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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★★ THRILLER

This Way To Paradise

D. Bruce Foster
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Finely honed character interactions add humor and dimension to the relationships in this pulse-pounding medical thriller.

In this second installment of the Alex Randolph series, D. Bruce Foster creates another exciting, pulse-pounding thriller that pits ER physician Alex and his nurse girlfriend, Penny Murray, against a stunningly beautiful sociopath. Alex and Penny survived the threat of gangs and drugs in the first book; will they be able to endure Mary Anne Hampton, or will she destroy everything they know?

The lives of Murray and Randolph seem far removed from the hot and steamy Everglades where we first meet Mary Anne as a sexually abused teen. Slowly but surely, the three lives move into position for the collision of the medical professional pair and the vile, sociopath Hampton. Hampton's sexual sadism and stealthy stalking of the couple lead readers on a wild ride.

Foster makes use of his knowledge of emergency medicine, as a chief of emergency medicine himself, and peppers the narrative with true-to-life encounters for his characters to experience. The jargon and explanations are always clear and never cumbersome, fitting seamlessly into the novel: "She held a bright metal laryngoscope in her hand, attempting to put a tube through the man's mouth into his trachea that would allow a ventilator to breathe for him."

Character interactions are central to the plot. The connection between Penny and Alex carries over from the first book, yet their relationship grows throughout this story. Even tangential relationships are finely honed, adding interest and humor. Small character interactions also contribute. "Nurses always arrive earlier for their shifts than do the docs, so Penny's car was already in the parking lot when I pulled in…'We come in early so our colleagues can go home early after a long and exhausting shift of trying to keep doctors on track. We work twelve hours. You only work ten hours. You guys are wimps.'"

Along with the relationships Foster builds, he does an excellent job describing each setting. From a strip club to a multimillion-dollar estate, the reader can easily envision every location. He takes crafting a setting to a new level, moving his plot and characters forward: "I flashed my security badge at the reader on the brick wall…My badge was apparently still *persona non grata* at Mason-Dixon…A guard stood at the security station wearing a gun belt and a Taser. This was a new one for Mason-Dixon. The light bulb must have gone on after three people died, a nurse took a bullet in the chest, and I got my ribs kicked in." This excerpt describes the setting at the hospital and gives the reader an opportunity to connect with the previous book in the series.

Time shifts are employed in this novel as well. Chapters are marked with the place and date they occur, ranging from late 1990s Florida to 2011 Baltimore County. Handled effectively, the shifts are never confusing. Similarly, when Mary Anne is deciding which flight to take at the end of the novel, Foster slows down the pace dramatically, but he never compromises the thrill of the moment.

This Way To Paradise has the elements of a medical drama as well as the heart-stopping thrills of a fast-paced crime novel. Foster integrates his own knowledge and interests, and he pays close attention to the details. Combined, these elements create an exceptional reading experience.

LYNN EVARTS (January 23, 2014)

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