

Blood Line: A Granger Spy Novel - Book 1

John J. Davis

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Rich character backstories make this spy thriller an entertaining read.

John J. Davis's *Blood Line* is a fast-paced mystery that uniquely emphasizes the value of family above all else. This is the first novel in the Granger Spy Novel series, which follows a family of spies.

When their family home is broken into, the dangerous past that Ron and Valerie Granger (sort of) tried to put behind them resurfaces. A seemingly straightforward break-in reveals an international crisis involving rival agencies, criminal arms dealers, and now the Grangers. Both legendary spies in their own right, Ron and Val must now return to their roots to prevent the latest in devastating weaponry from getting into the wrong hands. First, they must determine whose hands are the right ones among the manipulative and powerful players in this struggle, including some familiar faces from their past. The kidnapping of their daughter, Leecy, turns the crisis into a personal one. Ron and Val must act quickly and make gravely imperative decisions to save their daughter and the world.

Davis succeeds in his characterization of Val as a natural born spy; it is in her blood, after all. Her rich backstory, her sometimes reckless determination, her exceptional intelligence, and, of course, her fierce dedication to her family make her a fascinating character. Val is described as having "one speed and that was full speed."

While Ron possesses most of the same traits as Val, he seems to be more focused on his role in the family than his spy days. In the same scene, he tellingly "took up [his] usual spot ... at the rear of the line of Grangers." As the main character and narrator, the scarcity of reflection about his transformed life—and the tension this could cause in his relationship with Val—makes him somewhat underdeveloped, though his character could be further explored later in the series.

Occasionally, the dialogue seems unrealistic, particularly in regards to teenage Leecy. Her sentences are too complete and thought out. When Val is telling her about her grandmother's past, Leecy says, "she showed me the section of cloth wall map she used to chronicle all her travels on."

Not only are the characters compelling, but Davis skillfully builds tension with purposeful prose using sensory details: "The trees were so close I could smell the sap, and I was forced to slow down."

Fans of spy novels and series will enjoy this energetic and entertaining story of a family of spies.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (October 1, 2014)

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