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General

Corina's Way: A Novel
Rod Davis
NewSouth Books
978-1-58838-129-3
(May 31, 2003)

Imagine present-day New Orleans thick with incense, animal sacrifices, gospel music, attempted murder, and the unwavering determination of a woman wronged, and that's Corina's Way.

This is a narrative abundant with characters weaving in and out of each other's lives in the most unexpected ways. Reverend Corina Youngblood, part voodoo priestess, part church minister, finds her livelihood and way of life threatened by some savvy businessmen: her former lover and padrino, Elroy Delgado and his brother, Julio. Corina runs a small botanica (a religious supply store) that allows her to barely support herself, her son, and her church. She learns of the Delgados' plans to open a chain of "SuperBotanicas," "a Wal-Mart of spiritual supplies," all over the country, with the anchor store to be located only five blocks from her existing business. The plot takes off, driven by the strength of Corina's sole purpose in seeing that the brothers do not succeed in bringing about the demise of her life's work.

Gus Houston, a teacher and pseudo-chaplain of Miss Angelique's Academy for Young Ladies, becomes entangled with Corina spiritually and professionally and is inspired to enter the academy's all-white chorus in the all-black gospel competition of the city's annual Jazzfest. The outcome of this inspiration is far-reaching and permeates the lives of each character.

Having previously written the non-fiction book American Voudou: Journey into a Hidden World, Davis sets an authentic tone for his first novel. He is also an award-winning journalist and has written for numerous publications, including the Los Angeles Times and Boston Globe. He has taught writing at the University of Texas at Austin and Southern Methodist University and currently serves as travel editor of the San Antonio Express-News.

Some characters of the book-like the card-carrying Klan member/state senator Joe Dell Prince-truly enhance the work, while others-like Agon Hapsenfield with his bizarre sexual exploits and recent conversion to a confusing, Oregon cult-detract from the momentum of the story.

The soul of the book rings true, however. Fueled by her belief in evil intentions, buoyed by her faith in Jesus, and empowered by her practice of voodoo, Corina takes on the Delgados and what life puts before her in her own inimitable way.

This book is not recommended for younger audiences due to its graphic sexual content.

Melissa Burns