

## The Coalition

**Samuel Marquis**

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*A femme-fatale assassin is the standout character in this taut and fast-paced political thriller.*

*The Coalition* by Samuel Marquis chronicles one thrilling week of sensitive political crises and high-wire action. This ambitious thriller starts with a bang, revs up its engines, and never stops until the explosive ending.

William Ambrose Kieger is the president-elect of the United States. Having displeased a group known as the Coalition, he is assassinated by a ruthless killer with a nearly impossible long-range shot. The world's deadliest assassin escapes and plants evidence to keep the FBI chasing its tail. The Coalition maneuvers a new player into the president's seat, a woman firmly in its pocket.

Code-named Skyler, the sniper eludes capture by planting evidence pointing to a male culprit. Agents struggle to reconcile planted evidence with the truth, even as Skyler falls for a persistent and charming man. The femme fatale, the Coalition, and an FBI agent circle each other as the story thunders toward a shocking conclusion.

*The Coalition* is an ambitious political suspense thriller. Its biggest draw is the fascinating Skyler. Abused by men, she channels her anger into increasingly impressive assassinations. In her down time, she prowls for one-night stands that border on violent and are sometimes nearly fatal. Skyler deftly evades capture by convincing the world that the sniper they seek is a man, even planting hair from the men she sleeps with in service of this deceit. Skyler is a unique character, though additional backstory, especially related to how she became a sniper, is missed. Conversely, FBI Agent Patton, tapped to pursue her, is a standard hero cop character, and a host of villains and assassins are not fleshed out.

The writing is taut, though it sometimes seems to lack real twists and turns. Most of the revelations that are intended to be shocking are obvious from the get-go, save Skyler's final contract. Heavy-handed exposition and character development hamper an otherwise outstanding story, which begins to buckle under an unwieldy number of characters whose nicknames further confuse the mix. Additionally the decision to break continuous scenes into disparate chapters hampers the flow of the story. Coupled with the exposition and character development issues, this threatens to derail the thundering pace.

Still, driven by an unusual female assassin, the story explodes with action, and remains a thrill ride throughout. Perfect for fans of James Patterson, David Baldacci, and Vince Flynn, *The Coalition* is a standout thriller from an up-and-coming writer who is honing his craft.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 14, 2016)

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