Clarion Review

General

Megis
Michael Genrich
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

Not sixty days after September 11 2001 a new threat has struck the United States and it couldn't be farther from New York City. A low-yield nuclear device has been detonated on Lake Superior fifteen miles from the obscure town of Ontonagon in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Since the blast did little observable damage to people and property onshore our government's cover-up explanation has blamed the Ukrainian freighter Kharkiv for "fumes from an improperly vented hold." The freighter now lies in pieces at the lake bottom.

But there are more nukes where the first one came from and one of them has been reserved for a gifted albino physicist — code-named "The Package" by the CIA — who the Ukrainians claim has been kidnapped and is being held in a Northern Michigan lab. This explosive international situation is taking a toll on Sidney Hornberg Agent-in-Charge of the FBI office in Marquette. The Ukrainian terrorists have chosen him as the conduit for their demands and Hornberg nearing retirement is drinking more sleeping less and becoming a stranger to his wife.

But it's Hornberg's ultimate response to what his wife calls "the Ontonagon thing" that gives *Megis* an edge over the typical post-9/11 nuclear thriller. For *Megis* is also a celebration of the Upper Peninsula its forests and two-tracks and hunting camps and fishing shanties and especially its people. Hornberg and his friend Paul Adams a State Police detective from Houghton discover that the kidnapped physicist has become a target of both the Ukrainian GRU and the American CIA. Meanwhile a young Native American FBI agent Thomas Loonsfoot who has been guarding the physicist is finding that his charge bears an uncanny resemblance to Nanabozho the "Great Rabbit" of Ojibwa legend. The manner in which these commonplace characters act on what they learn makes *Megis* an extraordinary vision of hope and reconciliation. According to legend Nanabozho a trickster but often a benefactor of man has

been locked in struggle with the Evil One. But the Ojibwa are watching and waiting for recently it is rumored that Nanabozho has returned and will raise “the Great Megis” or shell once again.

While Hornberg Adams and Loonsfoot chase their destinies author Genrich a retired engineer who seems to have hunted and fished and hiked every inch of the territory from which he writes gives readers a sense of the landscape and tradition of the western Upper Peninsula. From Lake Superior (“Get-che-gum-me” to the Ojibwa) to Lake Gogebic from the Ottawa National Forest to the Sylvania Wilderness and from Watersmeet to Bruce Crossing to Houghton *Megis* is a novel of a place that is as rich in history and mythology as it is in fresh air water and woodlands.

Joe Taylor