ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Crazy Heat
Francene LaDue
Smashwords
978-1-4523-7338-6
Four Stars (out of Five)

Retired detectives called back into action under horrendous circumstances populate the pages of genre fiction and parade across the cinema screen in countless films. The jaded Special Operations guy or gal with a military style never fails to hit a universal chord in readers and viewers. Perhaps it's the genuine sadness in seeing a knowledgeable, irreplaceable genius sidelined that makes the audience want to follow the footsteps of a key investigator returning to duty in the most complicated civilian situations.

Often troubled by a desultory personal life, as Bobby Egan is in Francene LaDue's first novel, *Crazy Heat*, it's the disillusionment and human frailty that make these inimitable protagonists so appealing. Each of these strong-willed, driven personalities has the potential for series development when placed in the hands of a skilled writer. Bobby Egan is no exception.

A past affair, incarceration for murder, and a grudge have fueled this page-turner set in Tucson, Arizona, with sexually-motivated greed and violence in just the right combination. The reading experience is similar to watching a movie—rather than delving into a literary endeavor—eliciting vivid pictures and delineating a clear chain of events opposed to a meticulous exploration of character. This story's only flaws are tendencies to veer into excessive, explanatory conversations and to propel readers into hard-core action without breathers to soften the coarseness.

Like most American crime fiction, the plot is revealed through character interaction, not soul-revealing introspection and prolonged stints of description. This can be its best quality, or its unfortunate downfall, if the balance of narrative and dialogue is not held in careful proportion. Though LaDue has done an outstanding job of telling a gripping tale of killing and revenge, at times this book has trended into rapid-fire deliveries that propel this multifaceted story at a breakneck speed through the use of exhausting character exchanges, leaving the reader not only eager to know what happens *next*, but wishing that more details had been given about what is happening *now*. This periodic acceleration through the novel has detracted from what

could have been a five-star delivery.

Francene LaDue has an impressive background in the motion picture industry, with thirteen years experience working in the marketing department at Walt Disney Studios. Her short fiction has been published in *Click Magazine* and *Apocalypse*. Fast-paced *Crazy Heat*

is a commendable debut that shows the potential for sequels. A structured plotline with concise, no-frills scenes, also make this visual novelist a screenwriter on the horizon.

Julia Ann Charpentier