



TITLE INFORMATION

CONTRAPTIONS

Jeffrey Weinzwieg

BOOK REVIEW

Conspiracy is the currency of Weinzwieg's techno-medical thriller set in the late 1990s.

When in doubt, they say, one should follow the breadcrumbs, wherever they lead. Superstar New York City-based inventor Derek Cannon takes this to heart when he must determine who's trying to frame his business partner, inventor Ojo Jenachukwu, for the murder of a surgeon in Washington Square Park. Thanks to images captured on their "photo time machine," the Thermalzyer, the cops reluctantly free Ojo. However, the intrepid pair quickly find out a larger game is afoot. Derek's romantic partner, freelance journalist Christine Stratton Stryker, alerts them to stories about a series of unexplained, fatal birth defects ("*child has neither eye sockets, auditory canals, nor any remnant of a mouth*"); their connection with the murder only becomes apparent after the reading of a code from the victim's eyeglasses. The results lead to the unmasking of a monstrous project, set to coincide with the creation of colonies in space—the so-called New State. Further insights prove elusive until another crime hurtles Ojo and Derek toward a confrontation with a shadowy opponent—one that will require more than Derek's clever gadgets, such as the Metallic Immobilizer or Laser Stunner, to survive. Weinzwieg, who's written several surgical textbooks, keeps the dialogue snappy and the action brisk over the course of his slam-bang fiction debut. Although science and secret codes are the driving forces of the narrative, the author never allows them to overwhelm his novel's themes of how people can be driven by what they can do with technology, even if it's something they shouldn't do. It's a story that feels uncommon enough to be entertaining, but also ultimately feels eerily timely.

Fans of Michael Crichton and Clive Cussler will feel at home with this fast-paced novel's rogue science.