

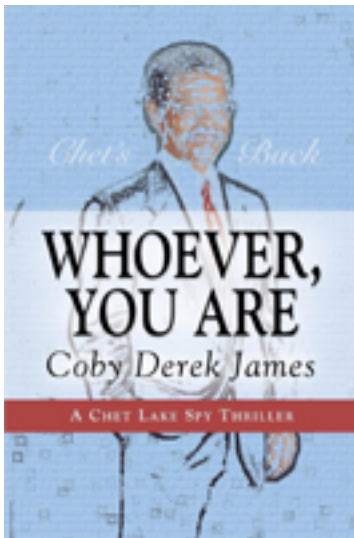


*Chet's Back*

**WHOEVER,  
YOU ARE**

*Coby Derek James*

A CHET LAKE SPY THRILLER



The hero, Chester (Chet) Lake, is part Native American and part African-American, but a citizen of the world. He is a mature person in his fifties, not a kid. Chet is no stranger to danger or human nature. He uses his heritage, his background in urban planning, and his maturity to slip across borders, and into and out of communities around the world, enabling him to perform international intelligence work.

## **Whoever, You Are**

by Coby Derek James

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*Whoever You Are*

# Whoever You Are

Coby Derek James

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2014

First Edition

*Whoever You Are*

## **DEDICATION**

To all new and old spies still here as well as those long gone.

*Coby Derek James*

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## **THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTER**

The hero, Chester (Chet) Lake, is part Native American and part African-American, but a citizen of the world. He is a mature person in his fifties, not a kid. He is no stranger to danger or human nature. He uses his heritage, his background in urban planning, and his maturity to slip across borders and into and out of communities around the world, enabling him to perform international intelligence work.

Chet has the perfect background, as a city planner, to move through an urban world in which his training and mixed ethnicity are an advantage.

---Coby Derek James

*Coby Derek James*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This book is a work of fiction based on facts and actual incidents organized to tell a story that has much truth in it but which is disguised for reasons of national security and the identity of the characters. None of the events occurred exactly as presented here. Nonetheless, they bear an eerie resemblance to events that could, and maybe should, have happened. Subsequent to the writing of this novel, events in Turkey have demonstrated the fragility of this democracy and why balancing the government with the issues in the region was a genuine concern for the United States and Israel. Similar events are now a matter of public record with the book and film *Argo*.

### **3 - A COLD BEER IN LONDON**

I walked into the *Twin Arms Pub*, my designated location for the first day pad pick up of my first Euro. I had an hour before the show and I was hungry. My style is to eat after seeing a play. So, I walked into the pub and ordered stout.

As I leaned against the bar, a young, obviously American couple came in and looked around for seats. There were none in the central area, and the ones in the back seemed a little sinister with a few big guys in leather jackets and tattoos controlling the space. The rear appeared off-limits to all but the local tattoos. So the girl said to the entire room in her commanding voice, "Let's sit over there." She was pointing at me.

#### **Honeymoon**

"Stephanie, I think—"

"What, David?" She gave him a look that told everyone watching who was in charge, David included, who just looked down at the floor without responding.

Stephanie wore skin-tight sepia slacks with a dazzling gold top and pearl necklace with her hair falling around her shoulders. She had a small dark wallet instead of a purse. Stephanie turned her patrician nose up when the boys in the back gave her the traditional catcalls.

David was lanky, 6 feet 1 inch, but stooped a bit because he had a thin, wiry build with a somewhat sunken chest. His chestnut hair was skilfully groomed. Almost any clothes would fit him well. He probably usually slinked into rooms unnoticed while his bride lighted up the place.

Now, David was looking bewildered, which emphasized the contrast between the two young Americans.

She walked with determination towards my table.

"I am starved," Stephanie announced to the room. A skinny little man in a dirty white shirt with a crane neck was working as the bar man. He ignored the other customers, rushed to Stephanie, wiping his pink raw hands on a dirty apron and doing his best to slick down his unruly dirt brown hair.

Stephanie surveyed the food offered behind the bar. A dirty glass skewer was turning a dry, hard, leather-looking piece of ham that looked as if it might be five days old. A few hard-boiled eggs were arrayed on a large white platter. Along the edges of the platter, there were some dry crackers crumbling from the heat of the skewer. It was too unappetizing to believe.

Stephanie looked up and spotted a wall menu written on a chalkboard in white, neat lettering offering various forms of hamburgers, steaks, and chips with salads. Before the barman could open his mouth, she said loudly and clearly, "Two hamburgers with no mustard or mayonnaise and one with only half a bun, and two cokes."

The barman froze. First, his long rat face just turned red. Then, he sputtered. "Lunch ta ov-aa." Stephanie wrinkled her nose. David piped in, "If lunch is over, what is available?"

Stephanie turned to face David; still a few paces back from the bar. "Did he say lunch is over"?

"Yup that is what he said, honey."

"David, you are quick with languages."

David had his hands in his pockets smiling. "Stop it, Steph, you've been to Europe 100 times, let it go." David, now in control, said to the barman as he moved onto a stool, "So, what ya got man"?

*Whoever You Are*

The barman had his composure back and was looking up and down the bar. “Well sin, until we soeve dinnah, this stuff on the bar ees alls we got.”

“Ok,” David said. “What about the eggs and ham”? Stephanie’s nose was wrinkling more.

The barman made his way to the ham and as he reached his hand in, I yelled. “Stop! That food is not fit for human consumption.”

Stephanie and David trained their eyes on me. Stephanie said in a raised stern voice, “Just who are you, a doctor or something?”

“No, I am not a medico,” I said.

“Well, what *does* one eat around here?” Stephanie was now on stage with the entire bar listening.

“Well, if you have time, there are lots of good restaurants nearby, especially Italian and Indian food.” I added, “I am going to see the *Mouse Trap* in less than an hour so please join me in a good heavy stout beer with some peanuts and potato chips from these plastic packages; catch dinner after the play. You can get some light food in the theatre too.”

Stephanie looked hard at me. “We’ll do as you say.”

The barman started to slink away when I said, “Two more stouts and throw us some peanuts and stuff, mate.”

I introduced myself as Chester Lake, the name on my travel documents. Over our beers, I learned that Stephanie Hoar has a Masters International Relations from Columbia, with her history degree at the University of Virginia, along with her Spanish, French, and Arabic language studies. David Stone, her husband, told me how they met at a Lacrosse match at Virginia while both were undergrads.



Stephanie Hoar was tired of her last name. It wasn't funny anymore. She'd been teased from the 4th grade on through grad school. New York kids are cruel apparently even at fancy upper Manhattan schools. Hoar was the name they had and she related how her mother said, "Be proud to wear it."

Apparently she was rather proud of at least her background, if not name, as she told me how Steven Calvin Hoar, her grandfather, had established the first Jewish up market law firm at the turn of the twentieth century. Now Hoar, Crain, and Muscovitz were *the* New York Law firm. Celebrities by the score found their way to the deep Persian carpet of HCM, as those in the know all called the firm, to get advice and counsel to get or protect their wealth.

Messy legal matters were not the firm specialty. Influence was. Occasionally, HCM found itself in court. That was a no-no. Court cases take time, and the result is uncertain but the right word here or there kept one out of court and out of deep civil suits that can ruin a movie star, football player, or banker's life. HCM specialized in preventive law as the founder Steven Calvin, or Cal as she said he liked to be called, coined the term. It meant pre-nuptials, investment counseling, pre-merger, and liquidation stuff for both firms and rich individuals. Wealthy New York extended to Washington DC on the south and Boston north. Los Angeles was kind of added on as a New York annex. The firm had big offices in DC, Boston and LA but no overseas operations. HCM had no taste for foreign stuff: too messy.

Stephanie's dad John David Hoar, Harvard, 1955, was now the Baron of the firm. She never saw him except on official vacations in the Catskills, or Jewish family get-togethers, or big-ticket affairs. She hardly knew him. So, she admitted that she rebelled and went off to the Ivy League of the South, the University of Virginia. She could have gone to Duke, William Mary or North Carolina but nowhere else. Going outside the official Ivy League was a rebellion enough she told me with a grin.

Stephanie had steely-eyed black hair, great legs, and a shape to die for. She stood 5 feet 10 inches but carried her body like Michael Jordan does. She turned every head, and she knew it.

Next to her was her new somewhat mousey cute husband David Stone (shortened from Stonescowsky by his father Karl).

It was easy to tell their origins. David wore a seersucker navy and white light weight jacket, steel grey slacks and opened collar light azure color shirt. David looked like a young MD on television who moms trust. That's because he was a freshly minted Cornell School of Medicine graduate. He worked his way through Penn as an undergrad on a small Lacrosse player scholarship. David had \$200,000 in school debt too. He had four years of residency before he could practice medicine. The honeymoon was timed between his planned residency in DC and Stephanie's job search at DC international think tanks.

I was on guard, so I just said I taught urban history at Cal and was on my way to a conference about cities in the First World War. I described how the First World War was the first to place city civilians in the line of fire. We were just warming up when I called out, "Curtain." We hurried off to the theatre. I reached into my coat pocket and pulled out my wallet, looked up at the bartender and said, "Can I pay in Euros?" He winked. I gave him a fifty, and he gave me back more than that fifty in several denominations as change; no one was looking.

At the Interval, we met in the upstairs snack area. I ordered just water and an ice cream. They acknowledge even deeper hunger, so I suggested they search out an Italian restaurant in the area after the theatre.

### **Destiny or Stupidity**

When I left the theatre, I walked slowly and purposely to the area that I'd recommended to the kids in the bar. I was seated in *Prego*, my favorite little restaurant with glass doors opening onto the street. The windows are open in warm weather, but it was not yet that warm this spring. I took a seat near the windows; there wasn't much of a crowd. I looked through the menu and found my cannelloni with a pleasant half carafe of Australian *Shiraz* wine. I looked out, and my kids were

walking by so I tapped on the window. The young couple jumped for joy and ran into the restaurant to sit with me.

I asked whether they were looking for me. They looked at one another and said in unison "Yes." We laughed. We agreed that we liked the play and all Agatha Christie's novels and short stories. We talked about whom we preferred to play the part of Hercule Poirot in the movies. Everyone's favorite was David Suchet playing Poirot. We seemed to laugh most of the evening.

### **Who is He?**

This man is fun, Stephanie thought. He is so much like Troy. Troy, the first man she loved. Troy was halfback with the Virginia football team. She was a cheerleader because there was no better, easier way to stay in shape and command attention. So, here was Troy again.

Alternatively, perchance, Troy was the dad she never had. Or maybe this man, Chester or whoever he is, as a father substitute for me? Who knew, but Steph felt good with Lake. Troy had been part of her rebellion, but she and Troy knew that their affair could only go so far. It was decent while it lasted. Troy was an excellent student. His dad was a lawyer too. Troy's dad even knew her dad vaguely. She learned that in the one visit she made to Troy Brown's home in suburban Maryland.

Troy's Dad was now a judge on the Maryland State Supreme Court. There were rumors of a US Supreme Court appointment. Troy's parents were polite, but Troy's mom was chilly, as they say; she was polite but not warm to Stephanie during the dinner in Judge Brown's home. Like her own parent's home, Troy's family had maids and cooks doing the housework. It was clear that pro football would be a small part of Troy's future before Ivy League Law School.

Sleeping with Troy was fine but living with Troy wouldn't happen. Her own dad wasn't even brave enough to come home for the planned dinner with Troy. Despite, or maybe because of, Dad's rudeness, Mom and Troy really hit it off well. Mom was crushed when Troy, because of football, couldn't commit to their wedding as originally planned. She couldn't understand how after two years and a Super Bowl ring

with the New England (Boston) Patriots, Troy couldn't miss a few days of the brutal sport. The wedding was the weekend before Troy's third, and Stephanie knew his last, year of pro football. Running backs are lucky to make three years without serious injury. Troy was taking the minute of fame as a ball player, and with one million in the bank, headed for Stanford Law School.

He and Steph had made this plan five years earlier when they were deeply in love and planning babies. Steph knew Troy couldn't miss even pre-season games for anyone unless it was the death of a near relative. Troy e-mailed Steph every day from pro football training camp, trying to keep their relationship alive. It was intense. But Steph realized she'd always come in second—something that didn't fit her personality in any way.

David wasn't a rebound. He was a bit of Troy in wit and persistence, but with David, Steph came first. David was a "Teddy Bear" as she called him privately. He would be a great father. Her dad, the Baron of Upper Eastside law, grunted, "At least he's a bit Jewish. But I bet he hasn't been to a synagogue since he was circumcised." She was glad David was a rational Jew who respected tradition but wasn't always in lock step with Israel.

As the conversation drifted, Steph liked this Chet more and more and the time flew. Later after the table clean-ups were going on around them, they all declared their tiredness. Chet said he would pay again. He reached into his jacket. His sports coat was draped over the chair next to him. As Chet pulled out his wallet from the garment inside pocket, they exchanged email addresses. Hugs were exchanged all around, and Chet left for the door. David headed for the toilet. Stephanie looked down; there was a black US passport on the floor near Mr. Lake's chair.

Stephanie's mouth was still open when David walked up behind her. "That man isn't who he says he is," she blurted.

"Well, who is he?" David said smiling. Then, David took the passport from her and said, "My God!"

Stephanie said, "We have to get it back to him now, let's run and catch him." They dashed out of the restaurant running back toward the theatre and the London Tube Station at Covent Garden. As they turned

the corner, they could see the man, Chester Lake or whoever he was, moving away fast. Then they saw another big man fall in behind him. The big man was keeping up. They ran as hard as Stephanie's high heels allowed. As they closed in, the sizable man was now through the turnstile and seeming to close in on their prey, Chester.

Stephanie jumped for the escalator hitting the big man hard with her body as she yelled down the elevator, "Mr. Whoever-you-are, we have your passport!" Stephanie's collision with the big man happened just as he seemed to be moving his arm up. She heard a crack—the ceiling tiles gave way above Lake's head as he disappeared into the tube tunnel. The big man yelped something in Russian. When Stephanie and David reached the bottom of the escalators Chester or whoever he was, was gone as well as the big Russian-speaking man who never came down the escalators.

David and Stephanie were out of breath, panting on the tube platform. They got in the train car, and both looked with wonderment at the US Diplomatic passport with a picture and the name, *Chester Lake*, US Department of State.

### **Moving on**

David liked Stephanie's head nestling in his chest. As the train slowed she looked up. "David, we are in something big. We have to follow it to the end. We are going to the US Embassy before we go to the British Museum. Hope you don't mind, sweetheart," she said.

David patted her head. "What was the word in Russian that big thug yelled? *Svoloch*? What does it mean?"

Stephanie snuggled closer and whispered, "It means 'bastard.'" She yawned and added, "David, you have a great ear for languages. I wonder what all this is about."

"And," David added, "Who is Chet really?"