



The Merchant of Death

Lisa Henry

J. A. Rock

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This genre-bending thriller and love story boasts complex, lovable characters that add drama and humor.

The Merchant of Death, by Lisa Henry and J. A. Rock, is the second in an easily addictive series of action-packed, rambunctiously humorous, and sweetly romantic crime dramedies that will satisfy adult readers of all kinds.

The enigmatic con artist Henry Page is not one to follow orders. Yet FBI agent Ryan “Mac” McGuinness holds out hope that this mysteriously troubled and undeniably magnetic bad boy will embrace the opportunity to enforce the law rather than break it by serving as a witness in Mac’s key case. Henry has less honest plans of his own when his twin sister, Viola, is afraid to go back to St. Albinus—the care facility where she lives—after her friend suspiciously dies. In a half-baked attempt to protect his childlike sister, Henry disguises himself as his twin to investigate the “bad angel” of St. Albinus.

The authors’ concise style keeps the plot fast paced, while the startling and smart imagery will capture the attention of readers who wouldn’t normally pick up an action novel. The beautiful and unromanticized melancholy in lines like those describing Mrs. Hanes napping on the couch—“slack mouth, a bubbly snore. A limp, skinny arm. A stained blanket piled on her like a dollop of garnish, rather than wrapped around her”—adds literary depth.

The plot is quirky, with a fantastically ridiculous yet nail-biting primary conflict between Henry and the oddly menacing forces of evil plaguing St. Albinus. The brief novel also successfully balances several subplots involving Mac’s jeopardized career, Henry’s unstable criminal friends, and the intersection of these two, so there is never a dull moment. The multiple plot lines promise there will be no shortage of material for several more books in the series. The authors don’t shy away from the refreshingly unconventional sexual tension between Henry and Mac, and this truly gives heart to the genre-bending novel.

The Merchant of Death has something for every reader, and its lovable characters, smart sense of humor, and layered plot make it an enticing start to a promising series.

PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (Spring 2015)

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