

about that. I have this darkness about me that I don't personally see as that dark. But I think on another level, *The Snow Garden* is almost the opposite of *A Density of Souls* in that *A Density of Souls* was this fantastical, kind of incredibly wishful book where you know the young victimized gay kid gets the football

subject of this hot glare of attention, that's the scariest part about it to me.

**Do you find that there is some part of it that you actually like—the red carpet, being honored? I mean, that's got to feel good, no?**

Yeah, it feels good. But with all the accolades and being honored, there is that

—with additional reporting by Daniel Vaillancourt

*Barker's 15th novel, Coldheart Canyon, was recently published by HarperCollins.*

Read more of Clive Barker's conversation with Christopher Rice at [www.advocate.com](http://www.advocate.com)



b o o k m a r k

# Panic attacks

A chilling book unearths a real case of '50s antigay persecution

**Sex-Crime Panic** ■ Neil Miller ■ Alyson Books ■ \$14.95

In 1954 and 1955 in Sioux City, Iowa, two children, an 8-year-old boy and a 22-month-old girl, were sexually assaulted and brutally murdered. As a result a new law was enacted, and 22 gay men were arrested in the heat of a sex-crime panic. As Neil Miller writes in his compelling and chilling account of the events, the law amounted to a warrant for preventive detention, the logic being “Take the pervert off the

street before he can strike.”

Some of these men were entrapped while cruising rest rooms; others, in true '50s witch-hunt style, informed on each other and were brought in. Twenty were tried and convicted as “criminal sexual psychopaths” and locked away in a special ward of a mental institution.

Miller paints a rich backdrop of a McCarthy-era Middle America where child molesters, murderers, and homosexuals were interchangeable. And few works of fiction have offered a cast of characters or motivations more

complex than those in this true story.

Best is the book's final section, in which Miller compares the 1955 Iowa law and its effects with Megan's Law and other sex-crime panic laws of today. He also brings us into the hauntingly familiar gay community of Sioux City today and updates us on the lives of the book's major players, many of whom, preferring to forget, would not grant him an interview about the nearly 50-year-old events. The children's murders remain unsolved. —J.E.J.