

Last Breath: Follow a Trail of Suspense into a World of Spies, Lies, and Terror

Cal Byers

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Respected surgeon Dr. Nate Bowen and his young family enjoy a sweet uncomplicated existence until while on vacation they innocently run across a ruthless band of terrorists double agents and madmen on a mission to wipe out large numbers of the US population with biological weapons. Events spin out of control and it isn't long before Bowman witnesses his family's shocking deaths at the hands of the bad guys. Set up and wrongly accused of several heinous crimes the doctor becomes one of America's Most Wanted and is forced to flee the country to well paradise.

While the initial whirlwind is gripping and well-penned readers are then asked to believe that this discerning young physician smart enough to deduce the intricacies of a large-scale terrorist plot in less than an hour's time cannot later recognize the murderous motivations of an intriguing seductive woman he meets while on the lam in the Bahamas. Even with images tossed in of Bowman dramatically clutching crumpled photos of his dead family and experiencing nightmares about their horrific murders we are surprised that he is so easily seduced by the beautiful bikini-clad assassin Melina. Author Byers however does do us right with his sizzling sex scenes.

Puzzling too is his quick "best" friendship with a native islander and his wife Mark and Angie Simone two potentially-interesting characters who befriend him and trust his version of the truth without reservation.

Byers' stock characters do not suffer from complexity nor do they offer many shades of gray. He fleshes them out only minimally making it difficult for readers to fully empathize with their plights. Too often they descend into one-dimensional stereotypes including the corrupt and corpulent sheriff.

Sheriff Lee Hines had a reputation throughout his county as an unsavory sort. The large-bellied cigar-smoking sheriff was "elected" through bribes drug-dealing gambling and hauling illiterate for liquor on election days...rumor had it that Sheriff Hines held illegal cockfights in his barn on Saturday nights.

Author Cal Byers a former creative director in an advertising agency now living in the Bahamas sets much of his latest novel Last Breath on the island; a place he knows well and depicts lovingly. This sense of place and the book's rapid suspenseful pace are nearly enough to compensate for its general lack of plausibility in characterization. The creepy scene where Kenna Straton is kidnapped and threatened is authentically bone-chilling and his heart-pounding rescue of Melina are scenes worth the price of the book alone.

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