

When the Past Came Calling

Larry S. Kaplan

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This mind-bending mystery surprises with FBI secrets, an inquisitive everyman, and historically pertinent details.

Attorney Larry S. Kaplan treads the line between fact and fiction as he weaves an engaging tale of conspiracy and intrigue. In *When the Past Came Calling*, an attorney is asked to help solve the mystery of a missing scientist, exploring themes of love and fate along the way.

Kaplan sets the tale in 1989, but draws back into the 1960s with a main character his own age and seemingly with shared experiences. When he was a teen, personal injury lawyer David Miller met a girl he'd never forget. It was 1966, at a party where his band was playing, and the only evening they ever talked. Twenty-three years later, this incident comes knocking on David's door.

The girl's father, a reputed cult leader, could have something to do with the disappearance of a government scientist based at Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois, David's one-time high school debate partner, Michael Eisenberg, tells him. The missing scientist is valuable for his research into genetics, David learns. Michael, now a US Attorney in Illinois, has been pulled into the case by others in the government, and he asks David if there's anything else he can remember about the mysterious girl that will help them track down her father.

Kaplan's tale starts relatively slowly as he introduces and characterizes David through Michael, through David's uncle Bert, and then through the pretty female FBI agent who is working on the case. Alternating flashback chapters show the party scene in 1966 that so haunts David. A murder and a reconnection with the best friend David hasn't seen since high school, Benny, who is an avid conspiracy theorist fixated on the Kennedy assassination, add key ingredients to the plot as it really begins to swirl.

David is levelheaded, cautious, and fairly suspicious as he gets deeper into the mystery that winds up threatening his own life. He's wholly believable in his day-to-day existence, and he's just interesting enough as an everyman. But can a smart, successful, thirtysomething be enough of a hopeless romantic to fall in love in one night and never forget the girl? It seems like a tad too much idealism.

The FBI plays David in this twisting path of misunderstandings, missed signals, and lost opportunities. Readers might want to read the whole book again to pick up on what was missed or to get a clearer picture of just how everyone is connected.

Kaplan's writing style is no-frills—plain, understandable, and without any extraneous color or scene-setting. He injects a dose of fact about this era in US history. The subject matter perhaps reflects not only Kaplan's own interests, but his own life as well—and this adds to the mystery.

BILLIE RAE BATES (September 26, 2014)

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