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Clarion Review ★★★☆☆ THRILLER

## A Nasty Business: The Journey Begins

**Andy Goldsmith**
Banatzoe Press
(541pp)
979-898552651-6

A Nasty Business *is a hefty thriller in which a young woman comes of age, growing into a talented spy.*

In A. R. Goldsmith's thriller *A Nasty Business*, a young woman joins a new branch of British intelligence.

In the 1970s, Nicollette leads her field hockey team to a championship victory, but her sense of celebration is short-lived. She realizes that she is at the end of her school career, and what directions she'll go in next still feels uncertain. Then she receives a letter from the government offering her an interview with a nearby branch of the Secret Intelligence Service. She, like other young women across Britain, has been recruited to join a new espionage program. It's a program aimed at revitalizing the nation's aging spy force, which is dominated by men.

Seeing a chance to serve her country and secure a rewarding future, Nicollette begins the training program with twenty-eight other bright-eyed recruits. For a few weeks, the women are trained in all aspects of the job, including firearm use and trade craft. Most of the recruits fail, though. Those who remain at the end of the rigorous process are ready to be spies. Nicollette is given her first mission: the assassination of a troublesome communist agent.

This slow, methodical story devotes too much space to Nicollette's school days, process of interviewing with intelligence service, and training, though. Its thriller aspects are limited as a result: considerable time is wasted on minutiae, as with the steps of Nicollette's interview process, down to her arrival in the building and the time she spends sitting in the waiting room. And other potentially exciting moments also see their action condensed and buried beneath extraneous details, including Nicollette's training, her friendships with the other women, and her first mission.

Colorful slang marks the characters' exchanges, though, and period details help to establish the background for the spies' adventures. Further, Nicollette's transformation from a self-conscious student to a trained spy is fascinating. She struggles with leaving home to travel to a training site in the US, and she grapples with personal issues around romance, her friends, and her future. Late in the book, she has a chance to show off her skills; endearingly, she wants to prove herself to herself, more so than to her superiors and fellow recruits.

Setting up a potential spy series, *A Nasty Business* is a hefty thriller in which a young woman comes of age, growing into a talented spy.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May 16, 2022)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*

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