

Bishop's Endgame: A Spy Game Novel

Michael Frost Beckner

Montrose Station Press (Sep 5, 2022)

Hardcover \$28.00 (490pp)

979-898559743-1

Bishop's Endgame is a frenetic thriller in which two men confront their mortality while struggling with the loss of a legendary spy.

In Michael Frost Beckner's tense thriller *Bishop's Endgame*, the murder of a legendary spy sparks a disaster for the CIA when an entire network of spies goes dark.

Russell Aiken was one of murdered spy Nathan Muir's recruits, but the years haven't been kind to him, and he has been kept out of agency operations. Muir's murder gives the CIA a unique opportunity to clean up part of their legacy in one fell swoop. Aiken is promoted to active field agent with the promise of a permanent assignment—if he can locate and bring in the prime suspect, Tom Bishop.

Bishop, another Muir recruit, has been active in Malaysia; he is one of the only spies in Muir's network to still be operating. Yet again Aiken finds himself on a dangerous chess board of moving pieces, with both him and Bishop trying to stay on the board. The CIA wants them both removed from spying. Both also grapple with Muir's loss, as he was like a father figure to them. They work to get ahead of the CIA and thwart a potential civil war in Kuala Lumpur.

The story's opening is explosive: Muir is killed, and Bishop is the prime suspect. The book then races along in a global game of cat and mouse. Aiken narrates in a sometimes unreliable stream-of-consciousness style, covering the unfolding events in an erratic, manic fashion. He jumps between memories, reflecting on crucial moments that have present-day ramifications. He realizes that Muir played the long game: every action had a purpose, even if some of his intentions took decades to reveal themselves. Aiken even sometimes pauses midsentence to veer into other thoughts, leading to a rapid-fire and fascinating tale.

While Aiken is this volume's focal character, Bishop is also developed in clear terms. He is flawed, conflicted, and vulnerable, even though he's built up a name for himself as one of the agency's cold killers. In Malaysia and in Aiken's recollections, Bishop's layers are revealed. Though he is still a capable spy, he struggles with the moral implications of his job, wondering where the line should be drawn.

Muir and his legacy hang across this whole exciting story. Both Bishop and Aiken are torn because of their loyalty toward him. They work to balance spying with staying true to their personal convictions. In between harrowing shoot-outs and taut banter, the men confront a gamut of conflicting ideals, musing over the consequences of having devoted their lives to an institution that is now determined to eliminate them.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (August 25, 2022)

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