

## All Body Bags and No Knickers: Mercenaries in Suits Book 3

**Shawe Ruckus**

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*All Body Bags and No Knickers is a slow-burning mystery novel in which a couple's perfect honeymoon exposes lies that could break family bonds.*

In Shawe Ruckus's mystery novel *All Body Bags and No Knickers*, a globe-trotting newlywed couple contends with the groom's long-hidden family secrets.

Chance and Catherine decide to honeymoon with his family in China. Not long after they arrive, though, tension mounts. The couple keeps crossing paths with the same pair of supposed strangers; members of Chance's family appear suddenly after having been estranged for decades; and Chance's cousin An, who is also Catherine's best friend, seems quite troubled. And even as Catherine works to uncover links between these occurrences, a vicious crime is committed that threatens to devastate her new family.

The book's mystery elements are too slow to arrive, however. Instead, the locales that Chance and Catherine visit are centered, with descriptions of their travels to each new restaurant, hotel, or spa used to move the story forward. There are luxury villas, bustling city streets, charming cafés, and golden beaches in the book's vibrant background. But this atmospheric quality is somewhat undone by the fact that Chance and Catherine discuss their experiences in these spots—what they had for dinner; the cultural practices they encountered—ad nauseam. As a result of such extensive worldbuilding, there are large gaps between the story's most significant events, resulting in a sluggish sense of intrigue at best. Indeed, most of the book's first act comes to seem inconsequential to the central story.

The book leans into genre tropes in a too-conspicuous manner, further undermining its potential to excite interest. Chase and Catherine run into people who have much to reveal to them by happenstance; a late-stage information dump reveals several important facts at once while also tying up a handful of loose ends in an unconvincing but convenient fashion. Further, the book's supporting characters are introduced in rapid succession throughout, their numbers ballooning to an unwieldy degree as the narrative progresses. Their development is often shallow, and many prove irrelevant to the overall plot; few do more than push Chance and Catherine toward their next event. Meanwhile, Chance and Catherine are static heroes, though ones who are also transparent about their thoughts, feelings, and internal struggles in the course of their narration.

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IAN DAILEY (October 12, 2023)

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