



Stunner

Niki Danforth

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Beautiful. Bright. And possibly, deadly...

This is all Ronnie Lake knows about her potential sister-in-law, Julianna. But she's determined to find out the truth about her wealthy brother's new lover before he throws away his happiness, fortune, and quite possibly, his life. Who is this mysterious woman with two lives—and how deep does her deception go?

As a divorced, downsized, 50-something, Ronnie finds herself becoming an “accidental detective” in order to get to the bottom of things. There are unexplained hang-ups when the phone rings. A disturbing package and sketchy characters appear at her wealthy family's estate outside New York City. It all pushes Ronnie to step out of her privileged life and into a sinister world where people will do just about anything to escape their past. Is Julianna the most desperate of them all?

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Stunner Details

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From Reader Review Stunner for online ebook

Jody Lanshire says

I carry on so much about the book covers, you'd think I was in the business, but I'm not a designer, just an appreciator, and this cover is exquisite. Inside the book is told in the first person by Ronnie. I'd call Stunner a casual mystery. It's not the most edge of your seat thrilling mystery, but it has its moments of fun.

Charlotte Gard says

Ronnie Lake Is Stunning

I loved the twists and turns and action in this book. Ronnie Lake seems like her character could be a fun, good friend. Always up for an adventure! Loved the book.

Susan says

Ronnie Lake decides that she is suspicious of her possible future sister-in-law, Julianna, and decides to investigate her. I admit to taking an instant dislike to Ronnie and thought that her interference was officious. Two stars because I did finish.

Lesley says

Good mystery! I would read more from this author.

Candice Ellis says

Well written. I enjoyed reading this book. It held my interest right up to the end.

Caroline Barker says

I really enjoyed Stunner. It is a fun, light-hearted read despite the mystery of Ronnie's brother, Frank's new girlfriend, Juliana. Ronnie, in her mid-fifties, downsized and living alone, with the exception of her dog, Warrior, has already faced losing one brother, Peter, since his wife practically whisked him away and didn't want much contact with his family. Her other brother, Frank, has not long been made a widower since the death of his wife, Joanie, but now he has a new girlfriend in Juliana who doesn't appear to have much of a past. Ronnie simply can't allow her only close sibling to be distanced from her.

The opening scenes of Chapter One instantly grabbed my attention and made me smile as Ronnie is taking an Aikido class. I particularly love how the author has taken small Japanese phrases used in the appropriate

manner and explained them to the reader. These little details make reading all the better for reining in the reader.

Being a mystery thriller I did question, after reading the first page, if the author was going to use the Aikido to make Ronnie's character be an ass-kicking heroine, which would have been unbelievable. However, the author twists the idea on the following page, making it clear that of course being in her fifties, Ronnie is using Aikido as self-defence. The way in which it is written did amuse me; whilst taking control of her opponents power, in mid-stance with the opponent on her back:

“Hold that image! Hey, the decade of my twenties with my body feeling immune to injury was ages ago. So why would I even consider acting like Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan and stack an aggressive attacker onto my fifty-five-year-old aching back? Commmme onnnn.”

Stunner is written in first person from Ronnie's point of view. The reader soon realises that Ronnie is a flawed character. Although merely looking out for Frank, Ronnie becomes too nosey for her own good, which lands her in a little trouble at times. She pushes herself too far, especially when interrogating those she believes had a connection with Juliana in the past. Instead of keeping it fairly general, she asks too many personal questions that raises suspicion. She is playing detective, and enjoying it, but throws herself in at the deep end without thinking of the consequences. I like this about her. After all, she's human; we can all open our mouths at times when we wish we hadn't, and this is something I could easily see myself do. This makes Ronnie's character believable and really fun to read.

Another amusing moment for me was a thought of Ronnie's when after following Juliana one day, she witnesses her meet up with a shady, lowlife male who surely can't be part of beautiful, glamorous Juliana's past?

“Pretty soon a motorcycle roars up, and a guy with shaggy black hair and a leather jacket shuts down the engine and gets off. He removes the jacket, revealing a torn tee-shirt. His arms are loaded with tattoos all the way down to his wrists. His jeans hang low on his behind creating a sight that only a mother could love.... He...walks into the coffee shop...

...Another thirty minutes go by before Juliana and Mr. Butt-Crack come out the door of the coffee shop.”

However, the light-hearted and fun moments do not always last as Ronnie finds herself in a spot of trouble when she is confronted by him in an alleyway. This scene provides some suspense and tension, which really reminds the reader just how dangerous Ronnie is playing this detective game. She is shaken up a little and is aware of her silly, amateur behaviour.

“What the hell did I think I was doing back there, going into that alley without Warrior? I'm not a professional private eye like Will Benson, just an idiotic, nosy amateur trying to look out for her brother. And an amateur who turned useless when the time came to defend herself. A coward. What happened to all my Aikido? Where was it when I actually needed it?”

Will Benson is an interesting character, being introduced to Ronnie by her Sensei, Isabella, Ronnie realises that one of her opponents in class is a Private Investigator. After explaining her situation to him, Will shows that he is willing to assist where he can. He can sense Ronnie's eagerness to find out all she can about Juliana, but he is also aware of her lack of experience and dishes out warnings and advice to her where he can. Throughout his involvement the reader can sense a growing friendship and possible relationship between him and Ronnie which provides a nice, warm feel to the story when everything else becomes darker.

Ronnie's ultimate goal throughout is to find out Juliana's true identity and past, to ensure that Frank isn't being played for money, and to ensure that her brother isn't taken away from her by a woman in the same

way that Peter had. However, going behind Frank's back, checking up on his girlfriend and running the risk of getting found out (or even having to confront him with what she is doing) all run the risk of him never talking to her again. She is treading on ice, but surely Frank is vulnerable after losing Joanie, and maybe he just can't see the many faces of Juliana? Either way, Ronnie feels she has no choice but to continue with her venture.

The reader can really sense Ronnie's true meaning for her actions. She genuinely loves her brother and cares for his welfare. When she is made aware of strange happenings with strange phone calls and delivered parcels for Juliana she just can't stop herself. Her suspicions and curiosity take over. Once she starts and finds herself deeper and deeper, it is hard for her to walk away. She must see it through to the end – even if she runs the risk of losing everything.

Another little treat from this story is the music soundtrack that the author has incorporated into the story. Each song is carefully chosen, fitting the scene perfectly. Some tracks that really stood out to me were 'Glory Days' (Bruce Springsteen), 'Invincible' (Pat Benatar), 'Runnin' Down A Dream' (Tom Petty), and The Eagles' 'Hotel California'.

If you are looking for a mystery with a sense of adventure, but nothing too dark, then Stunner is certainly a story you will enjoy. Written at a nice pace and in a manner that is easy to follow, with a light-hearted sense in parts, any reader will find it a quick and memorable read.

A copy of Stunner (A Ronnie Lake Mystery #1) was provided by the author in return for a fair and honest review.

Linda Strong says

Ronnie Lake is a divorced 50-something who's learning to be single again. Her children are grown and making their own way in the world. She is really close to her brother, so when her niece calls in a panic, Ronnie goes running.

She is a much younger woman, beautiful, charming, and maybe, just maybe she's dangerous. This is Juliana, the woman her brother has brought home with marriage on his mind.

But when Juliana shows up, strange things begin to happen ... hang up phone calls, a man with tattoos keeps popping up ... and Juliana, herself, is very secretive about her past.

Ronnie is determined to sniff out all the secrets before her brother is dragged into something that may be harmful to his health.

Teaming with Will, a local Private Investigator, Ronnie starts delving into Juliana's past. So who is Juliana and what exactly does she want with this family?

This is a very entertaining book. Ronnie is quite a character. She practices martial arts, she has a unique relationship with Warriar, her German Shepherd, and she's becoming quite attracted to Will, even if he is 15 years younger. She's nosy, head-strong, and doesn't hesitate to jump in the middle of things without thinking first.

The book is very well-written, with plenty of suspense to keep mystery lovers happy. Well-drawn characters.

Many thanks to the author and E-Books For Review who provided a digital copy in exchange for an honest, unbiased review.

Marjorie says

Excellent job!

A great short story about love and family. Trust and fear also play a big part. But I will not go any further. Enjoy the story it is a good one.

Rosemary says

Stunner - a review by Rosemary Kenny

Pampered, wealthy, family-oriented divorcee Ronnie Lake is quick to come to her niece's aid when Laura calls, frantic about the new woman in her recently-widowed father's life and the mystery surrounding her past life. Ronnie hears how young widow Juliana Wentworth has seemingly bewitched Ronnie's older brother Frank with her stunning beauty and intellect - she's pretty good at chess too! However after Laura tells her about a number of 'hang-up' calls and shows a horrific package that has come for Juliana, Ronnie decides to make sure that Frank's new love is not taking advantage of her vulnerable big brother.

What further mystery does the package raise? Who is phoning and threatening Juliana?
Why does Ronnie have 'flashbacks' after seeing Juliana break a heel on her shoe?
Where does Ronnie encounter Bobby Taylor and his sidekicks? Who's Francesca and who's her dad?
When does Ronnie rescue Francesca? How does Ronnie know Will Benson? How does he help?

Niki Danforth's imaginative thriller 'Stunner' really lives up to its title - not only because Juliana is a knockout beauty, but also because of the stunning revelations that keep the eager reader turning pages to the very end. I loved it and you will too - grab your copy today!

Vic says

A Stunning Read!

I didn't want to put it down. For the first time in my life I wished for the plane to remain in a holding pattern. Ronnie Lake is someone I would enjoy sharing a cup of coffee with. I can't wait to see where Ronnie ends up next.

Cheryl says

I give this 3.5 stars.

I received a free copy of this book via Instafreebie, with thanks to the author.

Wonderful introduction to a new author and a mystery series that is a little more than the standard cosy. Enticing premise that kept your eyes glued to the page and made for a quick read. My only complaint was that I found it got bogged down in the technical explanations of Aikido. Definitely recommended.

Susie Hargis says

I wasn't real taken with Ronnie. Her personality kind of rubbed me wrong. The writing was good, it was just the person being portrayed was annoying. And the mystery was flimsy. Sorry, that was all so harsh. The writing is good though.

Cindy Grogan says

I'm not generally a mystery fan, but I was looking for something different for some beach reading. Well, gotta say that I tore right through this. There were lots of twists I didn't expect (and I'm usually the one who sees how the movie is gonna end about 10 minutes into it). I loved Ronnie Lake's character: a bad-ass woman of a certain age --very cool. Anyway, I loved it. Can't wait for the next one!

Shash says

Disturbing things begin to happen when Frank brings his girlfriend, Juliana, home to meet the family. Ronnie is determined to protect her brother and find out what is going on. With the help of P.I., Will, she begins to look into Juliana's background.

The story was told well, from Ronnie's point of view. I would have loved a little more development of some of the characters. I liked Ronnie. She had her strengths and her flaws. She was nosey and would mess things up sometimes as she interviewed people, but her heart was in the right place. Warrior, her dog and almost constant companion, was a great addition to the story. Loved him!

I figured a lot of things out. More pieces kept being added, but usually I could see where they fit in pretty quickly. There were a few things that kept me guessing. There was quite a bit of swearing, especially in the last few chapters, which I could have done without. Overall, I liked the book.

I was given a copy of the book in exchange for a review.

George Ringo says

Thought I had this one figured out several times only to find I was off the mark. One of those books you plan to read in short bursts only to get caught up in the suspense and screw up your time schedule. Author's description of male losers is classic. Highly recommend.
