

Danger in Plain Sight: A Callie James Thriller

Burt Weissbourd

Blue City Press

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Danger in Plain Sight is an inventive thriller whose unconventional heroine learns how to live again.

Burt Weissbourd's exhilarating thriller *Danger in Plain Sight* introduces a compelling and driven heroine.

In Seattle, Callie James has created an orderly and satisfying life for herself and for her thirteen-year-old son, Lew. Her restaurant is a success, and she believes that she's put her difficult past behind her. But then her ex-husband, Daniel, shows up after a thirteen-year absence.

Daniel is an investigative journalist who is hot on the trail of a story involving terrorists, arms traffickers, and money laundering. The targets of his investigation are hunting him, too. Callie at first turns down Daniel's request for help, but when a speeding car throws him through her restaurant window, she decides that she can't turn him away.

When hired killers appear demanding to know where Daniel is, Callie seeks the help of mysterious Cash, whom she once fired for smuggling ivory through her restaurant. Efficient and information-packed, the book takes off on a quick and merry chase with many moving parts. Dark money is followed from the Caribbean to England before disappearing into the Middle East. There are boat chases, kidnappings, and eye-popping twists alongside sweet, honest bits of romance.

Callie is engaging and sympathetic. Though reluctant to do so, she emerges from her rigid routines and repressed emotions to rediscover her passion and courage. Alongside her, Daniel is handsome and self-involved, while Cash is all-American and practical. The secondary cast is colorful and multicultural, too: a Charleston sommelier addresses Callie as "Sweet Pea," shadowy Israeli Argentinian investors pull unseen puppet strings, and a mercenary masquerades as a Caribbean pirate tending bar.

Gallows humor punctuates the action, leavening the novel's violence; conversations are acerbic, funny, and enlightening when it comes to revealing who characters are. When Callie explains who her ex-husband is to Cash, he quips: "I would have thought you only dated philanthropists or altar boys."

Descriptions of food and decor enliven the book's restaurant scenes: there's hot pear sauce on seared foie gras, braised veal osso buco, and duck confit, conjured in surroundings of burnished hardwoods, copper pots, and hand-painted Portuguese tiles. Seattle itself is a brooding presence throughout, its rain-slicked streets named against a backdrop of Puget Sound islands and the snow-capped Cascades.

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MICHELLE NEWBY (February 4, 2020)

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