Clarion Review

General

Forgotten Promises
Denise Skelton
First Chance Publishing
978-0-9790877-1-4
One Star (out of Five)

Love lost love regained; a psychotic spurned female cute kids and slapstick matchmakers all come together in Denise Skelton's third multi-ethnic romance *Forgotten Promises*. The characters' only ethnic or racial influences stop at physical appearance. Fair skinned green-eyed and red haired detective Holly Lawson and chocolate-skinned paramedic Tyler Green both grieve over dead spouses within the first couple chapters. They become neighbors and predictably fall in love. Plagued by vindictive family and weird friends who frequently vandalize properties and interfere in the name of matchmaking the couple moves haltingly toward romance. When a psychotic ex-girlfriend threatens a friend and draws Holly and Tyler into the situation they show their true mettle and true love.

The author draws upon her experience as a former private investigator to pen believable crime scenes and conflict: "…I know who you are….Word is that you're wanted for questioning on an attempted murder case in Bolingbrook. If you're staying here I'll be sure to provide your new address to the Bolingbrook PD."

The psychotic stalker's scenes the strength of the novel appear haphazardly throughout the text. She often disappears for several chapters only to reappear without transition or link to previous events. Tension and suspense ramp up a notch in this storyline: "Janet realized what she intended a moment after the woman lunged for the door….Melissa tried to scream for help….There was always screaming moaning or wailing in this place….Janet quickly rose up slightly and rammed her left knee into Melissa's stomach."

This obviously is an ensemble cast brought from previous books but some characters should have sat this one out. For example one family includes two Davids who contribute nothing and add confusion for readers. The main characters Holly and Tyler need more development and could offer interesting possibilities.

Sadly minutiae drags down the pace overall and wears out the reader. The opening paragraph founders under this overload: “Turning into the parking lot Tyler Green slowed his white 1993 Ford pickup to a crawl. Turning the wheel hard he maneuvered it into a parking spot across from the apartment building hoping that the large tree would be enough….”

Weak dialogue often leads nowhere or parrots what exposition has already revealed: “Tyler led her to Ghirardelli Chocolate Shop and found a table in the corner. Tyler went to the counter to place and pick up their order. He ordered the Butterscotch Fudge Sundae which has butter pecan ice cream butterscotch sauce almond nuggets hot fudge sauce whipped cream almonds and a cherry for them to share and two decaf coffees. When Tyler walked back to the table with the tray Holly’s eyes grew large. ‘Gee that’s some sundae.’”

Often the detail-laden novel reads like a time management report and suffers from a plethora of amateurish mistakes. It cries out for a thorough editing of descriptions scenes and even characters.