

The Incendiary Agent

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✓ Verified Book of The Incendiary Agent

Summary:

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"They say the eyes never lie. And when he pulled open my good one, he saw the truth: That my world was about to go dark forever."

On the surface, the purpose of the scholarship program was philanthropic: to grant financial aid to visiting foreign students. In theory, it was also supposed to generate national security intelligence with respect to students from certain countries.

CIA field officer Nathan Frost was wondering if the covert aspect of the program would ever catch anyone doing anything-and then it did. But it isn't who he thought it would be. Nathan uses the tools and knowledge from his day job as a safety auditor to make sure bad things happen to bad people. But by disrupting the plans of Islamic terrorists, the Israeli Mossad, and Russian gangsters, it will be all Agent Frost can do to keep himself out of harm's way.

From Kirkus Reviews:

"In Reiss's debut thriller, CIA surveillance leads agents to a counterfeiting sting, which may be the precursor to a full-scale terrorist assault.

Nathan Frost funds the New York University scholarship program to aid visiting Israeli and Arab students. But the program's true purpose is to allow Frost to monitor for his CIA superiors the student applicants selected for having suspicious backgrounds and, thus, likelihoods of being or becoming intelligence sources. He hits pay dirt when one turns out to be a Mossad agent with an interest in another applicant, who might be a terrorist. The latter's cellphone, which has three numbers in its call history, directs Frost to a Secret Service counterfeiting operation with ties to the Russian mob. While this doesn't explain the presence of an Islamic terrorist in the U.S., the third contact on the cellphone might, and Frost and fellow CIA agents Diana Calabrese and Kerwin Chan must uncover a potential attack that's more sinister and decidedly more lethal than counterfeit currency. Despite the plot's inclusion of a seemingly endless array of characters from various agencies—there are even more countries with agents in the mix—the novel never feels convoluted or confusing. Reiss manages this by simplifying certain details; for instance, Frost's boss is named (and is nothing more than) "The Man on the Phone." The story excels at detailing espionage; Frost is an exceptional spy, stealthily bugging people with video and/or audio devices and employing more traditional methods, such as shadowing a Russian gangster to a subway train. But there are also quite a few solid action scenes, and Frost is more than prepared for any situation; he has an amusingly excessive arsenal of weapons stashed in a locker, which leaves Diana in awe; "I have one gun," she counters. The book is occasionally violent, but a torture scene, with surprisingly muted intensity, has the most impact and will have many readers squirming. The majority of the story's questions are sufficiently resolved before it's over, and a coda teases a sequel. Oddly, though this is the first novel to feature Frost and Diana, there's an impression that another story preceded it; the couple's flirtatious relationship is already established by their first scene together, and the manner in which Frost financed his program, with help from Diana, is hinted at in a newspaper article at the beginning and only partly explained later. That could have been a story all its own.

A deliciously elaborate story, with spies, guns and intrigue in liberal doses."

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