



Drawn into Danger: Living on the Edge in the Sahara

Keith Costelloe

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Drawn into Danger is a lush historical thriller in which a man goes to great lengths for his found family.

In Keith Costelloe's thriller *Drawn into Danger*, a man travels to North Africa, where deep personal relationships and a rocky political landscape alter the course of his life.

In 1978, twenty-four-year-old Dave arrives in Algeria to teach English. The country is switching gears after a recent revolution resulted in independence from occupying France. Dave befriends the other teachers, who come from places across the world. They include Seamus, Moussa, Sue, and Liz.

When an innocent bet between friends goes awry, Seamus is deported for lewd behavior and undercover operations. Dave and his tight-knit friends are introduced to a world of espionage and to Algeria's complex political climate. Even while gathering information about rebels and transporting sensitive documents, they continue their teaching jobs. The bond between Dave, Moussa, Sue, and Liz grows closer, but tragedy strikes, and Dave's outlook is altered.

The unbreakable friendships within the group center the novel. Each of the friends' backstories informs their behavior: Liz subverts her conservative upbringing while maintaining boundaries and self-respect; Moussa masks the trauma of his youth with a fun-loving, tenderhearted attitude. The focal four also have a communicative, nonmonogamous sexual dynamic, and their discussions on jealousy and polyamorous love tighten their bond. Their respect for each other is evident, and their love for each other is tangible and considerate.

Dave narrates, pronouncing his motivations and fears. He is earnest and often overwhelmed by the whirlwind of events. He explores his bisexuality, and he questions others' intentions and his own morality. The drama of his circumstances challenges his perceived capabilities and fortitude. He grows from self-concerned and introspective to being brave and warmhearted because of the violence and loss he experiences.

The narration is contemplative and frantic by turns, mirroring the situations that Dave finds himself in. Its details of espionage are obscure, though, with the basics of the government's intent mentioned only in passing. Dave is on a need-to-know basis, clouding the specifics of the plot. Facts such as who's on whose side and who wants to prevent a coup versus who is plotting it are stated in explicit terms only on rare occasions. What is revealed of Algeria's political history is intriguing, though, and the physical setting is captivating. The people in Dave's immediate circle seek to understand and respect its dimensional social culture, and as their knowledge grows, so too does their appreciation of the nation. But tragedies strike them, leading to a stunning and emotional conclusion.

Set in a lush, diverse Algeria, *Drawn into Danger* is a historical thriller in which a man goes to great lengths for his found family.

AIMEE JODOIN (August 16, 2022)

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