Clarion Review

General

Disorder in the Court
D. Eric Horner
Trafford
978-1-4669-4468-8
Two Stars (out of Five)

Disorder in the Court follows the horrific events that occur in a usually quiet courtroom when an escaped convict's murderous rampage wreaks havoc on the lives of three families and a handful of others caught in the crossfire. Author D. Eric Horner explores family dynamics, the far-reaching impact of one's choices, and how deeply relationships can cut. The novel also asks readers to consider what it means to be a hero and poses the long-debated question of whether criminals are born or made.

On this particular day in court, an attorney and his wife bring their coddled teenage daughter to court to face her crimes; a young couple comes to divorce; and three college friends arrive to observe the proceedings for a school project. All end up in the same courtroom where an escapee holds them hostage. Men are beaten, women are raped, and people are killed as the convict forces a mock re-trial of his case and humiliates and tortures the judge. Throughout the ordeal, those involved must evaluate the circumstances that brought them to the courtroom and deal with many deep, unresolved issues.

The story hinges upon a fascinating, although not entirely original, concept. That said, Horner's plot remains intriguing and his characters are imbued with rich, believable flaws. The author does, however, tend to tell the reader rather than show truths about the characters, especially in the first half of the novel. For example, when one character's daughter defies him, Horner writes, "Jim did not realize how he was being played." Readers would likely be more fulfilled by discovering such things through detailed writing.

A few technical issues challenge the novel. Careful proofreading is needed to clean up typos, for example. An additional editorial eye might have addressed a few other problems, such as using part divisions and subheadings rather than chapters to organize the book. Abrupt point-of-view changes from third to first person feel awkward, especially in light of an otherwise

creatively written surprise ending. And although they could reflect the dramatic content a bit more, the interior and cover design of the text are professional and neat.

Disorder in the Court is not for young or sensitive readers, as it contains fairly graphic scenes of rape, intense sexual references, and abundant adult language. The story has moments that are captivating and well paced, and could be enjoyed by the right reader. In all, the technical and overall writing concerns leave this courtroom suspense novel a bit disordered.

Diane Gardner