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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ THRILLER

The Mirror

Alonzo L. Llorens
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In Alonzo L. Llorens's novel, a group of powerful African Americans known as the Mirror may be rigging a United States presidential contest in order to elect an African American candidate. As FBI agent Frank Sharpe searches for connections between the shadowy cadre and a growing number of crimes, the looking glass becomes cloudy. Llorens crams his page-turning whodunit with enough double crosses to keep readers guessing to the very end.

Within his swiftly moving narrative, the author elicits empathy for all of his characters, not just the honorable Agent Sharpe, but also for the corrupt members of the Mirror and their candidate, Patrick Allan, who knows the organization is using him for its own purposes. Because readers see Allan and the members of the Mirror as emotional individuals who experience crises of conscience, it is tough to view the crooked characters as one-dimensional villains. The author even assigns distinct traits and motivations to minor players, including Frank's reliable office assistant, his uncle, a scheming prostitute, and a devout ministerial candidate.

Llorens indicts our electoral system and offers trenchant critiques of the military industrial complex. He exposes how wheeling and dealing creates strange bedfellows in United States politics, and warns of the dangers of absolute power falling into the hands of an elite few. The author deftly integrates his themes into the story without appearing preachy or losing narrative momentum. Along the way, readers who are thrilled by high-tech gadgetry are sure to enjoy the tools Agent Sharpe employs during his investigation.

Several minor flaws may distract readers from the novel's rollicking ride. *The Mirror* sorely needs a copy editor. The narrative sometimes veers from present tense to past tense for no discernible reason. The word "country" is always capitalized, while the Democratic and Republican political parties remain lowercase. Inquiries that should end with question marks end with periods. And there are misspellings: "intact" becomes "in tack," and "granted" morphs into "grant it." One can tell a manuscript is in desperate need of a proofreader when "Frank" becomes "rank," and when the protagonist's car is a "Porche," not a Porsche. Readers who can overlook these errors will be rewarded with an engaging thriller in *The Mirror.*

JILL ALLEN (July 5, 2011)

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