Clarion Review

General

The Khan Dilemma
Ron Goodreau
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

In Ron Goodreau's *The Khan Dilemma*, a cover-up is going on in Las Cruces, California. A young Muslim man by the name of Khan has murdered two people in a break-in gone wrong. Though the double homicide appears to be routine, the investigator assigned to the case, Max Siegel, is suspicious. District Attorney Rick Danko had previously assigned Siegel to paperwork hell, so why is Danko recalling Siegel now and putting him on an active case? Siegel has his doubts about the straightforwardness of the situation.

His hunch about the oddity of the case proves correct. The circumstances of the Khan incident don't add up to a break-in. Siegel has to take care how he handles these incongruous details, though, since Danko hates him and will do anything to smear his reputation. Furthermore, the feds are putting pressure on Danko as they, too, have an interest in the Khan case. Paired up with another agent that he doesn't particularly like, Siegel finds himself in a murky murder mystery with layers of deception.

This novel represents something of a career change for author Goodreau, who has degrees in government and law, as well as a stint in the Air Force. He is currently a deputy district attorney in Stockton, California. His time in the legal system adds the weight of knowledge to the sections of *The Khan Dilemma* that deal with Danko's operations.

A good political thriller should go from zero to sixty within a few pages, maintaining a high level of suspense and intrigue until the final page, which *The Khan Dilemma* does. The pace allows for effective introduction and differentiation of characters, but it also clearly, immediately sets out the problems of the book, then swoops the reader through the twists and turns of their solution. With its sustained energy and constant forward momentum, *The Khan Dilemma* engages readers through the last sentence, which, incidentally, leaves room for a sequel.

That said, Goodreau's novel relies too much on formulaic devices: the corrupt D.A., the duplicitous feds, the lone do-gooder, the impossibly sexy love interest. Moreover, the prose is competent but without any particular flair, relying on a hard-bitten voice familiar to the genre. The plot is not overly predictable, but the characters and the tone are, which does lessen some of the interest.

Overall, *The Khan Dilemma* is an entertaining page-turner and an above-average entry in the thriller and suspense genre.