



Strong Emergence

Nelson Mangione

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The international thriller gets a refreshing face-lift in this engaging page-turner that starts off fast and just accelerates.

From the opening pages, *Strong Emergence* grabs attention and keeps it to the end. Nelson Mangione has crafted a captivating story that's as mindful of global political subtleties as it is gripped by fast-paced drama and intriguing technological mystery. It is crammed with secret messages, hidden clues, and layered action.

After robbing the Memphis branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, Abdullah Burja leads law enforcement on a high-speed chase through the busy city streets. Quickly identified as a Nigerian operative with a terrorist past, Burja is apprehended just in time to be stopped from using his suicide vest.

As he lies dying, presumably from bullet wounds suffered during his arrest, Burja yells in an unknown language, leaving hospital staff to wonder at his final words. But Dr. Paul Gudrun understands and tries to unravel the code. His search leads him to a cryptic poem and an online list of names that he definitely should not have seen. With shadowy figures converging on all sides, Paul is faced with unraveling a world of secrets and betrayal, even though doing so may mean revealing his own carefully hidden talents. Meanwhile, breakthroughs in quantum computing could mean the emergence of incredible power for those who control this knowledge.

Although the plot begins by following the familiar pattern of an Islamic terrorist in America apprehended by resourceful and practiced law enforcement personnel, it quickly becomes more complicated, and any suspicion that this may be just a typical crime novel is forgotten. Sections that may seem cliché in other books, such as a dark-skinned gunman taking a young hostage at a mall, are handled so well that they feel fresh and engaging. Even quantum physics, too often used as a rug under which to sweep unexplained ideas, is used to its full effect by an author who clearly understands both the complexity and potential applications of the field.

Mangione's writing is sharp, engaging, and smart, and he expertly balances narration and description to keep the story moving quickly. The book's emotional engagement is particularly well done, and readers are often in the delicate but stimulating position of mistrusting the protagonists and sympathizing with the antagonists, even Burja. As events become most complex, it's increasingly difficult to know whose side anyone is on, leading to wonderful suspense.

Secretive pasts make the motivations of the central characters, both American and foreign, difficult to ascertain in the first half of the book, but any lost sense of depth is replaced by a burning desire to know more. Readers who persevere—an easy task in this case—will be thoroughly satisfied before the end.

This is high-tech cloak-and-dagger in a post-September 11th world done properly—exciting, realistic, and utterly readable.

ERIC ANDERSON (July 28, 2014)

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