



# Spectrum

*Alan Jacobson*

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## **Spectrum** Alan Jacobson

New York City: home to world-renowned museums, theater, restaurants, iconic sports franchises. Central Park. Wall Street. And an infamous serial killer who's terrorized the Big Apple for decades. The year is 1995 and the NYPD has just graduated a promising new patrol officer named Karen Vail. The rookie's first day on the job is anything but easy when she finds herself at the crime scene of a young woman murdered in an unusual manner. Vail is unsure of what she's looking at or what it means but it's a case that will weigh on her mind for nearly twenty years. As the years pass, Vail's career takes unexpected twists and turns as does the case that's come to be known as Hades. Now a skilled FBI profiler, will Vail be in a better position to catch the killer? Or will Hades prove to be Karen Vail's hell on earth? The character who has captivated readers worldwide and who won the praise of literary giants Michael Connelly, James Patterson, and Nelson DeMille returns in a story that captures the experiences that shaped the revered profiler and made her the top cop she is today."

## **Spectrum Details**

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Author : Alan Jacobson

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## From Reader Review Spectrum for online ebook

### Jim says

"Spectrum" is a very unique book that tells two stories at the same time until they crash into each other. On one hand we have a prequel to the Karen Vail story. Beginning in 1995 as a rookie NYPD cop, and through her maturation process in becoming a top profiler within the FBI. Karen's very first day on the job in uniform she's taken along by Sergeant Carmine Russo to a grisly homicide scene. On the other hand we have an immigrant Greek family arriving here in the states in the very early 1970's. Basil and Livana's struggle to make it here in this country is a very difficult story to be sure. When Basil is murdered by a member of the Castiglias mob crime family, this family will live in fear for the rest of their lives. Uncle Fedor, along with children Cassandra, Niklaus, and Dmitiri move out to Ellis Island to hide for 7 years. Meanwhile, the bodies, in the "Hades Slasher" case that Karen is investigating seem to keep growing. Strangely the Castiglia Family hit man who had murdered Basil becomes the only male victim of this serial killer. Even the Greek family's Cassandra falls victim to this killer. The killing spree moves into it's 19th year, with 10 victims before any real progress begins to come to light. How does Uncle Fedor, Niklaus, and Dmitiri fit into this killers plan ? Karen's career has progressed from NYPD homicide detective to FBI agent. After 9/11 Karen starts to become interested in the BAU. When the pieces of this puzzle start to fall into place the conclusion is somewhat like a crazy roller coaster ride. The intense pressure covering 20 years is stifling. The hardship the Greek family endures for almost 40 years is incredible. When the two narratives collide the expected explosion can really tear your heart out. This is a wonderful story of suspense, mystery, and incredible hardship. The characters seem to dance off of the pages into real life. How can you not root for this family, or Karen ? The story really fills in a lot of Karen's life background that the previous books didn't need to. A great read to be sure. 5 stars out of 5. Alan Jacobson's Karen Vail series packs a good punch. If you haven't read any of author Jacobson's Karen Vail books, you're missing out on some outstanding mystery/ thrillers. Don't be afraid to just jump right in.

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### Cathe Olson says

This book alternates between a Greek immigrant family in New York in the 1970's and the current investigation of a series of murders. Jacobson's character depictions were really poorly done. In the portions about the Greek immigrants in New York--if they didn't have such obviously foreign names, there would be no way to tell they were immigrants at all. There were no Greek sayings or accents or traditions or dress or anything that made them any different from anyone else. They were completely generic characters. And then the current story of Karen Veil with her perfect instincts that outshines all the men she works with. And then we meet Timmy who'd rather have a woman "between his legs." Give me a break. The mystery was somewhat intriguing but without believable characters it just didn't work for me.

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### Cathy says

I got this book from netgalley and I must say wow! I was transfixed. I totally loved it. We are taken from a poor Greek family in the early 70s in NY who get into trouble with the mob. And then we get to experience a serial killer case in the 90s also in NY

The relationships of the people in the family Livana, Basil, Dmitri, Cassandra and Niklaus and Fedor.. the life they tried so hard to make for themselves. Honest hardworking people.

The New York Police department faced with a serial killer and unable to solve the crime years and years go by. Karen Vail and Carmine Russo determined officers geez its almost 2 am I am going to dream about this book!

Great job Mr Jacobson

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## **Bob says**

A Page-Turner!

Spectrum, featuring FBI Profiler Karen Vail, is my first book by Alan Jacobson and it won't be my last.

Spectrum is actually a good book to begin this series with since it goes back and forth in time between 1995 -- when Vail was a rookie police officer with the NYPD involved in a homicide case known as Hades that has haunted her for the next twenty or so years -- to the present, where she is a highly-skilled FBI Profiler. As such, the first-time reader gets to know Vail and the course her career has taken over time without having to have first read the previous five books in the series.

Over the years the reader comes to learn that Vail is still tormented by Hades, as the body count of women killed by this serial killer has gotten higher and higher.

Jacobson does a good job in keeping the reader engrossed in this story, as it has more than its fair share of twists and turns. Further, Jacobson provides the reader with a cast of credible and well-developed characters.

While not major criticisms, I did deduct one star from my rating of Spectrum because I felt Jacobson did at times overload the story with too much information pertaining to the behavioral analysis done by Vail and her Unit, and a few unbelievable coincidences.

Overall, I enjoyed Spectrum and would recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good, fast-paced mystery with an interesting, believable and likable main character.

I received an advance eCopy of Spectrum from Open Road Integrated Media in return for an honest, unbiased review.

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## **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

I love crime fiction, I especially love crime fiction when an FBI Profiler is featured in the book. So shoot me, I love this stuff. Getting into the psyche of the killer and looking at the crime scene from different angles. Awesome, I am a sucker for this type of crime novel. This is my first read by Alan Jacobson, I read no reviews prior so went in with my expectations wide open. This is book six in the Karen Vail series, but I felt it read just fine as a stand alone novel.

*The year is 1995 and the NYPD has just graduated a promising new patrol officer named Karen Vail. The rookie's first day on the job is anything but easy when she finds herself at the crime scene of a young woman murdered in an unusual manner. Vail is unsure of what she's looking at or what it means—but it's a case that will weigh on her mind for nearly twenty years.*

*As the years pass, Vail's career takes unexpected twists and turns—as does the case that's come to be known as Hades. Now a skilled FBI profiler, will Vail be in a better position to catch the killer? Or will Hades prove to be Karen Vail's hell on earth?*

Okay, so the book switches timelines featuring Karen Vail's career path, we kick off with her as a rookie cop in the NYPD and watch it swirl upwards to her crowning glory of making it as a Profiler with the FBI. For the most part this was done really well, but towards the end of the book the time-hopping is rapid and years and years go in-between short chapters of happenings, for that part, I felt it was a bit too much fast forwarding.

I was expecting the book to have a much more dynamic fast pace than what it did, it really doesn't kick into high gear until after at least half way through and I have to admit for the first part I was wondering if it was going to hold me all the way. It did. Because when it does kick up a notch, it's good, fast paced and a lot more interesting.

At the same time as we share in Karen Vail's career path over a timeline hop, we do the same with a Greek family who have a crime fall upon their lives that changes it forever. For a while I was wondering why this family even featured in the book and there is nothing that distinguishes them as Greek even, not with speech, customs, food, traditions. But there must be a connection I thought, and there was, it gets revealed when the two timelines start to meet up like train tracks, they intersect and things get really dynamic from that point.

**For 20 years Karen has been hunting the same serial killer that she first encountered as a rookie cop, it's a killer who has evaded police and FBI efforts for a very long time. Karen is one of the first and few NYPD police officers to start to talk about profiling and looking at the psychology of the kills, for this she is ridiculed by fellow police officers that think it's all "new age" gobblydegook. She's a tough girl is Karen, she stands firm with a lot of rude, disrespectful male officers. Not easy to do.**

I really liked Karen as a character, she develops well in the book, in fact overall most of the characters are written well, there is quite a few of them too, so you need to concentrate and keep your eye on the ball. The book oozes imagery and descriptions of New York City, I could hear the accent, hear the noises, imagine the setting. It was really well done creating that realistic backdrop.

Karen is privy to seeing the devastating moment of the plane crashing into the World Trade Centre whilst she is investigating a crime scene from a high building some miles away. The writing and atmosphere of the terror and horror from that moment in our history was a powerful touch in the book, again another way the author has added some authenticity to the book's setting in New York.

**Overall I enjoyed this book, but enjoyed it a lot more past the half way point, up until then I was just meandering with it and it was a 3 star read, the overall book is a 4 star when I put it all together. I had guessed the killer correctly towards the last third of the book, some will, some won't.**

*I received a copy of this book thanks to the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Many thanks.*

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## Darcy says

I really liked the 3 different distinct timelines of this one and how the story unfolded.

We have the past, where things are set up. I really liked this part, but I felt like it was just dropped. I wish that we would have gotten more. Then we have the middle timeline, which was fascinating as this is where we got to see Karen grow as a law enforcement officer and how this case in particular left its mark on her. Then there was the present where the killer was finally caught. It was interesting how even in the present Karen still ran into walls, especially as some of those walls were people that had previously been in her corner.

I had guessed the killer pretty early on and sort of felt like things were wrapped up abruptly. I wanted to know more about why they chose what they did and how they managed to hide things for so many years.

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## Mommacat says

When I downloaded SPECTRUM, I knew that this book was part of a series and I was anxious to see how this author would handle that. So many writers get caught up in the outline trap that the first 10% of their novel is wasted repetitive space to make sure that the reader can pick any book in the series and enjoy. Oddly enough, this novel chronicled Karen Vail's beginnings as a rookie police officer and her rise in the department. There are two clear storylines. Karen's, and the tale of the serial killer she spends her career trying to catch.

Alan Jacobson weaves a tight tale that anyone who enjoys police procedurals would want to read. I particularly enjoyed the fact that he created a female character that wasn't afraid to be a woman. She was married and had a family. While that may have created its own problems, that mirrors real life and the author did a fine job.

I received an e-arc of this book from Netgalley in exchange for my review.

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## A Reader's Heaven says

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*New York City: home to world-renowned museums, theater, restaurants, iconic sports franchises. Central Park. Wall Street. And an infamous serial killer who's terrorized the Big Apple for decades.*

*The year is 1995 and the NYPD has just graduated a promising new patrol officer named Karen Vail. The rookie's first day on the job is anything but easy when she finds herself at the crime scene of a young woman murdered in an unusual manner. Vail is unsure of what she's looking at or what it means—but it's a case that will weigh on her mind for nearly twenty years.*

*As the years pass, Vail's career takes unexpected twists and turns—as does the case that's come to be known as Hades. Now a skilled FBI profiler, will Vail be in a better position to catch the killer? Or will Hades prove to be Karen Vail's hell on earth?*

I have read the first few Karen Vail stories but missed the last couple - but not to fear, that isn't even a

problem as this book gives us a bit of a timeline for Karen's rise through the ranks and gives us some very good detail about her career.

This timeline happens to coincide with a rather nasty serial killer who is stalking the streets of New York City. Apart from being the epitome of locations for crime fiction, I loved the sense of place the author brings to his story. While it did make the start of the book a bit slow, action-wise, it really does pick up in the second half.

The best thing, though, about this story is the author's treatment of Karen - she is a female rising through the ranks of the NYPD. She doesn't have it easy, she is treated poorly at times, but her strength of character, and obvious skills, come to the fore. She is one of the best female crime characters I have read.

The plot itself is tremendously good, even if it does sound a little mundane. Don't let the blurb put you off. A very well-written story that deserves to be read!

Paul  
ARH

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### **Linda Strong says**

For those of you who have read all the Karen Vail series books, you're in for a real treat with SPECTRUM. If you haven't read them, this will give you a good idea why you should.

SPECTRUM takes us back to 1995 .. the early days of Karen Vail when she was a brand new rookie for the NYPD. We get to go along for the trip that molds her into the Karen Vail we know today ... an FBI agent.

The books swings from present day back to her first day on the job, where she's tapped by Detective Russo and becomes her mentor - her rabbi - her friend - to work on a homicide case. Who knew the culprit would not only continue his killing spree, but to do it over a span of 20+ years. The case tortures Karen through the years as the number of women who are brutally killed mounts.

We are taken back and forth between past years and current year which allows the reader to see how those years were spent not only for Karen, but also a very disturbed killer.

Alan Jacobson's books never fail and are never disappointing. Lots of action and energy from the first page to the last. A really strong story with true to life characters where personal and professional meld. And the ending is spot-on!

I give it 5 stars and highly recommend this book and this author. It just doesn't get any better! Here's hoping that Karen's travels will continue.

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### **Becky says**

Thought it had it figured out but I was wrong. Very hard to put down.

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## **S says**

I wanted to like this book a whole lot more than I did, but I just couldn't find a way to justify a higher rating.

Overall I enjoyed the story. It was interesting and kept my attention through to the end. The ending was not terribly surprising to me, but it was well-written nonetheless. I think where this author really shines is in his research. These descriptions are outstanding in their depth, it felt like he devoted a great deal of energy in getting it correct. I had no idea about the extent of the NYPD surveillance of the public through the Domain Awareness Program. Terrifying to realize how much the government monitors us!!

However, there are problems with it. The character descriptions are terribly shallow ( and typically non-existent). The Greek immigrant family members felt especially like generic characters created to fill up space rather than real people. There were no cultural references to set them apart like language, clothing, physical features, etc. I also still have no real sense of what the main character ( Karen Vail) looks like beyond red hair (mentioned in passing sometime after chapter 5) and attractive. There are also scant descriptions of the environment and places where the action takes place. Was it windy? Cold? Bright? Cloudy? These details really help make a story feel complete, and since they were almost entirely lacking in the novel I felt it seriously hurt the novel as well. I suppose that some people may not care, but for me I enjoy a novel more if I feel more fully immersed in the character and their surroundings through the descriptions. It is also possible that the previous novels in this series had extensive descriptions that I missed here.

I received a copy of this book to peruse through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Pat says**

I'm so glad Alan Jacobson wrote this book. It was quite epic. I've read all the previous Karen Vail books but this, while not a prequel because it starts and finishes in the present day, gives you the story of Karen's early career in the NYPD and her move to the FBI.

She was somewhat mentored by Russo in the NYPD and ended up being part of the team investigating the first killing of the serial killer who came to be known as Hades. She has been chasing him for the last 20 years. In fact that's how the book starts, Russo calls her to say they've got another one and does she want in? Does she what!!

There is also the saga of a Greek family that goes back to the 1970s. You're not sure how this is going to tie in to the narration but you're confident that it will all come together. The Greek family has some horrendous bad luck which leads them to flee from their community and hide out in a deserted building on Ellis Island for many years.

With his characteristic panache Jacobson ties all these threads together in a very satisfying finale. My review doesn't do this book justice. It was quite outstanding and I enjoyed it immensely.

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## **Heather says**

Spectrum, by Alan Jacobson, is a part of his Karen Vail series. She's a celebrated profiler, but before she joined the FBI she was a New York City cop. There she encountered a seemingly unsolvable serial killer mystery, the case that got her interested in profiling to begin with. Spectrum covers the entire time frame from her first rookie days until the case comes to a head a couple of decades later. It also covers the ups and downs of a family—in parallel with the cops' work even though it came much earlier in time. I found this confusing and frustrating. Wait... she married whom? There was a divorce in there somewhere? Really? Who's this new detective? And then... Agh. It was particularly difficult because the narrative would jump years at a time.

There's one thing I found even more confusing than the wacky time jumps. That is, the narrative is in third person, but Karen's thoughts are continually injected in first person. Normally if someone did this they'd at least italicize the thoughts to set them off. Instead I had to constantly backtrack to figure out whether I was reading internal dialogue or just dialogue. Note however that this is an advance copy, so my fingers are crossed that this might be fixed by publication; there was a lot of it and the book is getting released soon, though, so I'm dubious.

I really enjoyed the characters. There are inevitable problems at first due to Karen's gender; although I understand that this was appropriate to the depicted time period, it was also frustrating. I did enjoy watching as some of the people around Karen gradually came to see her as something other than just her gender. Those characters that made it through the entire long course of the book were good. There was some depth, and some fun banter.

The hunt for the killer (once it caught up with the present day) held plenty of tension, some good red herrings, and enjoyable reveals. There's a great chase scene that pulled me in quite well, with some nifty use of modern gadgets.

The organization of Spectrum really threw me for a loop, but the story is excellent.

NOTE: review book provided by publisher.

For a longer version of this review visit my site: <http://www.errantdreams.com/2014/09/r...>

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## **Kimberly says**

This is the first book I have read in the Karen Vail series, so I was a little concerned at first as to how well I would pick up on things, or if I would feel that I was missing something vital from previous books. I was honestly surprised when the book started out with Karen as SHE began her work in the police department. This tactic really helped me get a feel for her character, as she moved forward in her career.

I also enjoyed how the author chronicled the serial killer's life, as it paralleled Karen's. By the time we are caught up to the present, we had a fast-moving thriller that I didn't want to put down. Also worthy of note, is the way Jacobson portrayed Karen's role both as a woman, and an FBI profiler, and how the attitudes towards her changed as the years went on.

Overall, I feel that for anyone new to this series, SPECTRUM is actually a good place to start, as we have all of the background information that leads up to Karen Vail's present position.

Recommended.

\*I received and advanced reader's copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.\*

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### **comfort says**

This story goes back to the beginning of Karen's career in the police force and her change over to the FBI. One of those back and forth through the years stories, that does seem to be able to keep the story-lines straight and the reader not confused.

When Karen is first seen she is called to a murder approx 20 years (can't remember but thereabouts) prior to the present day. The killings from this killer keep appearing throughout the following years and each time Karen is called out to have a look at the latest victim.

It is the story of a Greek family and their friend and his son, who undergo a tragedy in the 1970's and this follows them throughout the rest of their lives. Three children and two adults growing up together illegally on Ellis Island (they are squatting) on the Govt. property for years to keep out of harms way.

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