

The Siegfried Contingency

Steven H. Laskin

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The Siegfried Contingency is a highly polished thriller filled with romance, action, and mystery.

In Steven H. Laskin's adventure thriller *The Siegfried Contingency*, a bookstore owner starts a life-shattering quest while falling for a secretive police officer.

Carl Traegar runs a semi-successful bookstore in 1970s Seattle. His aunt passes and leaves him a nondescript book written entirely in German with cryptic instructions to destroy it immediately. Before he can do anything, a German man attacks him, demanding the book. Carl finds his life turned upside down with no idea what to do until a charming police officer, Randy McCutcheon, steps in to help. The two find themselves fending off assailants and near-death encounters. It seems that the inherited book holds a secret related to a Nazi plan—and evidence that the plan may be nearing completion soon.

Carl is a fascinating lead, with some darkness in his past that accounts for the skills he deploys during his adventures. The romance that builds between him and Randy starts off strong and remains realistic and endearing. Carl's primary goal is survival and protecting his loved ones, but he switches tracks to stop a potential global threat in a believable manner. His consistent goals and clear stakes anchor the story and keep its more unusual elements in balance. Every action and thought feels believable as Carl struggles with moral decisions and dire confrontations.

The eclectic cast of characters is well-established. Randy's history and reason for helping Carl interjects tension into the plot without overshadowing the larger story arc. Carl's friends and family have secrets of their own that often clash with his. A few of the antagonists border on cartoonish, but they balance out by the climatic reveal. Small moments, such as Carl's interactions with a bookstore employee, layer in deliberate but unassuming characterizations that pay off in the closing chapters.

The inherited book propels Carl and Randy through their adventure, and the secret hidden within it blends history and fiction in a compelling way. A few twists and turns keep the story from lagging. There's a nice balance between quiet moments, tasteful romance, and explosive action throughout the story. The writing flows and holds attention.

This thriller incorporates unique elements to tell a story that is engaging and dynamic, with spotlight-stealing settings and an intriguing relationship between the leads. *The Siegfried Contingency* is a highly polished thriller filled with romance, action, and mystery.

JOHN M. MURRAY (February 14, 2019)

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