ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

ROMANCE

Cricket Maiden: Romance, Match-Fixing, Murder Mystrey, T20 Matches, and a Magic Cricket Bat . . .
Algenes Edmund Dantes
Trafford
978-1-4669-7917-8
Two Stars (out of Five)

Mystery, suspense, romance, adventure, and cricket make an intriguing mix.

In *Cricket Maiden*, Algenes Edmund Dantes presents a story of suspense, mystery, and romance centered in the world of international sports, where the integrity of cricket is as essential as the integrity of the police force fighting to solve a murder and save the game.

In 2010, just before a high-profile cricket match between amateurs and professionals, the amateurs' coach is mysteriously murdered. Match fixers are thought to be the culprits, but proving anything about what happened is going to be tough. The match fixers continue to pressure and threaten players, trying to ensure they won't lose the billions of dollars they have at stake. And with the tournament in jeopardy, the billionaire who funded the match, Hedwig Dawson, also stands to lose a great deal of money, so he puts pressure on the police.

Enter former detective Landon Beau, brought in to solve the crime and save the game of cricket. From seedy neighborhoods to glamorous parties of the rich and famous, he chases clues to discover the truth. Along the way, he encounters a monstrous hit man, a mystical object, and a woman who just might change his life. But the clues seem thin, and he has little time to lose with the match date approaching and lives on the line.

Dantes starts with an intriguing premise. He paces the story well and keeps up the level of intrigue throughout. He also features a sport that isn't written about very often, which offers a fresh backdrop, although a short explanation of cricket might help those unfamiliar with the game.

The story is peopled with cops who have integrity—good guys to be cheered on. Unfortunately, many of the characters seem like caricatures. For example, Landon's love interest, a fashion reporter, covers a party filled with Victoria's Secret models, "compared to whom, she was as beautiful, if not more beautiful." And while this reporter can shoot pictures

and cover a fashion show, a cricket match leaves her relying on unrealistic practices that in the real world would be considered poor reporting at best, outright plagiarism at worst. A bit more focus on description that shows rather than tells would address many of these issues.

A worthwhile attempt to use dialogue to define personalities often inadvertently adds to the feeling that these are stock characters. For example, one shady character greedily speaks of "such a grand experiment carried out in such a large scale" and follows with, "and I control this game! Ha ha ha ha ha!" And one woman, after a night of passions, says, "You are so respectful and loving to my being. I am just so tearful with happiness that I found you." Time spent refining the sometimes overly dramatic speech patterns of stronger characters would have fixed this.

Finally, some story details may unintentionally mar the realism Dantes intends. While the story occurs in 2010, one character has an android secretary that looks human, while another character ends up in suspended animation. Both situations are a stretch to fit a time period that has already passed.

Nevertheless, the book is a strong effort toward creating a book filled with mystery, suspense, romance, and adventure. It may interest those who love both mystery and sports, and it could be a rare read for anyone who loves the game of cricket.

Diane Gardner