



## A Danger to Himself and Others

**J. E. Fishman**

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*Battle-scarred veterans are depicted as both victims and heroes in this explosive police thriller.*

It might seem cliché to have a narrative about former veterans as cops trying to stop madmen from blowing up innocents. It's true we live in a postwar era where such characters might be realized in fiction; given the surplus of such stories and films in the 1980s of the post-Vietnam action heroes, the idea is suspicious. But writer J. E. Fishman stares convention in the face and manages to mix a true entertainment gumbo in *A Danger to Himself and Others: Bomb Squad NYC Incident One*.

He does so with the likes of Manny Diaz, a battle-scarred Iraqi war veteran who suffers from a notion towards superior disobedience. While his stoic side permeates right through the first chapter—he disarms an explosive against bomb-squad regulation—he's also human: he suffers from impotence due to a war wound, plus he has confused feelings for his attractive yet emotionally fragile roommate, Jennifer.

Diaz might be at odds with those closest to him in work and life, but he's out to locate Warren Manis, a creator of underground bombs. Manis has found, thanks to an S&M-loving nurse, ways to put bombs into the prostheses of war veterans, and he takes pleasure in detonating them in public locales. After Manis sets off two of these bombs, Diaz races to beat the clock before Manis can do it again.

Again, if this sounds familiar, *A Danger to Himself and Others* overcomes convention. The characters, such as an oddball nurse and Diaz's smart-alecky, ill boss, Joseph Capobianco, provide darkness and humor to the story. Reading the details of the effects of the explosions and how the victims deal with the horrific consequences allows for some rumination about living with severe war injuries.

The narrative also benefits from tight prose. While some thrillers could have whole pages removed due to superfluous writing, *A Danger to Himself and Others* stays its course and keeps the paragraphs short, the sentences direct, and the pages turning right to the climax. Likely to be a popular reading choice as the first in a series, *A Danger to Himself and Others* delivers in a straight-ahead fashion.

JAMES BURT (Spring 2014)

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