

The Blast

Joseph Matthews

San Francisco, 1916. The streets roiling: pitched battles between radical workers and the henchmen of industrial barons, and between a vibrant, largely Italian immigrant anarchist milieu and the forces of state and church. All in the looming shadow of Europe's raging war, and of a fierce struggle over whether the U.S. should commit its might, and human fodder, to the slaughter in the trenches.

Into this maelstrom arrives Kate Jameson, a novice envoy from Washington tasked to secretly investigate the tenor of support for war entry among San Francisco's business elite. She's also hoping to glimpse her wayward daughter, Maggie, whose last message to Kate had come from there. And, too, she's seeking the ghost of her husband Jamey, who fifteen years earlier had landed there upon his return, shattered, from his part in the U.S. occupation of the Philippines.

Arriving back in the city at the same moment is Baldo Cavanaugh, a Sicilian-Irish son of San Francisco whose militant beliefs and special skills have led him time and again to the violent extremes of the city's turbulent history. And who now must confront the doubts and demons of his own character, which he'd sought to escape by fleeing the city three years before.

This stunning tale explores how these two seemingly disparate characters become engaged with the city's and nation's turmoil, and with the complexities of their related pasts in Boston, Dublin, London, Cuba, and the Philippines. A vivid picture of a city and a moment, the novel brilliantly reveals the explosive admixture of the deeply personal and the deeply political.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Matthews was born in Boston, raised there and in California, and has lived for many years in San Francisco. Formerly a criminal defense lawyer, he is author of the novels *Everyone Has Their Reasons* and *Shades of Resistance*, the story collection *The Lawyer Who Blew Up His Desk*, and the post-September 11 political analysis *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (with Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, and Michael Watts).

ACCOLADES

"A novel full of heart and verve. Strikers, spies, propagandists, anarchists, immigrants, suffragettes, and provocateurs—schemers and dreamers all—converge in this portrait of turbulent pre-World War I San Francisco. Part political drama, part family mystery, *The Blast* is vividly imagined, a quintessentially American story of power and corruption, solidarity and sabotage."

—Cara Hoffman, author of *Running*

"*The Blast* is quite simply a tour de force. Matthews brings to life a lost world of radicalism, in a riveting story that ripples out across multiple continents, with the entanglements of the personal and the political squarely in his sights. He has a keen ear for the passions, large and small, that impel women and men to take matters into their own hands. This is a novel for our troubled times."

—Sasha Lilly, author of *Catastrophism*

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—CARA HOFFMAN, author of *Running*

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A NOVEL

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SUBJECT CATEGORY

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War I / Political Thriller

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