ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Dorris Bridge
Clive Riddle
HealthQuest Publishers
978-0-9825164-2-3
Four Stars (out of Five)

In *Dorris Bridge* author Clive Riddle makes effective use of rural legends. Employing elements of folklore, myth, and supernatural phenomena, Riddle works his magic to draw the reader into a compelling mystery. Set in the mid 1970's, the tale centers on a series of unexplained hit-and-runs that take place on a lonely stretch of road in the outskirts of Dorris Bridge, a small desert town in northeastern California. The victims appear to be blinded by bright lights and frightened by alien noises immediately preceding the hit-and-run. Rumors begin spreading that the deadly illumination is a supernatural phenomenon that originated with the local Paiute Indians. One fateful night centuries ago, a shaman's son fired off a spear into the path of a descending star, only to find that he has tragically killed his father who was enveloped by the blinding lights. According to the legend, the lights bring bad fortune to those directly affected.

Riddle neatly dovetails back stories of rural legends into the main storyline—many of them genuine American folk narratives. Thus he constructs a bounteous work, well-grounded in authenticity and depth, unlike most crime mysteries. Leading the investigation is Randall Burgess, the unshakable chief of police of the town. Randall exudes an appealing kindhearted, albeit laconic, persona of a man haunted by painful memories of tragic mistakes made earlier in his life. He is also the father of Kyle Burgess, a rebellious high-school senior and prankster.

The reader is quickly immersed in the sordid world of small-town politics, racism, corruption, and infidelity. After witnessing the lights phenomenon, Kyle begins to investigate its possible connection to circumstances surrounding the hit-and-runs plaguing the town. Meanwhile, Randall is caught in the middle of a power struggle between the mayor and the town's rivaling political boss. As telltale evidence in the hit-and-run case piles up, the number of likely suspects zeroes down to but a few. The father-son duo's detective work will appeal to young readers, recalling *The Hardy Boys* series. But because the story is not simply centered on crime detection, *Dorris Bridge* will also appeal to adults.

Well-researched historical accounts contained in the back stories (not all of which are

material to the main storyline), bring to light poignant and darker episodes in American history, notably the ill-treatment of the Japanese internees during World War II, and the persecution of Basque settlers and sheepherders by local cattle ranchers. These and other colorful historical occurences educate the reader by bringing to life the local culture and history that shaped the town's character.

Riddle constructs not only a taut and fast-paced crime mystery with an unpredictable end, but also a touching tale of the heart. The adult reader will be satisfied by the extra dimension to the basic crime storyline—flawed, humane characters caught up in the dark web of relationships that inevitably end in betrayal, revenge, and tragedy. The humanity will resonate long after reading the book.

Gary Klinga