



Clarion Review

General

Ballerina: A Novel in Fractals

Jimmy Esmaeli

iUniverse

978-1-4759-3529-5

One Star (out of Five)

Ballerina: A Novel in Fractals, Jimmy Esmaeli's debut, tells the harrowing tale of Jennifer Bronson, from her teenage years through her early thirties, as she endures rape by her father, abuse by drug dealers, and poverty. Jennifer's talents as a ballerina and the support of her loving stepmother, Sandra, keep her alive. Esmaeli asserts that the novel is based on true events.

Unfortunately, Esmaeli's compelling plot line is buried under a plethora of writing errors. The author leaves out key words, makes new words using hyphenation, and, sometimes, he switches verb tenses within a single sentence. The reader may get the author's gist, but the exact meaning is lost because of bizarre spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. There are run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and paragraphs that last for pages, which make it difficult to follow the plot. Multiple characters speak within these long paragraphs, without any line breaks between speakers. Sometimes, dialogue is designated with standard quotation marks, other times with this symbol: <<.

The story alternates abruptly between Jennifer's point of view and the third person, often switching multiple times within the same paragraph. In addition, the narrative jumps from past to present without adequate warning and within the same paragraph. Infrequently, Esmaeli puts blank line spaces in between paragraphs to denote a jump in time. The story's present changes at an alarming rate. Jennifer is a thirteen-year-old one minute, an adult addict looking back at her teenage self the next minute, and soon back to being thirteen again. Such time jumps give the impression of the story folding back in on itself without progression. Many times, the author breaks from the story to insert truisms about life and lines upon lines of bold-faced rhyming couplets. It is tough to believe that a poverty-stricken drug addict with low self-esteem like Jennifer can produce poetry on a regular basis, thus giving the impression that Esmaeli is speaking from his own point of view.

In general, the story's major players lack consistent characterization, acting unbelievably mature or amazingly immature depending on the circumstances. Everyone speaks in oddly stilted English. It is difficult to ascertain key plot events because of the weird narrative structure and fractured sentence structure. Esmaeli's potential as a storyteller is evident, but the compelling events of *Ballerina: A Novel in Fractals* are hidden beneath text sorely in need of an editor.

Jill Allen