Clarion Review

General

Breaking News
Shawn Sprague
Innovative Publishing
978-1-893038-30-1
Five Stars (out of Five)

In *Breaking News*, first-time novelist Shawn Sprague has penned a well-plotted, well-researched thriller that opens with a bang and keeps readers hooked to the last page.

Anchor Eric Hills reports for the World News Network (WNN), but a precipitous decline in viewers has jeopardized his career. During his last week on the job, a Hollywood starlet named Samantha Kollet is kidnapped. When the kidnappers begin to send him emails, Hills finds himself not only a reporter, but a messenger as well. His life gets more complicated when he receives an anonymous letter claiming WNN engineered the woman's abduction. As he wonders who to trust, Hills realizes his days on earth may be numbered.

Sprague allows several characters to take on narrator roles in the book. This technique enhances the presence of even minor players by giving them detailed histories and motivations. Furthermore, the omniscient storytelling ramps up tension. Although Sprague hints at the identity of the villains early on, the effect is especially chilling because readers see the antagonists interact with their oblivious peers.

Unexpectedly, Samantha Kollet's role is down-to-earth and courageous rather than a vapid damsel in distress. Even the obligatory love subplot is refreshing because Hills falls for someone unpredictable. As a further breath of fresh air, Hills and his lover approach each other tentatively, awkwardly, and realistically. And, the fact that readers know everything before Hills does causes them to root for him to make it out alive.

In his author's note, Sprague acknowledges the assistance of colleagues in law enforcement and television. His research is skillfully woven into the story. The plot never slows and is jam-packed with unforeseen twists and snappy dialogue. Readers barely have time to recover from one incident before another occurs. The cliffhanger chapter endings make readers keep going. *Breaking News* deserves to be on the shelves alongside novels by John Grisham and

Dan Brown.

Jill Allen