

Drone: An Eli Quinn Mystery

Robert Roy Britt

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With its witty banter, cast of colorful secondary characters, and promising detective agency, Drone sidles into the genre with aplomb.

Robert Roy Britt's *Drone* is an expeditious thriller with plenty of political intrigue right from its explosive beginning.

Having successfully closed his first case, private investigator Eli Quinn attends a press conference under the scorching Arizona sun with his close reporter friend, Samantha. The subject of the press conference is the local sheriff's unethical treatment of immigrants. Just as it swings into gear, a drone carrying an explosive payload slams into the speaker, a state senator, who ends up in a coma.

Quinn's friend Jack hires him to look into the attack, suspecting that the sheriff may have had a hand in it. Soon Quinn finds himself braving thugs, drone enthusiasts, and a sinister conspiracy that stretches across the border.

Britt's second novella may be short, but it is not lacking, and readers new to the series will not be lost. Characterizations are top notch, the plot is believably paced with ratcheting tension, and the prose is highly polished. The novella utilizes elements from hard-boiled detective novels, pulp fiction, and adventure, mixing them with thrilling action.

A former reporter turned PI, Quinn's transformation and real-world education are a joy to follow. His tips and tricks are gleaned from his years as a reporter, skills that aid him splendidly as he delves into the failed assassination attempt. Quinn's character is rounded out by quirks such as a dedication to martial arts, refusal to use firearms, and a tendency to make wisecracks.

Additionally, Quinn's personality gives him an everyman feel that makes him easy to connect with. Unlike more intellectual literary detectives, Quinn is relatable and fun to root for. His relationship with Samantha, a stunning and intelligent mainstay of his social circle, evolves into a romantic one at a realistic and engaging pace. The dynamic between Quinn and his dog injects humor and levity into otherwise dark situations, including Quinn discussing case details with the pup for no other purpose than to fill him in.

Drone is deliciously short and sweet; Quinn solves the case within a few days of being hired. Tension is established immediately after the attack, and it simmers while Quinn conducts interviews and searches for clues before exploding in a powerful ending. Some questionable clues enable Quinn to lock on to the suspects suspiciously quickly, but otherwise the book moves at a logical and even clip. Quinn's second case reads as if it were written by a master reaching the height of his craft. With its witty banter, cast of colorful secondary characters, and promising detective agency, *Drone* sidles into the genre with aplomb.

Drone bodes well for the future of Britt's series, and Quinn's exploits land him deservedly in the literary PI pantheon.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 13, 2016)

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