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A young snowboarder turns up dead on the Blackcomb Glacier. The local police are calling it suicide, but the victim's mother, a U.S. senator, is not convinced. At the senator's request, the FBI sends in undercover agent Clare Vengel to infiltrate the world of ski bums and snow bunnies and find out what happened to Sacha.

Clare soon discovers that not only was the victim involved in an LSD smuggling ring, but also the uncooperative top cop in town is in cahoots with the smugglers. With her cover dangerously close to being blown Clare must solve the case before she finds herself in the deep freeze permanently.

Death's Last Run Details

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From Reader Review Death's Last Run for online ebook

Jason Brown (Toastx2) says

Read this book. It was very enjoyable.. Now – With that stated....

The following public service announcement was NOT brought you by Robin Spano and ECW Press (Though they did provide me a free review copy of this book).

The mixed reaction people feel to a train wreck is commonly kept a secret. Publicly, you say ‘Oh gee, how terrible, I hope no one got hurt’. Internally you have a rapid blink response to the tail lights ahead of you, initial reaction being ‘Ooh! Was that blood? I hope that is Blood!’. You know that things are not as they should be, that problems are occurring, that someone has thoroughly screwed the pooch. You keep looking, craning your neck hoping for a glimpse of the problem while ambivalently hoping everyone is safe. This book is like a spectacular and awesome train wreck.

So what is it about? What did I think? In Death’s Last Run, Vengel who was recently made a US FBI Agent, is pulled back to Canada to work a dual RCMP/FBI case. This Case is set in a Canadian Ski town, tracking the dead daughter of a US Presidential hopeful. It is a toss up between murder and suicide, with Clare integral to infiltrating a close knit group of stoners, drunks, ski bums and acid heads. She rooms with some suspects, does some drugs and breaks some rules. She takes up snowboarding, drinks micro brews, sniffs out clues and takes ridiculous risks to get the job done.

The overall plot was solid, flipping back and forth in classic Spano style from the perspectives of suspects, police, and alternate characters. As per the norm, whodunnit spoilers do not exist and the novel is crafted well and allows you to enjoy it with out having the entire plot handed to you on a platter. I grew to like and understand the bad guys, and “understood” the motives better than I ever could in a Sherlock Holmes book.

But enough about the novel, let’s get back to Clare herself..”The Trainwreck”-

Clare Vengel of the ‘Clare Vengel Undercover’ series is a spiteful, clumsy, juvenile, backward, unreasonable, messed up woman with literal daddy issues. Her inability to exist in the world and share a grain of truthful emotion is frustrating. She treats her boyfriend like an enemy; her FBI and RCMP colleagues similarly, with unbridled unprofessional distaste; her family and friends are ignored because she cannot get over.. Never mind, you get the point.

When I saw this wreck, there was no stopping me driving by. I wanted to see it. I opted to pick up the novel and lovingly gawp at the greatness of another Vengel story. For readers of the previous novels, you will find that Clare is seemingly worse than before, uncontrollably juvenile at points, taking pages from all of the world’s angsty teenage stereotypes. She drove me CRAZY. I wanted to see blood. Externally I cared to see Clare succeed in her current case; Internally I really was scoping for blood at the crash site, wanting to see a body part or two and red clotted snow.

I kept hoping for her to falter, hoped the universe would slap a cluepon down onto her lap. In the end, as with the train wreck, when i see that she comes out okay in the end, i forget about the instinctive need to view a corpse and am instead glad to see she came out on top, as always.

Clare Vengel.. I hope you continue to succeed in your escapades, regardless of the desire to see people line up and smack you to sense like on the 1980 movie Airplane!.

--

xpost RawBlurb.com

Catherine Astolfo says

Robin Spano has many skills as a writer, but there is one I must highlight. In *Death's Last Run*, she switches back and forth through several points of view. The reason this technique works so well for her is that she is utterly gifted in writing dialogue. Every single character comes alive through his/her own unique voice. The discourse is natural, flows well, and reveals the various personalities flawlessly.

The plot is interesting and intelligent. The whodunit kept me guessing. The setting is described in eloquent terms. But the internal and external dialogue held me spellbound. I loved it. A highly recommended read!

Carole says

I absolutely loved this book! This is Robin Spano's third book, and her writing gets better and better each time! Robin keeps the reader on the edge of their seat, wanting to know what will happen next, and keeps the reader guessing. The plot flows beautifully and fast. Perhaps Robin's greatest gift is her ability to get into each character's head and write dialogue. I feel like i know each of the characters personally. As soon as you read one or two lines, you know which character you're reading about. I can't wait for Robin's next book!

Jenn Ravey says

Clare Vengel is back again in Robin Spano's sequel to *Death Plays Poker*. Now an FBI agent, Clare is called to go undercover when a U.S. Senator's daughter dies. Though Sasha's death is ruled a suicide, Senator Martha Westlake, also campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination, doesn't believe her daughter killed herself. With enough clout to call in the FBI, Martha expects results but also begins doing her own digging to determine what happened.

As Clare embroils herself in the snowboarding culture of Whistler, she learns that drug running is hot business and that Sasha likely had several people who wanted her dead. She also learns that Sasha may have had other motives than drug money and counter culture.

Clare is an odd protagonist. At times, she's incredibly childish – painting herself into corners with her boyfriend and her boss – yet she also makes it clear she's not a child, doing things for the job that shock and anger those around her. She also doesn't seem to be an incredible undercover agent, allowing herself to become wrapped up in the people and the place she's assigned without keen observation or detection. But what the reader discovers each time is that Clare's assumption of her role is exactly what makes her successful, even if it puts her in danger at times.

As always, Spano's sharp storytelling and economical prose quickly grabbed my attention. What sets her

apart even further, however, is her expert handling of multiple perspectives, exploring the quirky citizens of Whistler and their motives without judgment. She also does an excellent job of providing readers with characters we should like – Clare, Martha, Noah – who are pretty awful at times, and characters we should dislike or suspect and making them sympathetic and likable. Thus, when the denouement occurs, there's an uneasy feeling as the reader holds his or her breath, waiting to find the identity of the culprit.

Debra says

While working for the FBI, Canadian undercover officer Clare Vengel is assigned to investigate the apparent suicide of Sacha Westlake, whose mother refuses to believe that Sacha killed herself. Since Martha Westlake is a U.S. senator with presidential ambition, she has the clout to push for an investigation. Clare's previous work with the RCMP provides the skill to assume a new identity at the renowned Whistler ski resort, however, the snowboarding, drug-using suspects present a unique challenge. Clare has little experience with either of their passions, but she's smart, adaptable, brave, and definitely an outside-the-box thinker; traits that land her in far more danger than she wanted.

Death's Last Run is author Robin Spano's third Clare Vengel novel, and even better than the previous two books. This is a clever, fast-paced whodunit with a terrific setting and great cast of characters. In addition to crime solving, there's plenty of depth to this story as Clare also tries to cope with her tumultuous personal life. She's forced to make tough ethical choices, personally and professionally, with no idea how things will turn out.

I love the way the author takes the time to carefully tie up loose ends and present the possibility of an entirely new challenge. You'll have to read the book to find out what that challenge is, but it will be well worthwhile, I assure you. A great read!

E.R. Brown says

This book is a blast! Spano's Clare Vengel is one sexy, smartass, high-adrenaline undercover agent. She keeps doing the wrong thing—jumping into bed with the bad guys, ignoring her bosses, and turning her friends against her—and you read on with dread fascination. Brought in to investigate a murdered snowboarder, Clare has to contend with drug dealers, a US senator, crooked cops and competing lovers—any of whom might be the murderer. Pure entertainment from start to finish.

Luanne Ollivier says

3.5/5 Death's Last Run is the third installment in Robin Spano's series featuring undercover agent Clare Vengel, but is a first read of this author for me.

At twenty four years old, Clare has already worked undercover for the RCMP and is currently employed by the FBI. This time out, it's a joint case between the two agencies. Clare is sent to Whistler, BC where Sacha, the daughter of a US Senator, has committed suicide. Or has she? The Senator doesn't think so - and she has

clout. So, it's Clare's job to infiltrate the local scene.

And infiltrate she does - Clare ends up with Sacha's roommate, her job and one of lovers. And more. Told by her handlers to not sample the local drugs, Clare goes right ahead.

This was my first introduction to this conflicted character. On the one hand, she wants to do a good job, but consistently bucks her superiors, taking risks that endanger both herself and the case. She desperately wants a secure relationship with her boyfriend Noah, but has no problem sleeping with suspects and calling it work. To be honest, I'm not sure if I like her or not. But you don't have to like a protagonist to keep turning pages. And that I did.

Spano has done a great job bringing the underculture of Whistler to life and has populated her novel with colourful characters. Spano effectively switches points of view, telling the story through the eyes of the cop, the undercover agent and the suspects. The plotting is inventive and multi-layered with lots of suspects to choose from. I did find it a bit hard to believe that the policing in Whistler - "Canada's most expensive playground" is so lackadaisical.

Spano has opened the door for Clare to go international - I'll be interested to see where she goes and who she becomes next. And what direction Clare's personal life takes as well.

Heads up for gentle readers - sex and drug use included.

Linda says

My favourite of the series. Hope there will be more.

Sandy says

2.5 stars

This is another in the Clare Vengel series & starts with an interesting premise. Sacha Westlake, 23 & from a privileged background, is found lying dead in the snow at a mountain resort. She's still on her snow board & both wrists are slashed. It appears to be suicide but Martha, her mother, is a US senator & asks the FBI to take a closer look. Enter Clare.

Clare is Canadian but lives in NYC, spending time with boyfriend Noah, also an FBI agent. They've been having problems lately & Clare welcomes the chance to go undercover at Whistler, BC. Once there, she meets Sacha's friends & tries to figure out if there's anything suspicious about her death. But soon, it becomes apparent this is about much more than just one dead girl. Drugs, dealers, money laundering, dirty politics and cops & another body are just some of the things Clare will uncover while pretending to be a slacker snow boarder.

The plotting is good. It's intricate & early on, there are several candidates for our killer. There is a large cast & the chapters alternate, told from the point of view of 7 or 8 of the main characters. The most interesting & well written characters are four men involved in the drug deals. They're very different (cop, snowboard dude, bar owner & gangster) but their interactions & personas seem real. Unfortunately, it's the main character that lets the story down.

Hey, this is fiction so we can all accept that the author may take some liberties with reality. But in a police procedural, there are certain guidelines or rules inherent in law enforcement they will have to follow to make it credible. For me to really get pulled into a story, I don't have to like the characters but I do have to believe them. And Clare is about as believable as an undercover FBI agent as I am.

First, there's the relationship & dialogue between her & Noah. Their conversations are all highly dramatic, frequently sounding as if they're auditioning for a soap opera & they don't seem to actually like each other very much. And despite Clare telling us she's in love with Noah, she is inordinately preoccupied with who she is going to shag at Whistler. She's not a particularly likeable character which would be fine if she seemed competent. Instead, she comes across as an undisciplined loose cannon, frequently making decisions that may have been meant to seem brave but are just dumb. Case in point: her new friends are into acid & pressure her to take some. Her RCMP handler forbids it, stating the obvious that she would have no control over what she might say or do. But Clare blows up, calling her "stupid" for following the rules & repeatedly arguing it's a good idea. Seriously? You're undercover among people who are part of a drug cartel, one of whom is a murderer & you think it's a great idea to take LSD & have no control over what you might say for the next few hours? Right.

Clare's handler, Amanda, doesn't come off much better. Over dinner one night, she discloses top secret information about something Noah did on a previous case. It's serious stuff, the kind of classified info someone in Amanda's position would only reveal to another superior, not to the agent's lover. The only person in any level of law enforcement in the book who comes across with any credibility is Noah, himself. At this point, I almost put the book down. But, in for a penny...when the identity of the murderer & his accomplice are revealed, you might be surprised by one but you'll have spotted the other early on. So as you've probably gathered, I would not recommend this, but as always, it's a matter of personal taste. The plot & premise are good but ultimately, I just couldn't suspend my disbelief often enough.

Dona Matthews says

I read this book in manuscript form (it'll be available next spring, and is available now for pre-order). Clare goes undercover for the FBI from New York to Whistler, where she gets entangled in a dangerous group of drug-makers, -sellers, and -smugglers she comes to know and like. I love how Clare is maturing, without losing her individualism, independence, or autonomy. A delight. I read the last 2 chapters slowly, and was very sorry to finish it. Already I can't wait for the next one.

Kathy says

This is Clare Vengel's third big case. With each case, she gains knowledge and insight into her chosen profession. She's still working on the personal insights.

The story is very compelling-I was totally off as to who the murderer turned out to be, even with all the clues. It was well put together. Robin is a good writer and get better with each boook.

I really enjoyed the setting. I will have to get a map to really get an idea of the layout of Whistler and the surrounding region.

I can't imagine what Clare will get up to next.

D.J. McIntosh says

A great setting in a novel is always important to me and Robin Spano paints a fascinating picture of Whistler. Panoramic beauty and luxurious resort life on the one hand with a dark underside that most visitors rarely get a glimpse of. But it's FBI undercover agent Claire Vengel who really steals the show. Tough, smart and uncompromising, she is always convincing. We're with her all the way. Deftly written, the suspense doesn't let up - highly recommended.

Sharon Mensing says

This is the third in a series of undercover assignments for Clare Vengel and, though her relationship with her boyfriend and fellow-FBI agent clearly carries through from book to book, *DEATH'S LAST RUN* involves a self-contained plot that is easily read as a stand-alone.

In *DEATH'S LAST RUN*, Clare is called to Whistler to investigate the suicide of a young snowboarder whose mother, Martha, a senator running for the Republican nomination for president in the U.S., believes that Sasha's death was murder. Clare finds herself dropped into a group of drug manufacturers and dealers who are exporting mountain snow, a high-grade LSD, to the U.S. It seems everyone she meets is in some way connected with the drug trade. There's Wade, a married alcoholic bar owner for whom Sasha had worked; Richie, a street thug who is trying to go legitimate through the purchase of an interest in the bar; Norris, a dirty cop; and Chopper, the manufacturer. Jana, Sasha's old roommate and Clare's new one, seems to be involved with the whole drug-dealing crew as she pushes Clare to become as active a drug-user as Jana is herself.

There's a rumor in town that an undercover cop has been planted, so Clare spends time deflecting attention from herself as she works to find information and get it to her handlers. Finding the right balance between being effective at gathering information and avoiding unhealthy behavior such as sleeping with suspects and partaking of their product is difficult for Clare. Since she's naturally averse to direction from authority, i.e., her handlers, she is more effective at the former and less at the latter.

As is fairly obvious from the start, the story of Sasha, drugs, and snowboarding eventually connects up to the plot involving Martha's bid for the presidency. The writing style involves very short chapters, often of just a couple of pages, dealing with different characters. This draws the reader in, with the "just one more chapter" approach, as well as making it clear that everyone's story is intertwined. There are several high-intensity scenes as the book draws to a close, and Spano describes the effect of various drugs consumed by the characters convincingly. While I can't weigh in on whether the drug descriptions are accurate, as a resident of a ski resort town myself, I can confirm that the frenetic pace of the bar scenes during ski season and the descriptions of the tourists are realistic.

The book is written with a light touch and in a straight-forward manner, so it is ideal for a quick escape from reality – especially if you like your escape to be in the mountains during ski season.

Debbie says

This is the first book I have read by this author. I saw her book in a picture taken when she was touring with Hilary Davidson, looked it up, was intrigued and bought it.

The story was very well written with lots of twisting plots. The story takes place in Whistler with snow bums, a money laundering bar, a corruptive cop, oh and there's also "Mountain Snow" which is a pure form of LSD being made and sold by several locals. It opens up with the death of a daughter of a woman running for the Republican ticket in an US presidential race. The RCMP and the FBI team up to send in Clare Vengel as an undercover agent to try and find the killer.

The story was very fast paced, believable and had you accusing nearly everyone. I rushed through this and thoroughly enjoyed. I would definitely recommend it!!

Kari Anderson says

From Goodreads.com:

A young snowboarder turns up dead on the Blackcomb Glacier. The local police are calling it suicide, but the victim's mother, a U.S. senator, is not convinced. At the senator's request, the FBI sends in undercover agent Clare Vengel to infiltrate the world of ski bums and snow bunnies and find out what happened to Sacha. Clare soon discovers that not only was the victim involved in an LSD smuggling ring, but also the uncooperative top cop in town is in cahoots with the smugglers. With her cover dangerously close to being blown Clare must solve the case before she finds herself in the deep freeze permanently.

My Thoughts:

Oh how I love thee, Robin Spano. This is no secret. I jump on every chance to snatch up a Clare Vengel novel. This is the 3rd Clare book I've had my hot little hands on, and each one impresses me more than before. Robin has jumped up on the list of authors I know I can count on each time a new book is released. When I want something good, I turn to her!

Death's Last Run is told through four viewpoints. You have Clare, undercover as Lucy. You have the Senator, and possible Presidential Candidate Martha. You have Richie, a drug dealer that wants to turn legit. And you have Wade, the employer... and lover of the dead girl. Spano did a great job using all the different voices to tell this story. I often feel like when I try to change characters, I still have the same voice. Robin has mastered this technique.

She has also mastered the murder mystery genre. She throws Clare into scenarios and locations that prove Spano is doing her homework and research to make sure she is telling her story accurately. And with each novel, she keeps you hanging on until the last second, throwing out several potential suspects, with the bad guy right under your nose. How do I always fall for this?

One thing I love about Robin's writing is that she has fun with it. A lot of murder mysteries, along with the characters, are dry and serious. Not Robin's. Clare is a badass who won't take anything from anyone. Granted she has a lot of growing to do and has severe trust and settling down issues, but still, she's a strong woman who rocks at her job. My favorite part of the book was in chapter 13, when Clare was taking snowboarding lessons and couldn't remember Chopper's name and called him everything from Flipper to Flopper to Flopface. I was laughing out loud at this.

You know what else I love? That Robin has left this bad boy open-ended, which leaves me with high hopes that another Clare novel is in the works. I'll keep you updated.

I give Death's Last Run 5 out of 5 bookmarks.

