

The Complete Callaghan Tetralogy

Kim Ekemar

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The Complete Callaghan Tetralogy is a well-conceived tale for those who enjoy smart, complex, global intrigue.

A London businessman, brutally tortured by the Russian mafia when he is mistaken for his father, seeks revenge and personal renewal in *The Complete Callaghan Tetralogy*, Kim Ekemar's intricately plotted, character-rich, intercontinental thriller.

After receiving a face transplant and artificial fingers, Matthias Callaghan pieces together what led to his kidnapping and mutilation. The four-part story traces his pursuit of justice, particularly regarding his former business partner whose draining of the Russians' bank account via Matthias's father's laptop spurred the kidnapping. The mistaken identity arises from Matthias and his father having the same name.

Matthias's quest takes him across the globe and into contact with a vast array of people, both upright and unscrupulous. Engaging subplots involve sex-slave traffickers and wealthy, elderly women who are seeking their own justice after being swindled by his father. The story's many plot threads are meticulously interlaced, and the pieces come together in a coherent conclusion. That's a considerable feat because there's a lot going on and many characters to keep track of.

The writing is intelligent and sophisticated. The main characters deftly conduct global transactions and their tastes include fine dining, expensive cars, and five-star accommodations. Prose is also detail-rich, which sometimes benefits the story and sometimes detracts from it. There are vivid descriptions of places Matthias travels to, including Sydney and Acapulco. However, some amount of detail could have been culled. The backstories of some secondary characters are presented as extended chunks of text, up to several pages long. Mundane routine—checking voice mail, arranging meetings, arriving and departing—is abundant. And Matthias's repeated retelling of his torture and subsequent experiences, using similar language each time, gets repetitive.

Some plot twists are built on contrivance, such as when Matthias receives the transplanted face of a man he's never met but who played a key role in his wife's secret, troubled past. The narration alternates between Matthias's first-person viewpoint and the third-person viewpoints of an array of other characters. While the ever-shifting perspective helps to illuminate events unfolding simultaneously in different places, it also lends incoherency, marring the overall quality of the writing.

Scenes depicting Matthias's torture and other violence succeed in their apparent aim of being highly unsettling. The action satisfyingly progresses in intensity until it culminates in a thrilling, global chase across the United States, Mexico, and Australia. The cover image of a patient with a heavily bandaged face and one intense, staring eye grabs immediately.

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KARYN SAEMANN (March 24, 2016)

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