

Vatican's Office Of The Devil's Advocate. While you would think most folks are out trying to find proof of God's miracles here on Earth; Daniel's job is to prove them false. It's a job he has taken to with gusto. Daniel struggles with his faith daily. Every day, he wakes up and prays to God for a stronger faith. Maybe it's because he's seen first hand how faith can be turned on people. Growing up, Daniel was raised by a traveling preacher named Tim Trinity. Daniel spent his childhood on the road, watching as his uncle set up the tent revivals, and made the blind see or the crippled walk. He watched as the people were rewarded for their faith by having their wallets emptied, all in the name of faith. Needless to say, Daniel and Tim don't talk much anymore. That is until Daniel gets his next assignment. The Vatican has learned of a preacher operating in the South who has begun speaking in tongues, and buried in the "tongues" are messages that have been proven to foretell future events. That preacher is Tim Trinity. Lottery numbers, car crashes, stock crashes and sports scores; Trinity has foretold them all. Soon, the entire world is aware of the miracle. And as the Vatican, the mob, and Daniel's estranged love Julia all converge on post-Katrina New Orleans, it's all Daniel can do to keep Trinity alive. Chervercover takes all of these plates and keeps them spinning perfectly. **THE TRINITY GAME** is a fantastic thriller by an author that has never failed to impress. Dan Malmon

**THE VANISHING POINT**  
Val McDermid  
September 13, 2012  
UK edition: Little, Brown  
US Edition: Atlantic Monthly Press

In her twenty-sixth novel, a standalone, Val McDermid goes rather far afield from her previous books. It opens with a child abduction at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. While a passenger is going through an airport security check, a man in what appears to be a TSA uniform appears and guides the five-year-old boy traveling with her through the terminal and they both seem to disappear. It soon falls to 27-year-old FBI Special Agent Vivian McKuras to interview the woman, Stephanie Harker, the godmother [and planned adoptive mother] of the little boy, Jimmy. The boy's mother, Scarlett Higgins [dubbed by the media as The Scarlett Harlot] had been a reality-tv star, one of those famous for being famous, with whom Stephanie had ghost-written several books, becoming best friends in the process. The question becomes: Had this been "a random abduction, a spur-of-the-moment snatch," or had Jimmy been a very specific target? In order to ascertain into which category this falls, Vivian questions Stephanie at length as to the entire background and history of all concerned. What ensues is a rather lengthy tale, the story zig-zagging from those flashbacks to the present time as the investigation shifts into high gear. The boy's father, who Scarlett married shortly before his birth in a media-planned circus, had died from a drug-overdose not long afterwards, Scarlett more recently after a very public battle with cancer. Stephanie puts Vivian in touch with a UK counterpart, and everything becomes more complex. As it nears its end, the plot takes a very unexpected turn, morphing into a stunning conclusion. Stephanie is a fascinating protagonist, one who takes refuge

in her profession. When it is suggested to her that she could sell her story to a magazine, her response is: "I don't want to have a story.' I like being a ghost. Insubstantial. Transparent. Anonymous." An intriguing tale it is, in which manic stalkers [of both genders] are a theme. [The author thoughtfully includes a glossary at book's end, translating Brit-speak for the American readers.] Val McDermid just keeps getting better.  
Gloria Feit

**VIRAL**  
James Lilliefors  
2012  
Soho Crime

From the moment intelligence professional Charlie Mallory opens a package to find the head of a murdered colleague, the action never flags in this thriller about a plan to exterminate the residents of a small African nation via a deadly virus. Following the suspicious death of his father, a government agent and would-be whistleblower, Mallory is hired to investigate an international plot to (literally) clear land in an impoverished and corrupt African country for development. When little-known Sundiata is devastated by a flu epidemic, Charlie enlists his Washington, D.C.-based journalist brother Jon to publicize the story. Meanwhile, Charlie crisscrosses the globe, evading attempts on his life as he tracks down the biological researchers, encryption experts, entrepreneurs, and assassins-for-hire who have the information needed to stop the even bigger attack Charlie knows is coming soon.

The frequent plot twists center on the identities of those responsible for the flu virus. As the brothers learn more about the shadowy group behind the plan, each are targeted by dangerous enemies, some of whom they know about, and some of whom they don't....

Ciphers, anagrams, and engaging details about combat and investigative tactics abound, but most engrossing of all are Lilliefors's descriptions of what Jon witnesses in the fictional African nation of Sundiata. From the rotting cocoa pods to the scene where workers confront the aftermath of a virulent flu that has wiped out entire towns, Lilliefors's account of a disease-wracked land is poignant and terrifying.

Charlie is tough and aloof—Jon hasn't seen his brother in years—while Jon is thoughtful and less wary, but both are believable and well-written: resourceful and intelligent without being infallible. **VIRAL** is a story of biological weapons, government conspiracies and investigative work—an engaging combination.

Elizabeth Michaelson



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