

Soleil, Too!

Larry Bonner

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An action-packed international crime novel, this sequel will get your pulse racing.

Russian diamonds, a Hong Kong crime duo, Canadian sisters plagued by gunfire—Larry Bonner’s second novel in his Soleil Tangiere series, *Soleil, Too!*, features volatile turns in a plot that balances the hijinks of a solid caper with the suspense of a political thriller. Romance and ruthlessness create an engrossing read.

Enter Soleil Tangiere, a Quebec native living in Zurich. It’s 1989, and the Soviet Union is about to collapse. The twenty-three-year-old, whose recent past includes heartbreak and flashy drama, finds herself at the center of new problems: her sister’s lover is pursued by assassins, and her own Russian lover has been sent to the Mir mine in Eastern Siberia as punishment for wanting to join her in the West. *Soleil, Too!* capably shifts between these tensions, bringing both narratives together in a breathless sequence that peaks in a chase on a hairpin Alpine road.

Aside from minor, jarring moments—such as the tendency in early chapters to disrupt the third-person narration with shifts to the first-person, and to make macabre observations, including the comparison of a violent death to a Jackson Pollock painting—the novel reveals genuine delight in its extreme situations. Especially memorable characters include Katia, a fiery, jilted Soviet whose penchant for falling in with the wrong people paves a road for her own reinvention; the Poong brothers, whose bumbling menace fulfills the timeless pattern of villains who can’t catch a break; and Yvonne, Soleil’s friend, whose verbal volleys light the page. Each takes care of his or her own interests with impressive nerve.

The pivotal flash of recognition that occurs when Soleil realizes who orchestrated the assassination attempts is less rewarding. This particular nemesis, whose ties reverberate in Soleil’s past, is likely to hold greater significance for readers of the first novel than for those who are new to the series. The placement of the discovery is also overshadowed by the more thoroughly considered strand involving a diamond theft.

A repeated refrain, “Better an honest devil than a lying angel,” illustrates one of the best aspects of the author’s approach—his heroine makes no claims to heroism. Soleil is drawn as a flawed yet rare survivor of unthinkable events, and for all her world-weariness, she remains hopeful for a different future. Intuitive, intelligent, self-assured, yet sometimes overly trusting, she’s a fictional bombshell—an ideal that nonetheless comes across as dimensional. Fans of action-packed novels—with a twist of mystery and glamorous European vistas—will relish this work.

KAREN RIGBY (September 8, 2014)

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