



Diamonds Are for Never: Crime Travelers Spy School Mystery & International Adventure Series Book 2

Paul Aertker

Flying Solo Press (Apr 6, 2015)

Softcover \$15.99 (256pp)

978-1-940137-25-4

An international adventure with a thoughtful layer of emotion, Diamonds Are for Never is a smart choice for young readers.

When stolen diamonds begin washing ashore from Indonesia to Dubai, an elite task force of teenage spies known as the New Resistance races to recover the treasure before it falls into the hands of the notorious Good Company in Paul Aertker's *Diamonds Are for Never*, book two in the thrilling middle-grade Crime Travelers series.

As another year commences for students of the New Resistance hotel/school, a training ground for future world leaders and international spies, fourteen-year-old Lucas Benes is close to uncovering the secrets of his past. But when his quest reveals a hidden fortune, it launches him to the top of the Good Company's most-wanted list. It will take the help of allies old and new to stay one step ahead as Lucas faces his fears and finds out who his real friends are.

Diamonds Are for Never picks up just six weeks after the events of book one, *Brainwashed*, and fans of the series will be pleased with the continuation of an evolving story line. While it can be treated as a stand-alone novel, references to past events and repeat character cameos would be best appreciated if it's read as a sequel.

Traveling to Civitavecchia, Italy, provides an exotic backdrop as Lucas and fellow spy kid / goth girl, Kerala, speed around aqueducts, the Roman Forum, the Colosseum, and more on a rented Vespa. Regardless of location, the New Resistance resonates with casual international appeal, from its culturally diverse and globally aware student body to a simple breakfast of doughnuts in the cafeteria where "glazed, maple, [and] cinnamon-sugar" are served alongside "French crullers, Iranian zulubiyas, Indian jalebis, black-sesame-seed doughnuts from China," and "Brazilian sonhos that were supposedly so good you would fall asleep if you ate too many of them."

Siba Günerro is delightfully wicked as the evil mastermind behind the deceptively named Good Company with her over-the-top themed ensembles, seemingly endless supply of frozen peas for snacking, and comically clueless interactions with her team. Toss in a group of brainwashed adolescent boys in gladiator garb to serve as mindless minions, and the effect is properly creepy in all the best ways.

Meanwhile, for Lucas and Kerala, the past comes into play in a sophisticated tangle of emotional backstory and history interspersed with moments of adrenaline-fueled action sequences that involve a Belgian diamond mine, the illegal ivory trade, and an innovative team of modern kids who can crack complicated codes, think fast on their feet, and calmly Uber over to facilitate a jailbreak.

An international adventure with a thoughtful layer of emotion, *Diamonds Are for Never* is a smart choice for middle or high school grades looking for an action thriller with humor and heart.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (April 17, 2018)

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