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Clarion Review

Leave No Evidence: Write to Know Series
Marilyn Harley Irick
CreateSpace
978-1-4499-8056-6
Three Stars (out of Five)

In her debut novel, Marilyn Harley Irick tells an absorbing story that has the potential to become a sought-after summer page-turner. When mysterious, chalky red lines appear at his workplace, architect Doug Donovan takes it upon himself to investigate these apparent signs of witchcraft or voodoo. He begins to suspect that his coworker, Liz Connery, is the culprit.

Later, after a change of employment, he seeks solace from the construction noises near his townhouse by cat-sitting at Liz's house. In the middle of the night he is awakened by the sound of a man frantically communicating to him in Spanish. "The voice crept closer emerging from the dark corner," Irick writes. "…Doug lay paralyzed with fear. Nothing was making logical sense, but he knew there was a figure standing in the bedroom watching him while he lay frozen with fear."

With this, Doug begins an adventure that not only involves con artists, intrigue, romance, riches, and murder, but also a voyage of self-discovery and the fulfillment of an almost forgotten legacy that spans two continents.

The only thing that keeps Leave No Evidence from achieving lofty success is the lack of proper editing. Readers shouldn't be expected to look for literary enjoyment in such a surfeit of errors. For example, in a scene where Doug's friend, Mary, is asked to house-sit, Irick writes, "Knowing she had to retrieve Doug's house key from under his doormat, she scurried quickly to fetch them." The plural form of key should have been used here. The author seems to have a fondness for certain phrases and words, such as the word "tri-fold," which she uses over and over. Additionally, there are too many clichés and cutesy phrases that force readers out of the realm of the story.

Nevertheless, Irick has developed a unique style and voice for her novel and has created some wonderful characters, such as Callie, a loveable transvestite, and a scene-stealing cat named Mister Peepers. The imagery and dialogue exchange between Doug and an Abbot in a scene involving Doug's visit to a monastery that he had inhabited as a child is almost

magnificent.

Except for some plot predictability and syntax, spelling and grammar errors, and some overindulgence in exposition, Leave No Evidence is a decent mystery and a great story, like the fusing of a Maeve Binchy novel and a mystery by J.D. Robb.

Lee Gooden