Clarion Review

Thriller

A Prayer for the Devil
Dale Allan
Emerald Book Company
978-1-937110-34-5
Five Stars (out of Five)

A Prayer for the Devil is a fast-paced, brilliant thriller that literally begins with a bang and never lets up. The "Bombing in Boston" a few weeks before the US presidential election takes the lives of leading presidential candidate, Brad Thompson; his pastor, Frank Fatone; a Muslim woman, Ablaa Radboud, who was about to speak; and Thompson's campaign manager, Aaron Miller. The product of a Jewish father and Catholic mother, Aaron had embraced his Hebrew heritage, growing up to become a wealthy attorney with political aspirations, while his twin brother, Luke, had taken a near opposite path, giving up a baseball scholarship to attend seminary and be ordained as a Catholic priest.

Luke decides to take a leave of absence so that he can care for Aaron's widow, Deborah, and her children, yet media attention and gossipmongers cast aspersions on his motivation. As fear of terrorist threats grips the nation, Luke attempts to unravel the mystery of his brother's death, learning hard truths along the way that sorely test his faith. The Old Testament "eye for an eye" worldview seems more fitting than "turning the other cheek," as Luke contemplates what to do about the murders. What sort of priest carries a nine-millimeter handgun, let alone considers using it for vengeance?

While the religious overtones of the novel might not resonate with all readers, the quality of the writing is so good that the protagonist's inner turmoil and moral struggle will truly appeal to nearly everyone. Honoring the intelligence of his audience, the author takes a minimalist approach that sucks readers in, keeps them thinking, and makes all 314 pages fly by with breathtaking speed. The ending packs a real punch to the gut, leaving an impression that lasts far beyond the final page.

Dale Allan's author bio states that he was twelve years old when his father was murdered: "A week before his death, Dale had struggled to write a letter updating him on the

family's activities. When his father was buried with the handwritten note in his pocket, Dale fully understood the power of writing." Indeed, he has—without exaggeration, Allan's debut novel is as well written, suspenseful, and engaging as one might expect from the likes of Clancy, Grisham, or Le Carré. Allan graduated from Fordham University, has held senior positions in Fortune 250 companies, earned a black belt in martial arts, and has traveled the world. A "political junkie" and devout Christian, the story line of his novel reflects his eclectic life.

A Prayer for the Devil is a fantastic read, likely the first of many noteworthy novels by an extraordinary writer.

Lawrence Kane