

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin purple lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# Red, White, Blue

Written by Lea Carpenter

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Published by sanmarco-sf

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# Red, White, Blue

By Lea Carpenter

## Red White Blue Flag

A dark, powerful, and subtly crafted novel that traces the intertwined fates of a CIA case officer and a young woman who is forced to confront her dead father's secret past--at once a gripping, immersive tale of duplicity and espionage, and a moving story of love and loyalty.

## Red White Blue

Anna is the beloved only child of the charismatic Noel, a New York City banker--and a mother who abandoned her. When Noel dies in a mysterious skiing accident in Switzerland the day before his daughter's wedding, Anna, consumed by grief, grows increasingly distant from her prominent music-producing husband, who begins running for office. One day, while on her honeymoon in the south of France, Anna meets an enigmatic stranger who will cause perhaps even greater upheaval in her life. It will soon become clear that this meeting was no chance encounter: this man once worked with Anna's father and has information about parts of Noel's life that Anna never knew. When she arrives back in New York, she receives a parcel that contains a series of cryptic recordings and videos showing Noel at the center of a brutal interrogation. Soon, everything Anna knows about her father's life--and his death--is called into question, launching her into a desperate search for the truth.

## Red White Blue Apparel

Smart, fast-moving, and suspenseful, *Red, White, Blue* plunges us into the inner workings of the CIA, a China Ops gone wrong, and the consequences of a collision between one's deepest personal ties and the most exacting and fateful professional commitment.

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. But what is the truth? The characters in *Red, White, Blue* only have an elusive grasp on it. And by the end of the book, you may as well.

*Red, White, Blue* is an extraordinary book—a spy book that eschews the typical plot-driven, adventure-fueled formula and focuses on a CIA operative—namely, Noel, who died in a skiing accident in Switzerland, the day before his daughter Anna's wedding—with fresh eyes. What kind of operative, the book

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Narrated in alternating chapters—Anna in the third-person and a first-person narration of the nameless CIA agent and author of a package of videos and recordings sent to Anna—we learn that during the time of his death, Noel was at the center of an interrogation for unofficially exfiltrating a woman named Veritas, a Chinese double agent who was his own asset. Anna, who is now married to a music producer, wishes to get to the truth.

The truth, however, is elusive. The strength of this book is that it exposes the often bizarre and esoteric culture of intelligence work. Take this line, for example: “The Farm is about buying into the idea that not one, but all of those nesting dolls are you. The ability to inhabit all of them without doubt is essential to survival.” The insights are so precise and authentic that it is hard to believe that Lea Carpenter was not a CIA operative herself, attesting to her strength as a writer.

This is not a book that will tie up all the details and hand them over to the reader in a neat red bow. Its purpose is not to set up a situation and then solve it; rather, its purpose is to explore the fuzzy morality of secretive work and how, eventually, the duplicity affects one's own sense of identity and the sense of identity of those he holds closest. When I closed the pages, I began to question the characters I had just spent a few days with: were other characters who were portrayed as outsiders secretly CIA? Did everything unfold precisely as it was portrayed? Those who are not comfortable with ambiguity may not enjoy this but for me, it earns strong five stars.

Red, White, Blue

...more

## Red White Blue Popsicle

“When you lose someone you love, you only want to be around the people who loved him, too!”

Anna is a woman in her mid-thirties trying to deal with the scope of her father’s death, which makes every passage relevant to her story of love and grief. She is a luminous and compelling figure, whose father, Noel, a former CIA operative, died on the eve of her wedding, literally (and then the wedding was delayed). She seeks answers and a truth to the lacunae of her life. But like the design of the CIA o

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Carpenter’s new book feels very intimate, despite its existential, non-linear style of time, action, memories, and reflections. The answers for the reader are often in the narrative juxtapositions, and in the book’s considerable white spaces between passages. The text fluctuates, and in lesser hands would be inchoate, but Anna is so central to all the facets of story that I always felt grounded in her character. It can jump to a father’s lesson on koans to a section on China Ops and yet there is a tensile thread that keeps it all from being desultory. There isn’t one excess word or event in this book.

After her father dies, Anna receives a USB in the mail from her father’s close friend, a colleague in the CIA. Anna feels a kinship with this man, who also loved Noel (like a father). On the USB are videos that don’t coalesce at first, but contain an overarching motif that parallel Anna’s questions and answers. There’s a section on the “parlor trick” of polygraphs; the matter of China; a woman important to Noel (Anna’s father) and the unnamed sender, and a running story of their work, or its climax. And, a running leitmotif is a video called “Rooms,” that reveals rooms, or compartments, on the question of Heaven and God, but also understanding and forgiveness.

These are pieces of the whole picture that Anna ponders, and the narrative returns to these rooms and also compiles other seemingly arbitrary ideas that are actually germane to Anna’s quest. Memories of cooking with her beloved father, or discussing philosophical ideas with him, and life lessons he imparted to her.

This absorbing novel reads equally like an unfinished memoir and an unfinished spy/CIA story, yet

Red, White, Blue

complete in the transaction between author and reader. I closed the book satisfied, and realized that part of the narrative's purpose was for Anna to just keep digging for meaning in the disparate strands of her life, the loose jigsaw pieces that yet contain connective tissue. And how, through those connections, she can finally feel whole and also part of that larger life outside herself.

The epigraph of Red, White, Blue is from an essay written by Norman Mailer, an obvious precursor to his masterpiece of the psychology and sociology of the CIA (and it is evident that Carpenter read the book). She quotes from Mailer: "We do not know which of our facts are bricks and which are papier-mâché painted to look like bricks." "We will not get the goods so quickly as we will learn how to construct a model which will tell us why we cannot get the goods." I don't often quote from the epigraph of a novel, but in Carpenter's theme, it seems pertinent to understand that the characters here are grappling with the limits of knowledge and how the art and aesthetics of deception can be proximate to truth, (and, it isn't too much of a leap to consider how it may annex the truth).

"If you are not comfortable with hypocrisy you can leave right now" is one determining factor of job fitness as a CIA agent. "The truth will set you free" if the truth approves of your exit plan. Welcome to the CIA, and to life "full of paradoxes. If you enjoy a good paradox, or several, as part of the mining process to understanding, then you'll laud the poignancy of this masterful, astonishing novel. Exploring and examining grief, loss, and love side by side with the CIA is ambitious, and fully realized here. And, for me, Anna will remain unforgettable. ...more

I really enjoy espionage novels, so I went into this one with high expectations. Unfortunately, those expectations were not met. I simply could not get used to Carpenter's writing style. The novel switches perspective between Anna, whose father is recently deceased under suspicious circumstances, and her father's young protege. It wasn't always clear which character was speaking, so a technique that often results in an interesting presentation of a storyline, fell flat. I simply could not get in

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I was chosen to read an advance copy of this book as part of Penguin's First to Read program. However, the opinions expressed in this review are 100% mine and mine alone. ...more

## Red White Blue Striped Flag

Lovers of the TV shows "Homeland" and "The Americans" take heed! This novel is for you!

"Red, White, Blue" by Lea Carpenter, revolves around Anna. Anna's father, Noel was a CIA operative. Anna's mother, Lulu, left them when Anna was six. The structure of the novel involves two narratives; one from an unnamed (male) former colleague of Noel's who is telling Anna the "story" of her father. The other is an omniscient point of view of Anna's life. The structure works beautifully for Carpenter's mysterious and moody tale, and the switching back and forth is clean and provides for a perfectly paced story to unfold.

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Much of the enjoyment of the novel is the "inside baseball" information about the CIA. In the afterward Carpenter states that she was given absolutely no classified information, so presumably she built her story on information that she found in, what seems to be, painstakingly detailed research. The strong feeling of authenticity certainly enhances the novel and the reader's experience, while some of the information and political descriptions regarding China are often disturbing.

Carpenter skillfully sets up a central mystery regarding Noel, which challenges Anna's beliefs and memories about him. The propulsive narrative's short sections sweeps the reader up in the suspense and intrigue just as a well-done film or TV show does for a viewer.

I'm not sure that the plot is more important than the "tone" and "mood" of the novel, but I will say that the ending does not clarify everything, and not all readers will be comfortable with that.

...more

I received an advanced copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review. I have to say that I was all excited to get this one because I love spy books. However, I couldn't get into this one. I tried three separate times to read this one and still couldn't do it. This book went absolutely nowhere. It circled around and around and around, and still went nowhere. I don't recommend this one at all.

## Red White Blue Background

Noel's only daughter Anna mourns his loss. At the opening of the book, we know Noel has died shortly after Anna gets married. What then occurs in the book is Anna unfolds the story of Noel and her mother and of her own life. The story is non-linear, but this worked for me. I found the narrative interesting and engaging.

Anna's character is, in some ways, unreliable as she holds her father high above everyone else in her life - including her husband. In subtle ways, I found the relationship between Noel's only daughter Anna mourns his loss. At the opening of the book, we know Noel has died shortly after Anna gets married. What then occurs in the book is Anna unfolds the story of Noel and her mother and of her own life. The story is non-linear, but this worked for me. I found the narrative interesting and engaging.

Anna's character is, in some ways, unreliable as she holds her father high above everyone else in her life - including her husband. In subtle ways, I found the relationship between Anna and her husband a bit unrealistic, but I liked the interaction and found the two together endearing.

Carpenter wrote *Eleven Days* which I really liked. She is creative with structure which is something I enjoyed. I'll definitely seek out her writing in the future. ...more

Disappointing. It's an espionage novel where nothing actually happens.

## Red White Blue Air Max 97

“Red White Blue” is a literary espionage novel, written in a very unique style. The story unfolds in a slow, deliberate and fascinating way, building on itself and bringing the reader directly into the fold.

Anna is the character around whom the story revolves. Anna was effectively raised by her father, Noel, after her mother, Lulu (short for Eleuthera) inexplicably left when Anna was young. Although Lulu stayed in touch, Anna was most deeply influenced by Noel. Noel worked in finance and when “Red White Blue” is a literary espionage novel, written in a very unique style. The story unfolds in a slow, deliberate and fascinating way, building on itself and bringing the reader directly into the fold.

Anna is the character around whom the story revolves. Anna was effectively raised by her father, Noel, after her mother, Lulu (short for Eleuthera) inexplicably left when Anna was young. Although Lulu stayed in touch, Anna was most deeply influenced by Noel. Noel worked in finance and when asked what he did for a living he told people he “moved things around.” Noel actually worked for the CIA and that is the story Anna confronts throughout the book.

Noel bought a chalet in Switzerland and Anna and Jake are to marry in Switzerland. The day (or the day before) they are to marry, Noel dies in an avalanche while skiing. Anna and Jake marry anyway and later go to the south of France for a honeymoon. They are both mourning Noel’s death.

Jake is a musician and is in the process of selling the record label he owns and is away frequently during the honeymoon. During the trip, Anna meets an unnamed CIA operative (although she does not realize that is what he is at the time) who cryptically tells her part of her father’s story. Anna learns that both Noel and the unnamed operative spent most of their time in China working with an “asset” who deeply affected their lives.

When Jake and Anna return to New York, Jake decides to run for the Senate. At roughly the same time, Anna receives in the mail a package including a tiny silver USB with a collection of videos relating to Noel and the unnamed operative. As a result of of Jake’s candidacy Anna is subjected to numerous FBI interviews where she never discloses the USB. Jake wins the election and their lives become very public. The book ends with Anna being further drawn in to her father’s activities.

The story is told in chapters alternating between Anna’s story and the unnamed operative’s story. The writing and story telling style are unique and rhythmic. The story is compelling and at the same time has a distant foggy feel to it, probably reflective of the nature of the business the story describes. I really liked this book. Give this one a try. If you like this review subscribe to [www.frombriefstobooks.com](http://www.frombriefstobooks.com) for more. ...more

Advanced copy through Penguin Press' First to Read program.

Red, White, Blue

I could not get into this book. It was very difficult to follow and confusing.

## Red White Blue Dress

So disappointing! I could not get into the author's style of writing at all and gave up in frustration. I'm surprised that Library Journal gave it such a good review. Not my cup of tea at all. Too many other books I could be reading!

Very cleverly and well written untraditional spy story with two main plot lines being woven intricately together throughout the book.

Lea Carpenter changes narrator every other chapter, and the chapters are super short (rarely more than a page or two), which adds a certain dynamic to the story development, but I am not a great fan of that particular technique.

The book was difficult to put down ("just one more chapter..."), and I was well entertained, but it will probably not be a book I remember Very cleverly and well written untraditional spy story with two main plot lines being woven intricately together throughout the book.

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The book was difficult to put down ("just one more chapter..."), and I was well entertained, but it will probably not be a book I remember a year from now.

[An ARC of the book was generously provided by the publisher through the First to Read program in exchange for an honest review] ...more

## Red White Blue Air Max

I enjoy espionage novels. Not so much this one. There's not much of anything happening except someone explaining, in a long and meandering way, that some people were spies. There you go. The characters weren't developed enough for me to care one bit about their feelings or fates—which didn't matter in the end because nothing really happens. Just not the book for me, unfortunately.

DNF. Not terrible and parts of it are actually interesting, but it isn't holding my attention, so I am setting it aside. Which is unfortunate since the premise is so good. It is the structure of the book that I am having trouble with. Not sure at this point if I'd be picking it up again.

## Red White Blue Nails

Red, White, Blue was a very different read for me. I am an avid reader of espionage books and the book description really stands out. I received a copy via Penguin Random House's First to Read program in exchange for an honest review. Anna has just lost her father Noel who was a larger than life role model for her. They did most things together after Lulu, Anna's mother left the family. What struck me most about Anna's memory of that event was how both of them responded to Lulu's leaving. The re Red, White, Blue was a very different read for me. I am an avid reader of espionage books and the book description really stands out. I received a copy via Penguin Random House's First to Read program in exchange for an honest review. Anna has just lost her father Noel who was a larger than life role model for her. They did most things together after Lulu, Anna's mother left the family. What struck me most about Anna's memory of that event was how both of them responded to Lulu's leaving. The reader sees how devoted her father is to Anna, but, we also see despite how cold he might seem she overhears his response which shows just how human he really is and also draws the reader closer to Noel and his love for his family. As the reader is shown Noel in more of a third person viewpoint as different characters in the book describe Noel and his actions throughout his life, as they understood them.

There was one thing that was hard for me throughout the book and what stopped me from giving it five stars. There were numerous aspects throughout the book where I had trouble determining who was speaking. In some areas, it felt like Anna was remembering conversations with Noel and with Jake and with a man who was trained by and worked with Noel. At times it felt like I was reading a memoir of Noel's life told by Anna and the man she met while on her honeymoon. I was not quite sure how I felt about Anna's relationship with her husband Jake. It almost felt like when she was on her own she met someone whose personality was similar to her father's and he basically took over in molding her to be what he needed her to be just as Noel did after her mother left. The reader spends their time changing their mind throughout the book about who Noel was and what he did that caused the different agencies to descend upon Anna after Noel died. Lulu seemed to recognize this when she saw all the perfectly ironed and spaced shirts in Jake's closet and questioned their relationship. What is odd is that whatever the structure of their relationship, he also seemed to need her and her approval for his life to work the way he needed. Red, White, Blue is a great book with amazing character development. Outside of the confusing point of view which just may be my interpretation of the flow of the book, this is a thrilling, character-driven mystery. Review can also be seen at Lady Techie's Book Musings [http://LadyTechiesbookmusings.blogspot....](http://LadyTechiesbookmusings.blogspot...) ...more

Iâ€™d say the assertion that this is a good readalike for fans of *The Americans* is a good one. A cerebral and slow-moving yet totally absorbing story with lots of intriguing espionage details.