ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Elvis Cream
Peter Menting
Xlibris
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Only in Muleshoe, Texas, could an incompetent clan of Elvis fanatics and rock-and-roll trivia experts who own a sewage treatment company need to connect with an Arabian sheik who looks like America's number one enemy, Osama Al Osama.

Sheik Ali Hasheeshee is from oil-rich Emirate of Quais. He prefers sand dunes and camels to shopping malls and other detritus of the Western world. Nevertheless, the sheik, who thinks Osama Al Osama is a "destroyer of all that is best of Islam," feels compelled to go to the United States and "conquer America for Islam." In New York City, he hires Brian Berman, a flack labeled a genius by the magazine *Psycho-Adman*. Meanwhile, in Muleshoe, the Rivers family, owner of Consolidated Amoeba Company, is in financial straits and also seeks Berman's services. The company's one asset, its patent, will expire soon, and the Rivers want to sucker someone into buying Consolidated for an inflated price.

In Peter Menting's *Elvis Cream*, the action flies between the Big Apple and Muleshoe. Berman is intent on linking the sheik and Consolidated Amoeba Company. He believes the sheik can assume Elvis's persona and ingratiate himself to America. To impress his client, Berman launches assorted campaigns, including one for the Professional Wrestlers Temperance Society and another for Americans for a Stiffer Spine, which he designs to appeal to the sheik's appreciation of beheadings and amputations.

Menting has an excellent sense of pace, offering grin-generating phrases like the response of young Clayton Rivers, after being offered a football scholarship to South-by-Southeast Texas Tech: "'Where's that?' Clayton had asked the recruiter, which nearly cost him the scholarship."

Interesting characters abound, including Noora, the sheik's daughter. Despite his misgivings, she persuades her father to allow her to accompany him to America, the trade-off being her promise to submit to an arranged marriage. The result is that Noora manipulates her father into staying in the United States in spite of his misgivings about Berman, the Rivers, and

American culture. That the Rivers believe a suitable business reception site is the Pink Pussycat, Muleshoe's strip club, helps little. Noora is aided in her quest by Matthew Rivers, the family's youngest, who is entranced by her burqa-shrouded loveliness.

Many of the novel's comic situations are outrageous enough to provoke derisive snorts, but it's easy to suspend disbelief for the sake of another yuck. Can there be too much of a good thing? It appears so, as the book's conclusion is both overly complicated and only semi-satisfying. Up to that point, the plot moves quickly, as the story rolls along with a situation comedy's ping-pong banter run at double-speed. However, the narrative would have benefited from additional editing. For example, one thread—the adventures of Berman's friend—is distracting. Another—Matthew's romantic pursuit of Noora—isn't fully developed.

That said, *Elvis Cream* is a fun and easy read to while away a rainy afternoon or to combat boredom on a long trip.

Gary Presley