

Daria's Plan

Thomas E. Reid

Friesen Press

(157pp)

978-1-03-913128-6

In the domestic thriller Daria's Plan, a determined mother dodges a criminal organization and the Canadian authorities in order to protect her son.

In Thomas E. Reid's thriller *Daria's Plan*, a single mother schemes to escape her abusive partner and build a new life.

Daria has reached her breaking point with her criminal partner, who has trapped her in a cycle of abuse. She plans to escape, and to take her son, Liam, with her. With as many of their belongings as they can take, they make their way to Canada.

In Canada, Daria enters into clever, but sometimes criminal, enterprises to support herself. These include working as a waitress, taking a government job, and spying for a criminal organization. Still, Daria is able to avoid the authorities in the midst of her increasing acts of deception.

Daria's schemes vary in type and depth, but she's consistent as a careful observer. She keeps watch for potential means of earning money or gaining influence, and she proceeds with caution. Her initial plans are enacted in several stages, as when she records a client whom she's contemplated blackmailing. She is driven by her enduring need to provide for herself and Liam—a compelling enough reason to secure her heroine status. Still, she doesn't change much in the course of the novel, even though it's implied that her past was more complex.

While the book's opening chapters are enthralling, following as Daria stages and enacts her escape plan and establishing her ingenuity, the story unravels as it progresses. There are several unpredictable turns, as with the introduction of a Cuban criminal organization, that muddle its sense of cohesion. And the book's pacing is too languid, even in the course of high drama, including the escape itself, and through Daria's mission for the Cubans.

Further, though Daria's thoughts are marked by care and strong plotting, her conversations with others are more formulaic. The members of the cast speak in similar manners; in exchanges, they become indistinct. And though Liam is said to be a withdrawn child, he speaks with unexplained, grown-up eloquence. That the book is written in the past tense is a further source of confusion: its events unfold with few contextual clues to place them in time. Instances of extra punctuation and malapropisms further mar the prose.

Working toward an inconclusive ending, the domestic thriller *Daria's Plan* follows a determined mother as she dodges a criminal organization and the Canadian authorities in order to protect her son.

JOHN M. MURRAY (July 29, 2022)

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