



Under Dark Skies: The Nightshade Forensic Files, Book 1

A. J. Scudiere

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Paranormal and FBI-thriller elements blend seamlessly to present a strong cross-genre offering.

In A. J. Scudiere's paranormal thriller *Under Dark Skies*, former medical examiner Donovan Heath and FBI agent Eleri Eames become partners in the Nightshade division of the FBI. This division deals with covert intelligence about threats inside the United States, rather than just law enforcement. An intriguing combination of the science of the paranormal and skillful detective work puts this thriller at a whole new level. Scudiere's background contributes a stronger scientific angle, particularly with the forensic investigation components.

Eames and Heath are paired in a case involving the kidnapping of the daughter of an FBI special agent. There are whispers that she has become involved in a cult in Texas, and Eames and Heath head there to do their jobs. Heath is harboring an enormous secret, and Eames's past is constantly influencing her thoughts and actions. Slowly, Scudiere reveals information about these two, drawing readers into their lives and emotions.

Scudiere does an excellent job with all aspects of the plot. With vampires and zombies almost ubiquitous lately, it would be easy to dismiss this premise, but they are deftly handled through scientific detail and sharp characterization.

Another strong point is the writing style. Scudiere's sentences move the story along at a quick clip while at the same time, the level of detail makes the book a fascinating read. "The older man's sadness played into the interview. The reaction of the person being interrogated changed how the agent proceeded ... Eleri appeared to be very good. Her voice was softer now, soothing, probably in an effort to make Collier more at home, get him to give more details." Not only does this give us a sense of the interrogation's progress, but it also gives us important insight into the character of both Eleri and Heath.

Fans of FBI thrillers should be excited by the paranormal twist to this excellent book.

LYNN EVARTS (Summer 2015)

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