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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

A Cross Estate: a 9/11 Novel

William Thomas Kinsella
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On September 11 2001 the Twin Towers in New York City were destroyed by two planes hijacked by terrorists. This atrocity perpetuated an iconoclasm that completely changed the sixty-year isolationist and untouchable feeling of the American citizenry. For the last six years our minds have been stretched to their limits to comprehend this cowardly act and its fall-out. A slew of writers have written about terrorism and specifically 9-11 including John Updike and his novel *Terrorist* Salman Rushdie and his novel *Shalimar the Clown* and most recently Don DeLillo's critically acclaimed *Falling Man*.

Jack Conroy the protagonist of William Thomas Kinsella's sometimes clumsy but accurate novel *A Cross Estate* appears to have it all. He is a champion swimmer and graduate of Duke University. He has a girlfriend that loves him unconditionally a doting uncle and aunt and wealthy parents that want what they consider the best for him. Conroy is a believable and likeable character with the peccadilloes that come with youth tempered by the descriptions of Kinsella's intonating perspective. Conroy wrestles with the conundrum of accepting a job that pursues his passion as a landscape designer or following his parents wishes and working with a financial company on Wall Street. Kinsella writes "Jack yearned for certainty: shape one choice Veronica. She defined the colors. His confusion gave way to agitation. He wanted to get out of the excess of light to where light was defined. He wanted the shadow that brought form and form that made color real. Above all else he wanted Veronica."

Kinsella expertly sets the reader up for the emotional fall of 9-11. Readers will sense the tragedy waiting off stage but the presence is understated until Kinsella hits the reader with its full force and they relive the experience of loss as Conroy is killed during the "prime of his life". Kinsella implements the reader into the novel and they mourn along with Jack Conroy's loved ones as they try to make sense of an insane situation setting aside their guilty lamentations and accusations and attempting to rebuild their world through the healing balm of Conroy's and Veronica's child.

Because of a cross on the front cover and a couple of biblical quotes some readers might mistake *A Cross Estate* as a religious book and be turned off to the novel. It is neither religious nor secular falling somewhere in between as a bridge that connects an entertaining and inspirational story and an enlightening and spiritual moral. Kinsella has tapped a vein wherein flows the ichors that makes mankind god-like in their pursuit of triumph over pettiness prejudice and pointless unnecessary death.

A Cross Estate is inspired by the cross that stands on Ground Zero and Kinsella's own experiences and observations from 9-11 while he worked in lower Manhattan.
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