

No Reflection

Spencer Rhys Hughes

Spencer Rhys Hughes (May 26, 2013)

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This high-stakes paranormal thriller grabs attention from the first page to the unexpected end.

Blood, gore, and mutilation in the repugnant underworld of New York put an anxious woman in the throes of a life-or-death investigation—a chase that may lead to her own demise in this terrifying urban fantasy. An action-packed, paranormal thriller teetering on the brink of madness, *No Reflection* pauses barely long enough to contemplate internal fears.

An actor as well as an author, Spencer Rhys Hughes draws from his familiarity with New York City to write *No Reflection*, his debut novel. An eccentric air and an imaginative slant on urban fiction shine through in this fascinating book. Written in a unique voice, Hughes blends private detective mystery with deadly horror and has a clearly developed, distinctive style.

The dangers here are real, not an irrational figment of one's imagination due to stress. "The hand was cold, smooth and cold, and she knew whose it was because it could only have been the Man's hand, his frigid grip, all ice and frost, feeling like it had never left since the attack, and it could only have been his voice, his breath, rank and warm, purring into her ear."

As in many plots with high stakes, the tendency to barrel forward without considering less-significant details, such as proper formatting and meticulous line editing, is apparent in this otherwise-riveting novel. Spaces between paragraphs, minor typos, and odd use of capitalization for emphasis detract from a quality story.

If rewritten as a screenplay, this nightmare on espresso would be appropriate for the horror genre during a Halloween movie festival. At no point does the story lose the attention-grabbing impact needed to keep an audience captured until the unexpected end. Even a seasoned critic will not want to stop reading.

Here, a feeling of impending doom adds to the description of a grotesque, foreboding dream. "She turned and saw a creature, some foreign being, too beautiful to be human. Then it grew closer, emanating its own light, and became hideous. Its face was scarified and dense with excised tissue and misapplied make-up. ... It held a paring knife in its right hand, and walked towards her with fluid strides, floating above the ground by an inch."

Dirty subways, dank city dives, and dangerous neighborhoods create an ominous atmosphere with a perfect mixture of dark and depressing—exactly what the horror enthusiast seeks in entertainment. With more focus on manuscript preparation and an improved production process, Edgar Allan Poe would be proud to shudder at this chilling, unnatural tale.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (November 26, 2013)

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