



Going To Cameroon: A Novel

Izzaldin Alzain

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This fresh take on the murder mystery puts the reader in the shoes of a lying, deceptive killer.

If he's charming and well-read, can a murderer be in the right? In *Going To Cameroon*, Izzaldin Alzain pulls us through a story that, with intricate lies and convoluted justifications, questions how far one can go to avenge past wrongs. The book's charismatic protagonist, crafty deceptions, and cultured setting make it a fresh and welcome addition to the genre.

After discovering that his abusive father carried on affairs with three women he thought were close family friends, Pierre Boucher crafts a plan to seek retribution. With a silenced pistol inherited from his uncle, he intends to murder the three adulterous women to get back at his father for a lifetime of verbal and physical abuse.

Pierre drops out of university, telling his girlfriend, family, and friends that he's moving to Cameroon to do charity work, when he's really going into hiding as a cover for his scheme. When he is caught shoplifting from a bookstore by the beautiful Martine, he takes the opportunity to create a new persona and asks her for favors that make her an unknowing accomplice to his crimes. Patiently, he weaves a web of lies that he feels will hide him from the police investigation. Will he succeed in getting revenge for his father's vile ways, or will his cockiness and elaborate deceptions be his downfall?

Although the reader is put in the shoes of a lying, deceptive murderer, Pierre's character is so charming that it is easy to sympathize with him about his abusive upbringing, and side with him against the blundering investigations of the police. The "animal magnetism" and "melodious voice" Martine sees in Pierre come through strongly in the writing, making him rich and compelling. The author uses carefully selected details to bring life to characters and scenes, such as Martine's facial scar or the pigeons outside Pierre's hidden apartment. Despite many scenes of routine activities, the story holds an exoticism that only tales set in Europe can achieve.

Alzain's writing reflects a strong academic vocabulary and a formal tone that lends itself well to characters speaking another language. At times this leads to charmingly awkward phrasing like, "If you want a list of one hundred must-read novels, he could do it without much sweat." At other times the dialogue feels forced or stilted, particularly in the overuse of the characters' names in conversation. The author is overgenerous with commas, and tends to repeat words too often within sentences and paragraphs. This causes a choppy feeling in some sections; however, it is easy to get used to and lends to the writing a worldly tone that fits the content well. Any technical anomalies are far outweighed by the elaborate plot and addictive characters.

Going To Cameroon is an enjoyable read for those looking for a fresh take on the murder mystery, and is highly recommended.

ERIC ANDERSON (October 10, 2014)

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