Clarion Review

General

The Cusp of Dreams
Diana E. Sheets
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978-0-557-24373-0
Two Stars (out of Five)

The current economic situation will likely generate dozens of stories about failure dreams denied and expectations dashed. Because of this it is somewhat curious that author Diana Sheets decided to set her novel about a business on the rocks in the early 1990s.

Sheets worked in sales and sales management before turning to writing full-time and readers might safely assume that her characters are based on people she has encountered over the years.

Sue the novels heroine has little in the way of redeeming qualities. She is an equal opportunity crank who is nasty either directly or behind the backs of her co-workers underlings clients bosses and even her long-suffering husband. Her animosity is heightened if the target is an attractive female. Sue is overly concerned with money materialism and appearances both her own and that of others. Very few characters come off well and no one save Sue appears to be competent at what they do. The secondary characters all have flaws in Sues estimation either physical intellectual or emotional. This can make for some uncomfortable situations for readers who will be looking for something uplifting or some hope in an otherwise bland business setting.

There is only the loosest of storylines which focuses mostly on Sue and her colleagues as they call on clients and deal with interoffice tensions as the economy slides and their jobs are endangered. The unifying factors are anger and resentment against the people in Sues universe.

The dialogue is unrealistic in more than a few spots as the characters offer exposition and at times more description than would be heard in normal conversation. For example Sheets writes Well she bubbled he was gorgeous. The most handsome man Id ever seen. Tall slim over six feet with jet black hair and slate blue eyes. God and what a body! An Adonis thats what he was. Every movement of his was athletic wizardry. I loved just to watch him see those gorgeous limbs of his in action; gaze at the purposefulness of his long powerful strides. In seeking to tell

the story the author tries a bit *too* hard to convey the scenery.

Additionally the book employs different font sizes to express differing levels of agitation anger and astonishment. Done once for effect such a device might be acceptable. But overused as it is here this technique is distracting.

Towards the conclusion which takes place a few years after the previous chapters Sue launches into a romantic liaison and the description of their encounters could be described as erotic or pornographic depending on the readers point of view.

Despite its flaws *The Cusp of Dreams* could well be seen as an indictment of a business model that makes more demands than its workers can meet. Does this way of doing business contribute to Sues behavior towards others? Does she enjoy playing the power game both in the office and in her socialization with her co-workers? These are some of the questions for the reader to ponder.