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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

I Rise

Obukohwo Odogun
AuthorHouse (Sep 29, 2011)
Softcover $18.03 (248pp)
978-1-4567-9681-5

Set against the backdrop of Nigeria, *I Rise* is the story of Elijah, a sincere romantic hero. He marries Miriam, desiring a quiet domestic life with his twin sons, only to be incarcerated as a suspect for a crime he did not commit. Trouble follows his family even after he is exonerated, propelling this rather hastily produced novel in countless directions.

With a plotline suitable for an epic series, Obukohwo Odogun's complicated and somewhat convoluted book takes on too much for one simple tale. Rather than narrowing and focusing on Elijah's predicament, in itself enough to sustain a work twice as long, the story explores the disappearance of his sons after they form a three-way friendship pact with a mysterious orphan at a boarding school. This subplot is also involved enough to stand on its own.

For the reader seeking details on Nigerian life, tidbits are woven into the text, flowing naturally rather than feeling tacked on. These descriptions, however, are poorly edited, riddled with punctuation and grammatical mistakes. For example, "Though, the sun still shone up in the sky as if it was meant to be permanently there. Everyone felt its' effects as sweat trickled down many a fore head and as if in agreement the dry harmattan wind rustled the leaves on the trees inside the schools compound, depositing its Sahara dust on every surface it settles on."

Odogun's book appears to be in the early draft stage of creation. Improperly formatted dialogue runs into the narrative, and awkward use of language combined with the tendency to tell rather than show (particular scenes) detract from the enjoyment of reading. In addition, a competent editor could have prevented the confusing constructions that often occur when American English is written as a second language. In one instance, Odogun writes, "Miriam was happy to see her husband at eventually … Miriam enthusiasm of locating Elijah waned after noticing his gaunt frame as it may take anyone previously familiar with his built some difficulty in recognising him as he had changed from his previous physique to his present state."

The front cover is intriguing with four lit candles against a black background, but the back blurb is stilted, which will cause difficulty in marketing. If greater care had been taken with editing, the book could have been divided into a trilogy, focusing on Elijah, Miriam, and their twins, respectively.

This rapid-fire novel holds potential—an unusual mixture of action and suspense, spiced with a police procedural investigation. From a critical perspective, the story is still under development, but may be worth pursuing with dedication.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (October 16, 2012)

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