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CLARION REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥

Agent of Influence

Marian L. Horton
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Political intrigue shines in this well-plotted thriller about deception and murder. Agent of Influence takes two former CIA agents, a presidential campaign, and a Russian spy, and thoughtfully delivers an exciting and fast-paced game of cloak and dagger.

The Schmidt foundation, owned by former CIA agent Jonathan Schmidt, is studying the impact that the growing Hispanic population has on the current societal landscape. He and his colleague, Alex Carmichael, stumble into a political landmine when they discover that the vice-presidential nominee's senior aide, Carl Peters, could be a Russian informant. Deciding to capitalize on their intelligence training and their connections, Alex and his beautiful partner, Nicole Granville, become entrenched in a dangerous quest to uncover the people who have infiltrated Russian spies into the government.

In order to watch Carl Peters as closely as possible, Alex signs on as a political consultant for the vice-presidential nominee, Paul Montenegro. As Alex and Nicole work side-by-side, a budding romance between them threatens to jeopardize the investigation. Tension grows as Nicole and Alex withstand several attempts on their safety leaving readers to wonder if they will live to uncover the duplicitous plot.

Each chapter ends with an unanswered question that compels readers to turn the page. And throughout the novel, Horton holds the reader's attention by introducing new, provocative characters—from a priest with a political agenda to an unassuming chauffeur.

With such a strong plot, readers would do well to overlook the minimal character development and the long passages of dialogue that serve more as a convenient way to provide information than they do to enhance the characters. Jonathan, Alex, and Nicole form a likeable cast of characters with an admirable goal.

Although the narrative can be bogged down with too many unnecessary details, the subject of the Hispanic populations and its relevance is a fresh and unexplored subject in mysteries. The author also weaves in historical facts about Communism and the allure it had for Hispanic immigrants in the United States. This is a difficult task and one that Horton handles well. Thoroughly researched and presented in a way that reflects all points-of-view, Agent of Influence handles the subject with diplomacy.

This novel will surely satisfy those who love a political thriller. Despite the need for some editing, Agent of Influence will quickly catch readers up in its world of high-stakes politics.

MONICA CARTER (May 18, 2010)

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