



Out of the Storm

Carol Ashe

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This steamy romance thriller features suspenseful twists and a capable heroine.

In *Out of the Storm*, a steamy romance thriller from Carol Ashe, love, lust, and murder all have their moment in the spotlight.

In Winnipeg, Manitoba, a deranged psycho is desperate for the attention of detective Isabelle Carte, and will stop at nothing to have her all to himself. Ashe's page-turner combines fast-moving, pulse-quickening suspense and adventure with good storytelling and smart writing.

Isabelle, also known as Isa, is sassy, beautiful, and totally devoted to her job—so devoted, in fact, that it ruins a three-year relationship. Hours after her breakup, Isa is called to the banks of the Red River, where a body has washed ashore. Unlike most of Winnipeg's murders, this one is a message for Isa, whose name has been scrawled across the victim's forehead. When another woman's body turns up with the same inscription, the usually unflappable detective is shaken, and retreats to a family cabin in the woods to regain her composure. She doesn't plan on finding romance while evading her stalker, but that's just what happens—handsome architect Alec Reed has also taken refuge at a neighboring cabin, repairing his home and making peace with a family tragedy. Despite a bumpy start, Isa and Alec fall in love, but Isa's stalker is still on the loose, threatening to upend Isa's happiness.

The narration jumps back and forth between Alec and Isa as they struggle with their demons. When Isa is kidnapped, Alec realizes just how much he loves her, and that she completes him. The dual narration provides a clear understanding of both characters' psyches, and plunges the reader right into the love-struck couple's innermost thoughts and desires. The author gradually builds each of the protagonist's characters chapter by chapter, creating readable, believable characters—Isa as the hard-boiled detective with a soft spot for romance, and Alec, the workaholic who finally gives in to love.

Out of the Storm is a steamy romance thriller, with the plot revolving around Isa and Alec; finding the crazed murderer is secondary to this newfound love. Still, Ashe keeps her readers engaged with lots of action, snappy dialogue and short chapters as the story races to its exhilarating conclusion. Plenty of steamy sex scenes—in a shower, on a couch, in various spots around Isa's cabin—are titillating and breathy, without becoming overly graphic.

The author takes the reader on an unexpected journey by placing a detective at the center of a murderous tale, rather than focusing on sleuthing out the killer. As a result, *Out of the Storm* is a frothy, capable addition to the romance-thriller genre that leaves open the tantalizing possibility of a sequel.

BARBARA NICKLES (March 17, 2016)

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