



Dead Air

Michael Bradley

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In Michael Bradley's captivating thriller *Dead Air*, a radio DJ's spotty past catches up to her in cruel and violent ways.

Kaitlyn thought her life was on track. She has a successful career and a loving fiancé, though she keeps her friends at arm's length; most know little to nothing about her younger years. Her peace is shattered when anonymous letters appear at her office, making references to *The Shallows*, where Kaitlyn's childhood innocence was lost.

Kaitlyn intends to keep *The Shallows* a buried secret, even as the letters' author becomes more aggressive. A detective, Rodney, and his partner, Julia, know that Kaitlyn is not telling them everything, and Rodney is affected by Kaitlyn's resemblance to his estranged daughter. As Kaitlyn's curated world falls apart, she confronts the detectives, her stalker, and the truth about *The Shallows* to avoid further damage.

Kaitlyn's puzzling past is revealed through gradual flashbacks that blur her role: she seems to be both a victim and potential perpetrator. Kaitlyn's preferred coping method is escapism: she ran after the incident at *The Shallows*, and continues to run from reality, lying to her fiancé, friends, and police.

Kaitlyn, Rodney, and the stalker have something essential in common: they harbor intense guilt about their pasts, which manifests in irresponsible and dangerous ways. The narration switches between their perspectives, resulting in an intimate, even empathetic experience of the stalker's mindset that drops clues about their identity. An uncomfortable correlation between mental illness and violence is introduced near the book's end, whose resolution otherwise stays true to the characters.

Dead Air is an exciting mystery whose flawed leads struggle to make the right decisions.

DELIA STANLEY (July / August 2020)

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