

Silk

Rupert James

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In this intricate labyrinth of deception and manipulation, vivid portrayals combined with a sterling narrative propel what could have been a stereotypical, rich-and-famous tale of fashion pandemonium to the top of the genre. At the controlling helm is Massimo Rivelli, a lucrative clothing manufacturer and an Italian playboy with a concealed criminal agenda. His mistress, Victoria Crabtree, intends to replace his wife at any cost. Unrelenting and mad, she pursues him with the zeal of an unstable adolescent. Christine Fairbrother, a divorce attorney intent on “taking silk,” or earning prestigious status as a Queen’s Counsel, and her daughter Isabelle Cissé, a design graduate on the London fashion scene, round out this entourage of major players.

Filled with workaholics and eccentrics, this is not a stage for down-to-earth, sweet personalities: “Despite her dramatic departure from her own London Fashion Week debut in the back of an ambulance, two nights in hospital and a further week’s bed rest at home, Isabelle found herself, at the age of twenty-two and only six months out of college, the hottest story in the British fashion world, eagerly courted by stylists, editors and PRs desperate for her business.” Rough and demanding, these are protagonists with an attitude, coupled with an unrelenting desire to succeed. If not furthering their career ambitions, they are fulfilling their own needs with self-centered finesse: “Rivelli was not in the mood for conversation. He grabbed Victoria by the arm, pulled her behind a curtain and kissed her hard on the neck. She knew his moods; he was angry, he needed the kind of executive stress relief that only the seasoned mistress could provide.”

A cast of secondary characters threatens to overwhelm the story, but the author stops short of succumbing to a potentially intrusive bombardment. Polished to near perfection, James implements a complex plot that includes minor players that actually count. Divided into three parts that span the globe from London and New York to Milan and Tokyo, this international page-turner will appeal to the reader who enjoys a fast-paced thrill ride, as opposed to a relaxing drive through the countryside.

Rupert James is a London-based fashion journalist. *Silk* is his second book. First-hand knowledge gives this compelling novelist an admirable edge over his peers in an exceedingly commercial field of fiction. James’s trademark voice will capture a wide audience.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (March 15, 2012)

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