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TITLE INFORMATION

NASHVILLE MERCY

DeLand, M. Maitland
Manuscript

BOOK REVIEW

In DeLand's debut mystery thriller, a tenacious reporter uncovers murder and conspiracy at a local hospital.

Kate Katelinson works as a reporter for the *Nashville Herald*, a job in which her recklessness and instincts as a journalist often clash with her bosses. When Kate is assigned a piece about the purchase of the Nashville Mercy Hospital by Boston-based health conglomerate Community Healthcare International, she initially sees it as another filler piece; however, a chance meeting with an old roommate who works at the hospital suggests there might be more to the story than she thought. Following her intuition, Kate discovers that local music celebrity Gwendolyn Cartwright is being held in critical care after what appears to have been a botched heart surgery. Further investigation yields that the operation itself was likely unnecessary; in fact, many similar procedures are performed in order to boost Community Healthcare International's profits. Kate's efforts are aided by a group of nurses and nuns at the hospital—calling themselves the “Underground Resistance”—but her investigation is complicated by her budding relationship with one of the hospital's executives, Brad Wickham. When, after agreeing to an interview, Gwendolyn dies from a suspicious infection, it becomes clear that those involved are determined to keep their practices secret. Kate is forced to question how involved Brad is in the scheme and how far she's willing to take the story. DeLand's story might not surprise many mystery fans, but she commands the genre's conventions well, pacing out the story and allowing the action to unfold at a steady speed. Prose is straightforward and deliberate, adding little personality to her characters but also avoiding overdramatization, which helps keep the novel focused. Similarly, the plot's basis in medical practices and hospital politics provides plenty of detail but doesn't get mired in boring technical jargon or lengthy exposition.

A steady-handed thriller that doesn't botch the basics.

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