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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Project Dark Savior

E. A. Mourn
Carrie Jadus, illustrator
BookSurge (October 2008)
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"The early morning sky had a slightly pinkish hue that reminded Ewan of blood tainted water." This is the opening line of E.A. Mourn's crime thriller *Project Dark Savior* which struggles to tell the now age-old tale of a detective revisited by murderous demons from the past.

Detective Liz Wylde is seemingly haunted by the spirit of a serial killer the unfortunately named Billy Vegas as a new series of murders occurs along the Florida coast. Now she is forced to reopen wounds that never fully healed and investigate the murders in the hopes of stopping them once and for all. Of course Billy Vegas is dead and it isn't his spirit that is responsible for the murders but "some new breed of serial killer" that may have been created by the United States government.

If the story sounds familiar that's because it has been done before. Think *Silence of the Lambs* meets *The X-Files* in which this scenario has been achieved with far better results. The most glaring problem here is the fact that Mourn's prose lacks true depth. From the start it is apparent that she has read one too many crime novels and is simply trying to create an underlying atmosphere that is dark and brooding. Her descriptions fall flat and her characters never take the form that is she is trying so hard to mold them to; this a sad reality since this is the first novel in a forthcoming series dedicated to yet another traumatized detective.

"'It's going to be a miracle if we find so much as a skin cell in here'" one detective says at the scene of a crime. "'Have forensics go through everything and we'll see what they come up with okay?" With statements like this Mourn is unable to properly capture the world of the investigative squad. Instead of going into real detail about the crime scene investigation process she falters and steps back when it matters the most. As a result the plot twists are unsurprising and don't pack the intended punch.

The bright side to the story is that Mourn's writing ability is fairly strong and with a little more practice (which this series is sure to give her) the stories may begin to take shape in an entirely new light. The author understands how to tell a story and when to shock her reader but her skills need polishing before the desired effect is fully realized. (August 21, 2009)

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