

Don't Tell Mom About This

Eric Serrell

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In Eric Serrell's literary spy thriller *Don't Tell Mom About This*, a broken agent takes on a deadly mission.

An undercover FBI operation gone awry sends Elise to prison, scarred both emotionally and physically. Nine years later, Elise finds herself undercover once again, working for a security company that pays well, and this time tracking a con artist who targets even worse criminals.

Post-prison, Elise feels that she has no choice but to slip back into the life. Still, time and circumstances have taken a toll, and she struggles internally, her inner voice proving all too eager to lead her astray. In the course of her globe-spanning assignment, Elise walks a fine line between achieving the mission's goals and surviving.

The narrative focus is on Elise's mission, but there's a staggering amount of backstory and asides along the way. Elise is a complicated heroine: she grew up in South Africa, the daughter of mixed parents, her life complex in twists and turns. Most of her reflection unfolds in a stream-of-consciousness style and as a diversion whenever she has a moment to herself. A wide range of social commentary and gender politics plays in to her unusual story.

The prose captures Elise's voice and never strays from it. Every scene and conversation is framed through her eyes and unusual perspective. Sentences are shorter and staccato when her emotions rise; they unfurl more when she's calmer and introspective. The variety is engaging, and all of the pieces come together in the satisfying resolution.

Don't Tell Mom About This is a heartfelt thriller whose spy elements are a light cover for deeper issues.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January / February 2020)

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