

Book Review: First Lie Wins
By Ashley Elston

Who is Evie Porter? For that matter, who are Lucca Marino, Izzy Williams, Mia Bianchi, Helen White and Wendy Wallace?

Actually, they're all the same person, technically. Because Evie Porter changes her identity almost as frequently as people change their underwear. And that makes "First Lie Wins" from author Ashley Elston a fast-paced, fun-to-read, psychological thriller.

But let's address that first question.

Evie Porter is a ghost. She assumes various identities as assigned by her mysterious boss, Mr. Smith, whom she knows very little about. She's given an identity, a place to be, an unsuspecting mark, and lastly, the nature of the job. Once her mission is accomplished, she – or rather, that identity – disappears from the face of the earth.

Evie, her most recent identity, has worked for Mr. Smith for nearly 10 years, and has become his most reliable asset. But after she appears to botch her most recent job, she senses Mr. Smith has lost faith and trust in her. Combined with her growing affection for her current mark, Ryan Sumner, and her desire to lead a more normal existence, Evie is pressed to use all her specialized skills and accumulated resources in her greatest challenge yet.

First she must extricate herself from her past. And you don't just walk away from Mr. Smith. But Evie teams with Devon, a technology whiz, to pull out all the stops in turning the tables on Mr. Smith.

I love a book that keeps me guessing, and I lost track of how many times I paused and said to myself, "Whoa, didn't see that coming." Elston's writing and plot twists will

keep you on your toes. It's an exceptional game of cat and mouse that will have you frequently wondering where the truth ends and the lies begin.

I've seen some reviewers comment that the flashback timeframes and various aliases become confusing. In my opinion, it's just the opposite. The seamlessly alternating timeframes from present day to various points in Evie's past provide a clearer understanding of who this woman is. We understand what makes her so fragile yet tough as nails at the same time. It all comes together in a fairly explosive final 30 pages that fully satisfy the anticipation.

And let's not forget the white origami swan motif. What a powerful visual communication tool it becomes.

"First Lie Wins" is Elston's debut adult novel, having previously written six young adult novels. And she certainly has entered this new genre with a bang.

I give "First Lie Wins" 5 out of 5 stars. If you're a fan of plot-twisting, psychological thrillers, you will not want to miss this one. I welcome your thoughts if you check it out.