Clarion Review

General

Secreto
Jack Cade
Laurel Mystery Books
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Two Stars (out of Five)

San Diego is at risk of a cruise missile attack from either Mexico or from the Pacific. A team of undercover agents hired through the U.S. government and led by a British "consultant in matters of crime" have joined forces to uncover the mystery of whom and where this cruise missile may come from.

In Jack Cade's new crime mystery novel *Secreto: The Strange Case of the Fisherman's Son* Julius Burton an ex-Navy Seal and CIA secret agent is recruited to the undercover crime team to investigate Omar Ratcliff a self-made billionaire suspected of harboring a cruise missile. The son of a tuna fisherman they believe Ratcliff may be plotting to set off a missile from a tuna boat but they need to find out if their background on his motives and means will lead to a missile if indeed he has one.

The team's work leads to revealing background on Ratcliff's psychological state exposing a madman. Burton says in a debriefing meeting with his team: "[Ratcliff] seems obsessively afraid of a terrorist attack. He spoke several times about his disappointment with the president's anti-terrorism program; said it was misguided and stupid with not enough resources for the real vulnerabilities such as bombs in shipping containers and trucks crossing the border."

In Cade's novel the story follows many of today's current issues. The book includes a president who has little popularity because of his war in Iraq a loosening of terrorism-fighting tactics and defense around the border as well as other references to topics that parallel the Bush administration. The book serves as a good metaphor for current events and is a clever commentary on present day politics and government. It uncovers the vulnerabilities of protecting a large border as well.

Secreto also offers readers a mystery to solve that is easy to relate to. It includes plenty of problem solving when the team discusses possibilities and motives action scenes when they

uncover a cruise missile and romance between team members as well as the “enemy.” While the book is entertaining and easy to internalize it is not overly complicated and some of the “answers” to their investigation are too obvious or easily obtained. Cade includes few twists until the very end which can disappoint those who enjoy convoluted plots.

Cade’s own identity as the author is telling as a mystery writer. Cade is a pseudonym taken from “the leader in late medieval Europe of the 1450 Kent rebellion that took place in the time of King Henry VI in England.”

While *Secreto* may not be the most in-depth mystery it is a fun read. More than anything it brings thoughtfulness to current-day issues such as the war in Iraq and the safety of the country. It brings an otherwise fictitious world close to home just short of encouraging fear or worry about powerful madmen harboring ill-will in this crazy world.

Christina Claassen