Clarion Review

General

Created of Fire: The War Comes Home

Mark Cato
Fair Hope Press
978-0-9662562-2-2
One Star (out of Five)

In a speech for a Brooklyn city council position politician Bill Trammel speculates on the potential inevitability of deporting prospective terrorists. Simultaneously riots break out in a Muslim marketplace. As violence escalates events catapult his ideas into the public debate. Set in current times this book examines a plethora of provocative issues such as racial/ethnic profiling media influence on politics and balancing a “War on Terror” with protecting individual rights.

Sadly this tiny spark of brilliance is quickly doused by a confused inarticulate collection of uninspiring people who interact in unbelievable ways. When creating characters that live in current times meet real-life people and visit actual places it is essential that the author do his homework. Cato seems to have forgotten this literary tenet. For example a conventional backpack bomb cannot hold enough explosives to bring down a 52-story skyscraper. Further Muslim terrorists cannot use body art to identify one another since tattooing is prohibited under Islamic law.

Motivations also must make some modicum of sense. Two hunters (not terrorists ordinary hunters) happen to be driving by the marketplace riot on a hot summer afternoon. They inexplicably decide to stop hunker down in their trucks and begin sniping at the unruly crowd. Since hunting season takes place in the fall the odds of one—yet alone two—people even having illegally-loaded rifles in their vehicles are remote at best. Furthermore no one in his right mind will begin shooting at people who are not directly threatening them without cause. Since we later discover that only four shots were fired all of which managed to hit a victim in the shoulder these two guys are either the best shots in the world or the worst… Either way it’s hard to imagine such a scenario in real life.

The rest of the characters are similarly uninspiring. The erstwhile politician Trammel

supposedly delivers brilliant speeches yet the author describes his gestures and the crowd's reactions without actually relaying any of his words. When he does talk he comes across as an insecure fool who cannot make any decisions without his wife Vicky's input. His crowning achievement is a nervous breakdown suffered when he incorrectly thinks he is indirectly responsible for his campaign manger's friend's parents' murder (yes it's really that confusing).

Said friend Ritchie Ferris (a.k.a. Rachid el'Farid) is the only truly interesting person in the story. A reporter for the New York Times he is brought into the drama because his friend Kevin is Trammel's (incompetent) campaign manager. His Persian heritage and accidental encounters with terrorists as well as Homeland Security make Ferris both a witness as well as a participant in the culture clash outlined in the book.

Were this a first draft a superior editor might be able to salvage a few gems and redirect the author to accomplish something worthwhile using the Ferris character and the interesting premise of this book. As it stands however it is simply not worth reading. Despite a promising premise there is no fire in this lackluster book.

Lawrence Kane