



**Cardin, C.R.**

**CASE STUDY**

Evolution Press (291 pp.)

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The promising first installment in Cardin's planned *Taylor Case* mystery series.

Dr. Taylor Case, professor of forensic science at Georgetown University, has been obsessed with child predators since her brother David was abducted when they were children. At night, the professor masquerades as "Hunter," tracking down those who exploit children by pretending to be one of them. When her young nephew's friend is kidnapped from his yard, Taylor deepens her involvement in the underworld of child pornographers and predators. But that makes her the target of some very dangerous people and brings the FBI to her doorstep, as they're uncertain on which side of the law Taylor is operating. Her investigation into child exploitation is not the only aspect of her double life—she keeps her sexual preferences a secret from her hypercritical, overbearing father. As entranced as she is by her new love interest, the mesmerizing female Czech art authenticator Alex Haas, Taylor has doubts about her honesty. Cardin takes the reader on a gritty, disturbing journey to a world most would prefer not to know—populated by those who get their kicks from and make obscene amounts of money off perversion. Despite the chilling realism of the story, the author imbues the plot with some cautious optimism, not just for Taylor but for those she struggles to save. Comparable to the work of Tess Gerritsen, Patricia Cornwell and Kathy Reichs, *Case Study* defies easy categorization, with elements of forensic, procedural and cozy mysteries, but with a gay-friendly romance subplot—even if the concluding love scene reads like an afterthought. Well-written, suspenseful and meticulously plotted, Cardin's debut novel is flawed only by Taylor's near perfection. Her beauty, brilliance and superior investigative abilities become implausible as the book progresses.

An impressive first mystery.

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