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FBI-agent-turned-bricklayer Steve Vail once helped the FBI solve a brilliant extortion plot. It was supposed to be a one-and-done deal. But when he's in Washington, D.C., to see Kate Bannon- an FBI assistant director- on what he thinks will be a romantic New Year's Eve date, suddenly things get complicated. The FBI has another unsolvable problem, and it has Vail's name written all over it.

## Agent X Details

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# From Reader Review Agent X for online ebook

## Shelley says

Plot Summary: Ex-FBI agent Steve Vail navigates a maze of hidden codes and brain-teasing puzzles to stay hot on the trail of a band of Russian spies in this breathtaking follow-up to his New York Times bestselling debut, *The Bricklayer*

FBI-agent-turned-bricklayer Steve Vail once helped the FBI solve a brilliant extortion plot. It was supposed to be a one-and-done deal. But when he's in Washington, D.C., to see Kate Bannon - an FBI assistant director - on what he thinks will be a romantic New Year's Eve date, suddenly things get complicated. The FBI has another unsolvable problem, and it has Vail's name written all over it.

A man known as Calculus, an officer at the Russian embassy, has approached the FBI claiming that he has a list of Americans who are selling confidential information to the Russian SVR. In exchange for the list, he is asking for a quarter of a million dollars for each traitor the FBI apprehends. But then Calculus informs the FBI that he has been swiftly recalled to Moscow, and the Bureau suspects the worst: the Russians have discovered what Calculus is up to, probably have access to his list, and will be hunting the traitors to kill them unless the FBI can find them first.

The FBI realizes that it has to keep the operation quiet. Once again, Vail is the perfect man, along with Kate Bannon, who would be anyone's first pick for help on an impossibly dangerous case. But finding the traitors isn't going to be easy. In fact, it's going to be downright deadly. And if the Bricklayer survives, he will have to come up with a few tricks of his own.

Review: From the outset of this book where Kate Bannon, Assistant Deputy Director of the FBI, is nearly killed by noxious gas from her own vehicle, the storyline caught my attention. Kate has decided to move on without her life without Steve Vail, who she partnered up with during the Pentad Investigation, and got a nice promotion out of it. Kate is forced into making several choices and decisions in this book, especially when she is named as a spy and traitor for the Russians.

When Steve Vail, a former FBI agent, now Bricklayer and person most responsible for stopping a group known as Pentad in it's tracks 6 months previously, arrives in DC, he is suddenly thrown into several investigations. He assists in bring home two kidnapped children to their parents, and then finds himself embroiled in a How's Who of spies running rampant about the NSA, CIA, and FBI. He's also asked by FBI friend Lucas Burksaw, who he worked with in Detroit, for help in locating a missing FBI agent named Sandra Brunson. And here all he was supposed to be doing is going to a New Years Eve Party with Kate, who told him to stay home!

Review: I honestly like Noah's writing style and the character of Steve Vail. There are plenty of twists and turns, and you're not really sure who the bad guy is until nearly the end of the book.

Boyd is also a former FBI agent, so he knows the ins and outs of the department. Vail has the determination of a pitbull when it comes to solving cases. His interaction with Kate Bannon, however, leaves lots to be desired. He seemingly can't trust anyone, and hates authority figures with a passion. The only reason he helps the FBI in this book is because Kate is nearly killed.

Vail, and Lucas interactions are nicely written and they make alot of sense. The banter between them is a

condition that they actually trust each other explicitly with each others safety.

Trying not to give too many secrets away and still rate this story is a bit unusual to me. Steve travels from DC to Chicago attempt to find out more information about the spies. Then flies to Miami where he finds unusual help from the CIA after discovering that the FBI has missed a bunch of spies still unaccounted for.

The ending I will leave alone, except to say, we shouldn't get our hopes up that Vail and Kate will be happily ever after.

Releases February 1st 2011 \*\*recvd ARC from publisher\*\*\* Book#2 in the Steve Vail series.

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### **Barbara says**

Selfish of me, but I was so sorry to learn that "Noah Boyd" died last month. I really like the Steve Vail character--as much as Jack Reacher--and had hoped for many more books.

p.220 Great line--attitude:

"Whatever misguided thing you are about to do, I'm in."

Complex, maybe even a bit convoluted, but I really like the characters.

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### **Larry says**

This is Noah Boyd's second book. In his initial book he introduced us to ex FBI Agent Steve Vail and Steve is the main focus of this book. Boyd is an excellent writer with many twists and turns in the plot and story line that require the unique abilities of Steve Vail. I really have enjoyed these books and am anxiously awaiting the next book. The books combines international spy story lines, FBI and government moles, bad FBI leadership and a few other things. Noah Boyd is ex FBI and I can imagine how the FBI feels about how we writes about some of their leadership. The reason Steve Vail is ex FBI is that he cannot stomach or follow the incompetence of those FBI Agents placed over him. He is also a pretty impressive "maverick" in how he comes up with solutions to the problems he is faces with. Very ingenious stuff. Highly recommend this author and his books.

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### **Paul Pessolano says**

Many of you read Noah Boyd's first mystery/thriller, "The Bricklayer" last year. It was not only a bestseller but one of the best mystery/thrillers of the year.

Noah, is an ex-FBI agent that spent twenty years with the Bureau and has been involved in many high profile cases, including the Green River Killer case and the Highland Park Stangler case (which he is credited for solving).

Steve Vail is an ex-FBI agent, that is now earning a living as a bricklayer, that left the service because he is

very strong minded. He did not like the bureaucratic red tape that hindered him in solving cases. He goes right for the jugular.

Steve goes to Washington to visit Kate Bannon, an FBI agent, for what he hopes is a New Years Eve party and a romantic interlude with Kate.

Steve gets embroiled in several cases that include the kidnapping of a young boy, a missing FBI agent, and a spy ring.

Calculus, an intelligent officer with the Russian Embassy, has contacted the FBI about several Americans who are supplying confidential information to the Russians. However, Calculus disappears before the FBI can contact him.

Steve discovers that Calculus has left behind codes that will lead him to the traitors, if he can unlock the codes. Each code leads Steve to one traitor and a new code is used to lead him to the next one. The only trouble is every time Steve gets close to the traitor, the traitor winds up dead.

There is plenty of action and some really neat clues to solve that leads the reader from one suspect to another. The light banter between Steve and Kate add a little comedy and fun to an otherwise deadly game.

A must read for those who have read "The Bricklayer", and for those who haven't, don't miss these two great mysteries.

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## **Bill Khaemba says**

**“We are men who find chess fascinating. Did you expect our lives to be secretly interesting?”  
? Noah Boyd, Agent X**

Truly a surprise spy book that was thrilling and amazingly constructed, thoroughly enjoyed the mystery aspect of the book. Steve Vail is such a fun investigative character, that had a hint of sass and always never following the rules, it was so fun to follow his character. The clues left by the Russian spy about top government operatives selling government secrets to the Russians was just a fun ride.

Sadly the author **Noah Boyd** passed away, but this book was magnificent and will live on and put a smile on my face.

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## **Dylan Edwards says**

If you enjoyed The Bricklayer ( I definitely did !) then you will really enjoy this ...a more defined and complex novel which keeps you on the edge on your seat

I am right in reading that Mr Boyd is no longer with us .....

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## **Glen says**

A Russian offers the FBI a list of names of Americans giving information to the SVR, or whatever they're calling the KGB these days. Said Russian is recalled to his country, and the FBI has to get the list before the KGB finds out and begins killing the those listed.

I'll call it a mid-tier book for this sort of thing.

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## **James says**

It was good to get back to a simple ol' book that just entertained, and lacked all the drama and majesty of the books I have been reading lately. This book was fun, entertaining and reasonably well written, managing to captivate me and - as any good crime thriller should - confuse the hell out of me right up to the end. Okay, so it isn't an amazing book. But I did 'like it', and it was definitely worth the read.

The characters were interesting, with the banter between the characters being fun and light-hearted; really entertaining. Though, I can't help but ask if there are people in real life who banter like that - I mean, it's perfectly done; the wording, the timing and the subject. I just... I know that it is perfected for the book, but as much as I like it I find it hard to believe that 'real people' speak like that - no matter how much we might want to.

Then you had the plot. I have already said that this book managed to keep the secrets hidden until the end - and the with the prescience I have developed regarding books lately that is quite something. I liked the romantic plot and felt that it added a nice emotional package to the tense, nail biting thriller/action parts; all oh which were well written, fun and well thought out.

Of course, that's not to say that this book didn't have flaws. As with most crime/thriller books author's have to be wary of not becoming obvious when writing these books, and unfortunately a lot of them make their characters dumb to compensate a little; and this bugs me. I.E (view spoiler)

However, this is still a fun read. Its the sort of book you might call a beach-read, or a holiday book you read whilst travelling. It is fun, serious... but not demanding. Which is always nice when you are trying to relax.

So if you are looking for a holiday read, a quick book or just a fun read this is your book [N.B. there is a predecessor].

Have Fun Reading.

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## **Matt says**

Boyd returns with another exciting installment in his Bricklayer series (for lack of a better name), that equals, if not tops, the last one. Full of even more intrigue and drama, the book practically sells itself with its plot and character development. While it did have some cheesy moments in the dialogue, the story more than

made up for it. With three mini-stories woven into one, we can see Steve Vail in numerous lights and really get to the core of the character's development. While the story is nothing unique and the characters are nothing out of left field, the entire book comes together so well and the story is so well done that it cannot really be compared to anything else in its genre.

I was disappointed to learn that Boyd passed away not long after this book's release, so there will be no more real Vail to be had. It is sad, in a way, as I was just getting to like and enjoy the characters and the storylines, which wove some interesting tales. That said, this brief journey into the world was a decent one and well worth the invested time, should the reader have a spare week or two.

Kudos, Mr. Boyd. You wrote some great stuff and I thoroughly enjoyed it. May your estate not go the way of Robert Ludlum and let some second rate writer try to fill your shoes.

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### **Mekerei says**

[image error]

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### **Rob Kitchin says**

I like a good spy thriller novel every now and again. In my teens I read pretty much nothing else – Len Deighton, John Le Carre, Ted Allbeury, Graham Greene, amongst others. So I was quite looking forward to Agent X. In my view it was the literary equivalent of a Steven Seagal movie. The prose was workmanlike and flat and the dialogue wooden, lifeless and corny. The characters have no depth and their back stories are practically none existent. There is barely any chemistry between the leads, despite their supposed attraction. The plot is totally unbelievable, both in premise and its unfolding, with Vail solving a whole series of very difficult puzzles in a matter of seconds, undertaking James Bondesque escapes where the baddies really should have finished him off several times, and relying on a couple of unlikely coincidences. That said, the plot and pace is what got me to the end of the book. If you can suspend your sense of reality and just enjoy this as a corny spy blockbuster then this might be for you. Personally, I'm still with Deighton, Le Carre, Allbeury, Greene and co where plot, prose, atmosphere, characters, sense of place and so on are paramount.

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### **Tim says**

No better than an average yarn with a tediously slow pace around solving a mystery and sexual interactions.  
4 of 10 stars

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### **Sally Gawne says**

Noah Boyd's life makes up for a remarkably authentic background for this book. His own life was a former FBI agent and his character of Steve Vail, aka Bricklayer was derived from his father's occupation. As I did not read his first book, this is my thought of where Bricklayer came from. He was a disenchanted

FBI agent and rules got in his way of doing his job effectively. Therefore, Steve Vail becomes a nomad with the skill of an office of the law but none of the stops. Despite this, it does stand on its own without having read the first book.

Kate Banning starts the story as someone who knows something or has something someone wants. The first pages get you hooked. You do not have to wait until page 100 to get into this story. The story moved up, down, and sideways. When you think that is it, something else pops up to grab your attention.

The book is very readable. , Even though Steve is a superman hero, his has Clark Kent's romantic skills with Kate and as a result the romance falls flat in the story.

The cover is quite eye catching and would make a great Mark Valley movie!

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## **Steve Dennie says**

“Agent X” (February 2011) is the second bestselling novel under the name Noah Boyd, which is a pen name of Paul Lindsey. Lindsey, who wrote a total of 7 novels, served as a Marine officer in Vietnam and then worked 20 years with the FBI. Unfortunately, he died at age 68 in September 2011 after a battle with leukemia. So this series may go no further.

Both Noah Boyd books revolve around former FBI agent Steve Vail, who now works as a freelance bricklayer in Chicago (thus the title of the first Boyd book, “The Bricklayer“). In both books, he gets dragged into complex criminal plots, and works alongside FBI agent and love interest Kate Bannon. They are an interesting team.

The defining characteristic of Vail is that he distrusts authority—especially in the FBI, which burned him. He's the prototypical loner, the anti-establishment hero who gets things done by working outside the system. Think of a cerebral Dirty Harry with an FBI badge.

In Agent X, a Russian spy known as Calculus offers to give the FBI a list of Americans who are trading secrets to the Russians. Calculus is recalled to Moscow, a sign that he's been found out. But Calculus left a series of cryptic clues—extremely cryptic—to the identities of the American traitors. The FBI needs to find these moles before the Russians start killing them off (to avoid embarrassment at being caught spying).

Vail comes to Washington DC to see Kate Bannon, and both are recruited for this urgent investigation. The American turncoats keep getting killed, and there are gun battles with the bad guys. But they keep at it.

The plot is quite complex. Calculus left very complicated clues, but Vail, of course, cracks them. However, things get so complicated that I, simpleton reader that I am, got confused at various stages. In some cases, I just gave up trying to keep things straight or understand what was happening, figuring it probably didn't matter. And it didn't. It would have been a better book, and much more believable, without this treasure hunt.

Paul Lindsey, aka Noah Boyd

“Agent X” tells us a lot more about about Steve Vail, helping us understand why he is the way he is. That was nice. The relationship with Kate Bannon is quite back-and-forth and charged in this book (as it was, actually, in “The Bricklayer”), and for good measure Vail's former partner, Luke Bursaw, is brought into the



investigation. Through him, we learn a lot of Vail's back story.

Boyd also uses much more dialogue, and tries to be witty in the banter between Vail, Bannon, and Bursaw. There is a kernel of cleverness in the dialogue, but too much of it sounds wooden, even corny. Like something I would write. Give the same conversation to Lee Child or Robert Parker, and it would work perfectly. Boyd is just terribly clunky with dialogue. I found myself cringing.

But he's not clunky with pacing, or sparse when it comes to action. He gets too fancy, to the point of being confusing and unbelievable with the Calculus clues (which just weren't necessary). But I could deal with that, because it was still a fun ride.

"Agent X" was a good book, but not as good as "The Bricklayer." I only recommend it with some caveats. However, if Paul Lindsey had a third bricklayer book in the can before he died, I'll probably read it.

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### Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

This is a fable meant to teach that you should **never trust a misogynistic Lithuanian chess master**. I swear I am not making this up. Read the book if you don't believe me.

It's nice to see a new author improving his game. This one's a lot meatier than the first Steve Vail book, *The Bricklayer*. I'd still like to have more depth in the personal backgrounds of the main characters, though. *Agent X* involves a deadly scavenger hunt created by a Russian spy called Calculus. The clues lead FBI agents Steve Vail and Kate Bannon from one double agent to the next, but every time they get to the next double agent, that person is killed.

I was all ready to give this book four stars. I liked the greater plot depth and sophistication as compared to the first one in the series. Then came the end, which was very confusing and wrapped up too quickly and tidily. Good story, fast pace, interesting characters, and some fun, playful dialogue. I give it 3.5 stars. It's worth mentioning that this series has no foul language and no sex scenes. If you're looking for a clean(er) mystery/thriller series, give this one a whirl.

The author, "Noah Boyd," is a former FBI agent, so we know his name can't really be "Noah Boyd," right? I started rearranging the letters in NOAH BOYD to see if I could figure out something about who really writes these books. Here are some possibilities:

- 1)"A. H. Nobody": The novels are randomly generated by computers.
  - 2)"Honda Boy": The author is that bored retired FBI agent blowing through your neighborhood at midnight on his noisy motorbike. Buy the book, so he can afford a car and you can get your beauty rest.
  - 3)"Hobo Andy": The author is the homeless man warming his beans over a trash fire under the railroad trestle. Go buy the book right now. The poor guy needs the money for his next bottle of Thunderbird.
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