Clarion Review

Mystery

Fools Rush In-Where Angels...
Merritt Charles
978-1-4208-6068-9
One Star (out of Five)

Jeff Wes Lou and Wayne are four men of varying ages and strangers to each other. Two of them are married one is widowed another lives with his mother but they all have unsatisfied “needs” and the misfortune to seek out some X-rated diversion in a Buffalo theater.

Angel is waiting for them. She gives them her come-on — opening her dress to reveal her naked body — and offers them a fantasy come true. A fifth man Nick is the first to respond to her and leads the way back to her hotel room. The others follow. Unbeknownst to them Nick is a former cop turned con man and pimp and he has hidden a video camera in the room to record the men’s peccadilloes. Leaving Angel to satisfy the clients’ urges Nick the accomplice heads off to research the men’s financial worth.

Each victim reacts differently when the inevitable call comes with the blackmailers’ demands. Some pay up; some don’t. Wayne uses his security guard training to hold up a liquor store for the money astonished at the ease of it. Jeff is determined to get even. When Jeff and Lou cross paths they team up to “get” Nick and Angel even as Lou’s Uncle Bruno makes use of his contacts on the police force to investigate and also intercedes with Lou’s wife Carla to forgive him.

Men who stray and the repercussions of their actions are the subjects of this novel by retired human resources executive Merritt Charles. While the idea is certainly intriguing the story is very slow. The author provides far more detail than necessary telling rather than showing (“The questions answers and speculation were literally sandwiched in between bites of half-pound loaded cheeseburgers crisp salty home fries bathed in ketchup huge whole dill pickles and mayonnaise-based coleslaw that ‘just slips right down’ at least that’s what Janis promised.”) and he jumps from character to character in his recitation of circumstances. The characters themselves are shallow and unlikable and the logic of their actions is hard to follow; Wes who drinks pretty heavily racks up his car more than once in this book. Yet when he

abstains from alcohol he hits a small girl who runs into the road.

Readers will find this exploration of illegitimate sex and its fruits plodding and unrewarding. And while the structure of the book implies that all of them will in some way work together to solve their problem it never happens.