

Side Hustle: A Wynn Cabot Mystery

Drew Golden

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A work of art goes missing in the intricate and compelling mystery novel Side Hustle.

A series of thefts at a DC bank ensnares a dyslexic FBI agent in Drew Golden's thrilling mystery novel *Side Hustle*.

Wynn Cabot struggles with bureaucratic minutiae while riding a desk at the FBI. She's waiting to hear back from Bishop, her partner on a classified mission overseas; he is in Jerusalem with a bullet in his chest. When Nova Bank's famous lobby sculpture goes missing, it's a welcome distraction—a chance for Cabot to prove her value to her superiors.

The missing sculpture is renowned for being massive, heavy, and made of gold and silver, but before it went missing, witnesses say it was flaking and rusting. After Cabot busies herself by collecting statements, she learns about a series of murders in which the victims' necks were wrenched. Then, random safety deposit boxes are stolen. Cabot detects a connection between the missing sculpture, the murders, and the stolen boxes, but whatever it is, it's elusive.

Cabot—still a relative newcomer to the FBI—is a character who rubs her bosses the wrong way. Early in the story, she tracks down Bishop despite direct orders to the contrary. Her intelligence and strategic mind, in part owed to her dyslexia, is positioned as a source of trouble. When the clues won't line up, her methods put her at odds with the agency and political figures. Her determination and dedication make her a compelling lead, even as she struggles to maintain her work-life balance.

The methodical plot builds in a teasing fashion, intriguing its audience with possibilities. The question of whether the missing art was an insider's job is among these. The steady momentum of Cabot's investigation is countered by her warm connection to Bishop; both are forced to put personal feelings aside while they're dealing with their jobs. A secondary cast member—the bank's head security guard, James, whose aspirations blind him to a politician's charms—stands out; conversely, one involved bank employee's background is developed in a way that feels forced.

Scenes are transitioned between in a jarring manner: one sequence folds from Cabot doing mindless office work into an assassination attempt, all before returning back to the office setting. While both events are interesting, the jumps between them impede the story's progression. Still, their details hint at hidden connections, including of paint flakes raining down in the bank's lobby, and of a suspicious scratch on a bank employee's head. Ultimately, all contribute to the book's satisfying conclusion.

Side Hustle is an intricate mystery novel concerning missing art and murders; its heroine is compelling.

JOHN M. MURRAY (February 17, 2021)

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