. Godin's novel dives right into a world bordering on the mystical and the reader gets to walk alongside protagonist Nick Jordan as he navigates an increasingly complex and difficult San Diego in the 1980s.

Jordan is a young surgical intern, freshly out of medical school in New Orleans. He is bound for the sun-soaked beaches of San Diego, but amidst the blooming crisis set off by the newly-discovered Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), San Diego is anything but a paradise. Godin expertly takes us into this dichotomous world where tragedy "is counterbalanced by the excitement, exuberance, and goofiness of Nick's fellow interns". Nick's journey is made real by Godin's own life in the operating room and it is in the smallest details that the novel really comes alive. In one scene, Nick is patching up a grizzled local surfer's face and in it, we are taken by Godin's prose – afterwards it should come as no surprise that he is a facial plastic surgeon – right to his fingertips as they sew up the gash.

"He found a bleeder in the fat and stopped it with a disposable electric cautery pen. Nick then used an absorbable suture to bring the deep layer together, careful to grab a bite of the bottom layer of skin with the tip of the sewing needle in each stitch...The jagged layers of skin had come much closer together and could be closed without tension. This was the key to getting an inconspicuous scar."

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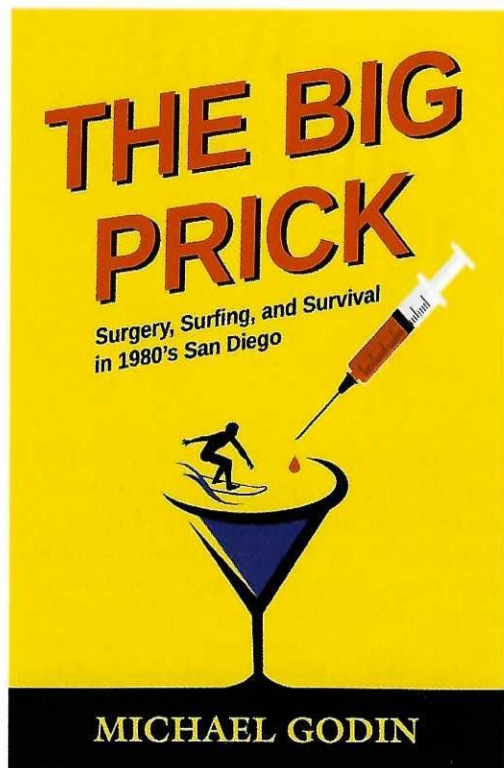
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The Big Prick is available on Amazon and with other fine retailers. Retailer sellers can purchase copies from Ingram.





But it isn't all medical jargon and operating room stories. There is a distinctly human element to the novel as Nick and the other interns navigate the earliest phases of a career that just doesn't seem to be what they signed up for. The hours are dangerously long, their supervisors are fabulously callous creatures, and any prick of the knife or needle could spell disaster for Nick and his fellow interns. But simmering beneath the veneer of seemingly endless monotony and struggle, is a shot at something special: love. With a deftly-executed bit of "will they, won't they" between Nick and his paramour, Holly Spencer, Dr. Godin rounds out *The Big Prick*, but to find out if Nick gets the girl and finally earns the approval of the surf bums, you'll just have to pick up a copy of the novel for yourself.




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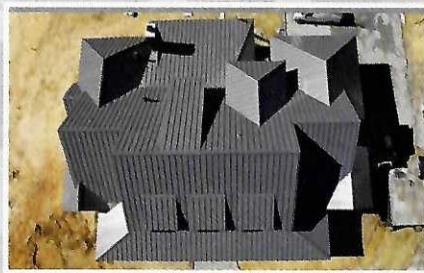


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