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THRILLER

Shadow Dragon

Lance Horton

iUniverse (May 2, 2012)

Hardcover \$33.95 (424pp)

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A thriller with hints of Tom Clancy and James Patterson, *Shadow Dragon* plucks you up on the first page and offers an exhilarating joyride through biological skulduggery and perilous chases, never veering off course. Genetic modification, power mongers, and learning to cope with loss are just a few of the subjects tackled by author Lance Horton.

This contemporary thriller with tinges of science fiction and police procedural reveals its content through the eyes of FBI victim specialist Kyle Andrews and investigative reporter Carrie Daniels. Andrews is intent on pursuing a position as a special agent while dealing with his narcissistic mother, and Daniels is trying to recover from a recent breakup with her stalker boyfriend. An FBI investigation sends Andrews and his partner, special agent Lewis Edwards, to Montana, where he soon meets Daniels in her search to find her grandparents' killer.

The pursuit of information causes Andrews and Daniels to cross paths often enough that they begin to wonder if their cases are connected. Multiple murders, strange shadowy creatures, and a plot to build a new kind of soldier draw Andrews and Daniels into a chase that puts their lives on the line.

Characters in this novel are, in the main, believably drawn and easily distinguished from one another. Some lack the depth that would make them more than place markers. Flathead County Sheriff George Greyhawk, for example, would be more well rounded if just a few more personal details were added to his backstory; as is, he veers into magical Indian territory which, to be blunt, is unfair to his place in the story and the character's heritage.

That said, there are no superfluous characters. Montana in winter is a less common setting for thriller/suspense novels, and it's a welcome change from the plethora of city- and beach-based fare of other works in this genre. The ribbon of a budding relationship between Andrews and Daniels is realistically drawn throughout the book. All the threads introduced in the beginning are expertly woven together (including the clues) and, perhaps more importantly, satisfactorily tied off at the end. The pacing is fairly fast, but never too swift. The ending is, refreshingly, atypical when compared to the oft-used happily-ever-after scene.

Shadow Dragon is an excellent debut novel by an author to watch. This book is highly recommended.

J. G. STINSON (October 1, 2013)

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