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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★★ FANTASY

Silver Summer

Stephen Fogle
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Intricately woven characters and plot keep the pages turning in this paranormal thriller.

In his debut paranormal thriller, Stephen Fogle weaves an intricate plot about three people on three different missions. Walter Murphy, a hit man, has a job to do before he retires; Wes Parker, a “controlled” werewolf, needs to talk with someone about his past; and Jaime Allen, a teenager, wants to find out if a deserted farmhouse is haunted. They have no idea that their experiences will eventually land them in Kenton, a small Kentucky town, where they will encounter a pack of bloodthirsty werewolves.

Suspense is key to the prologue, when a terrifying chase scene between Walter and a werewolf—a small glimpse into the plot’s climax—catapults readers to an adventure that, at first glance, appears to be typical of werewolf stories. Though the prologue closes with a cliff-hanger, Fogle swiftly transitions back to when it all began two weeks earlier. It is May 29, 2013, and Walter is in Austin, Texas, to complete a job before leaving for his final assignment in Kentucky.

Fogle does an excellent job of introducing characters in quick, consecutive snippets and at a steady pace. For instance, there is the addition of antagonists who are aiming at the same target as Walter. Then there is a sudden shift over to Wes, who served time for an unintentional murder and just received parole. Both Walter and Wes are, ironically, portrayed as decent, respectable men, and their inner thoughts and actions appear logical. Were it not for Walter’s ghastly profession and Wes’s hideous transformations during full moons, readers would view these characters as regular Joes.

The most sinister of antagonists is Wes’s father, Vincent, who is on his own mission in Kenton: he is desperately searching for the truth about the twin sons that were kept hidden from him by his ex-wife. Fogle’s use of this character is crucial to the plot since many readers can sympathize with the strong ties between parent and child. The initial description of Vincent is not of a devious man, but the author slowly reveals the character’s devious intentions to make his pack invincible.

Nonetheless, to keep from causing a stir in the small community, Vincent hides his pack in an abandoned, off-the-beaten-track farmhouse, unaware that it had been the scene of a vicious murder and is considered haunted by the locals. To confirm rumors, thirteen-old-year Jaime sneaks into the farmhouse during a full moon only to encounter massive, hideous beasts. Placing a curious teen into a precarious situation unnerves the reader.

The experiences of the three protagonists are chronologically juxtaposed in the form of short vignettes within each chapter, at first concurrently and, as the plot builds, in defined segments of time. This technique both keeps the characters animated and provides a panoramic view of the plot as it comes full circle.

Fogle has produced a story with twists and turns that will keep readers on edge and perplexed as they try to anticipate outcomes.

ANITA LOCK (January 21, 2014)

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