



Betrayals

Charles Palliser

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At once a hypnotic murder mystery, scathing literary parody, soap opera, and brilliant pastiche, *Betrayals* is an astonishing virtuoso performance by a modern master of literary gamesmanship in the tradition of Vladimir Nabokov and John Barth.

The novel unfolds in a series of seemingly unrelated narratives, each written in a different style -- indeed, in a different genre. There is an obituary for a Scottish scientist and Nobel Prize winner, written by a colleague who clearly relishes his death. Early in the century, a train in the Scottish Highlands heads down the wrong track during a winter snowstorm, and the passengers are forced to abandon the train, resulting in the death -- or is it murder? -- of one of them. An inane publisher's reader summarizes the plot of a tacky hospital romance novel, which ends in a gory murder all too reminiscent of Jack the Ripper. Even a report on a contemporary academic controversy explodes into a scandal of plagiarism, shattered reputations, paranoia, and suicide -- or is it murder made to look as such?

As Palliser deftly teases out each new situation, it becomes clear that they are all variations on a single outrageous theme: a distinguished figure in some intellectual pursuit -- science, literature, academia -- becomes obsessed with the success of a rival and schemes his demise, only to botch the job out of sheer monomania. Like the scorpion that stings itself to death, each plotter becomes a victim of his own plot; each betrayer changes places with the betrayed in an intricate dance of deception, revenge, and revelation.

A challenging, engrossing, utterly original work of art, *Betrayals* is also pure joy to read -- a book that will make you laugh out loud, turn pages madly in pursuit of the next plot twist, and above all, marvel at the supreme ingenuity of a fictional puzzle in which the unlikeliest pieces fit together perfectly.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Charlsie Sprouse:

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Kari Annis:

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