

The Deceivers

Robert J. Aiello

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When a self-proclaimed “Psychic Advisor” named Marcos is found decapitated near Pittsburgh’s Point area fountain, assistant police chief Thomas Santucci calls upon the talents of his long-time friend—and retired mentalist— Grant Montgomery. Though struggling with his own demons from the past, Montgomery agrees to aid Santucci; knowing only too well that his friend is being pressured to solve this murder in record time because of the ruthless political aspirations of the Superintendent of City Police, Philip Dorebecker.

The investigation heats up after Santucci and Montgomery find Marcos’ checkbook and discover that Myra Hershfield, from one of Pittsburgh’s founding families, has given \$60,000 to Marcos and over \$100,000 to his workplace, the Paranormal Research Institute. Hershfield is thoroughly convinced that Marcos had psychic powers, as he was able to tell her things about her dead husband she has revealed to no one, but upon visiting the Institute, Montgomery detects a scam. Baffled by how Marcos could have found out about Hershfield’s past, Montgomery knows he has overlooked a key piece of information during the investigation, but it continues to elude him. Even a visit to Hershfield’s psychiatrist in New York, Dr. Alexander Grinwell, leads nowhere. And no one seems to know the name of the Institute’s founder. When one of the students who led a psychic demonstration at the Institute is murdered just before meeting with Montgomery and an attempt to murder Montgomery takes place shortly after, he figures out what has been eluding him in the investigation. Santucci and Montgomery finally realize that someone connected with the investigation is leaking information to those responsible for the murders. A plan is then set up by the two to catch both the informant and the elusive figure behind the killings.

As the final scenes unfold, readers will find themselves thrilled with who gets their just deserts—even though much has already been revealed—for author Aiello has done justice to developing Montgomery and the rest of the cast of players in this first, and most interesting, tale of suspense.

NELLY HEITMAN (September / October 1999)

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