

Jump Cut: An Ellie Foreman Mystery

Libby Fischer Hellmann

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A film producer finds herself embroiled in international conspiracies, in this mystery with Snowdenesque twists.

With *Jump Cut*, Libby Fischer Hellmann unreels her fifth Ellie Foreman thriller, in which a Chicago video producer finds herself caught up in a deadly international conspiracy.

Ellie and her film company have a good reputation. Even so, it is a surprise when the multibillion-dollar Chicago-based corporation and major defense contractor, Delcroft, asks her to film a candy-coated, feel-good profile. It's smooth sailing until Charlotte Hollander, Delcroft's vice president of engineering, goes ballistic when she sees Ellie's first edit, calling it "a pastiche of amateur photography."

Ellie is shocked and confused. Then her intuition suggests Hollander's attack was spurred by the casual background video appearance of Gregory Parks, a mysterious "consultant" she and Hollander both met at a trade show. She traces Parks. He asks to meet her at a Loop CTA station, but as she approaches the meeting, she witnesses his apparent murder. But Parks has left a clue: a zip drive concealed in a cigarette pack.

With that, Ellie descends into a labyrinth of conspiracies and cover-ups involving government alphabet agencies, rogue Blackwater-type private security operators, Uyghur separatists from China's Tamir Basin, and an ambitious Chinese general named Gao.

Short chapters rocket the fast-paced plot through references to drones, encrypted computer codes, and Hollander's scientific breakthrough—DADES, Delcroft's Air Defense Energy System. Ellie races around with zip drive in hand, stopping at Chi-town landmarks like the Baha'i Temple and Northfield's famous Happ Inn, along with other restaurants, bars, and hot spots.

The supporting cast adds depth, including Ellie's stalwart retired military boyfriend, Luke. Hellmann catches perfectly the nuances of an autumn romance. Other notable secondary characters are the Porsche Spyder-driving FBI agent Nick Lejeune, and Jake, Ellie's ninety-something-year-old father, "a wizened Ben Kingsley" always up for "kreplach soup, corned beef on rye, and coffee" at his favorite deli.

With Hellmann tossing in IEDs, murder by car crash, kidnapping, and spooky allusions to the "Deep State," the nightmare confederation of bureaucrats, moneyed interests, and military-industrial-complex honchos controlling the US government, *Jump Cut* is an easy-to-read mystery inspired by the paranoia-causing NSA-Snowden headlines.

GARY PRESLEY (Spring 2016)

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