

Soleil's Star

Larry Bonner

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This entertaining, fast-paced third installment in a thrilling series develops relationships while maintaining fun action.

Soleil's Star begins in 1990, with a newly doubtful Soleil Tangiere eager to lay her past to rest. This third installment in Larry Bonner's glamorous series pits the Canadian beauty against new villains in a plan devised by an old adversary. Using clever scene changes, a plot laced with luck tells the tale of starting anew.

The book gathers energy slowly, recapping events from *Soleil, Too!*, which left Soleil Tangiere and her boyfriend in possession of an 88.88-carat diamond. Members of the Russian underworld and the right-hand man of a Venezuelan general hunt Soleil for the stone, under the direction of "Grandma," head of Carrington Metals. The cat-and-mouse story line is well suited for showcasing cosmopolitan locales. This time, however, cinematic violence gives way to more sinister events. The hostage-taking of Soleil's friend with the aid of a date rape drug and a separate incident involving a plane crashing into a building may be viewed as too-real touches in a work that hinges on fantasy.

Soleil is often saved by happenstance. She finds transport at just the right moments, encounters a sympathetic female captor, and mostly avoids direct confrontation—in one visceral event, a foe is run down by a bystander's car. A showdown with Grandma is also avoided, which diminishes Grandma's role as the main source of peril in Soleil's life, though this leaves ample room for a sequel. Despite the reliance on fortunate timing and quick reflexes in several near-escapes, Soleil emerges as an appealing protagonist. She's not perfect—she doesn't have the eternally cool exterior of a Bond-like hero, she doesn't intellectualize every move—which mostly works to humanize her. Readers feel threats right along with her.

Deeper facets of her character emerge in moments that portray the arcane, elite world of gem cutters. New York's jewelry exchange emerges as an especially lively setting. Here, loyalty to a couple in the diamond business provides necessary insight on Soleil's resolve to protect those she loves. Exchanges with Zvi, an expert cutter in Italy, are also drawn with respect.

On rare occasions, the writing tilts toward explanation when a richer scene would establish the mood, as with a description of the George Washington Bridge. Sometimes the work includes details a reader might safely be assumed to know, such as the mention of *Miranda v. Arizona* when Soleil is read her rights. One of the more fluid sequences portrays a drive with her boyfriend, Max Stepanov; such quieter interludes allow the story to develop through relationships.

Soleil's Star is a spirited work punctuated with cliff-hangers, cameos from characters who played larger roles earlier in the series, and outlandish scenarios—a capable mix catering to both longtime fans and newcomers alike.

KAREN RIGBY (February 13, 2015)

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