

The Hubley Case

J. Lee

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The Hubley Case is an enjoyable popular thriller helmed by a clear hero.

In J. Lee's thriller *The Hubley Case*, ex-marine and present-day vigilante Ben Siebert commandeers an FBI case and goes head-to-head with unknown criminal masterminds to protect the reputation of a friend, all in the name of loyalty.

The trouble begins when Peter Hubley, an American businessman, is executed in a gruesome fashion in a Brazilian airport. In rapid succession, his assassins drop dead. Their bodies are stolen in transport to the morgue. When a convincing video surfaces suggesting Peter's involvement with Brazilian criminals, the American public goes from sympathetic to believing Peter got exactly what he deserved. FBI agent Nikki Benton, who was recently transferred to Chicago, is on the case and keen to prove her mettle to herself and her new boss.

Ben also has a personal interest in finding out what happened in that airport. He is a dear friend of Peter and Sally Hubley's, and Sally has asked him to clear Peter's name. Anyone who knows Ben knows that this means trouble for those who stand in the way.

With short, breeze-through chapters, *The Hubley Case* starts out at breakneck speed, instantly introducing action and the start of a complex plot that is still easy to follow. Brazilian cities and Chicago neighborhoods come to brilliant life through vivid descriptions that let the night's darkness raise hairs and the draft of a cool Chicago evening tickle the neck. Enigmatic bad guys enter the story with their own difficult working relationships, while Ben and Nikki form an unlikely alliance to solve the Hubley case.

After the initial action, the story progresses with little urgency. Baited with fables and legends of the destruction orchestrated by Mr. Riddle (one of the villains), and through strong-arm retribution meted out by Ben, the audience waits while the characters continue on parallel paths, anticipating when the characters' paths will cross. The race against the clock is absent until the final third of the book. Once the stakes are raised, the casualties add up and the story flies toward its finale with surprises that will delight.

Most of the characters are interesting to follow, though Nikki is dimensionless. She is steamrolled at every turn. Her presence in the story serves to showcase Ben's brilliance and fearsome tendency toward violence, which impresses rather than troubles her.

Authentic and purposeful dialogue is employed in lieu of flashbacks. The plot is well imagined, though it does not suggest specific devastating outcomes should the bad guys succeed. Peter's murder makes headlines, but it's unclear why it should. Head-hopping between characters confuses the story, as does the ambiguous use of pronouns. Typos are scattered throughout.

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TANISHA RULE (October 26, 2018)

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