Clarion Review

General

The Unmerciful Lawyer
Scott Gaille
CreateSpace
978-1-4563-5685-9
Four Stars (out of Five)

Scott Gaille, in his second novel, The Unmerciful Lawyer, presents a beguiling tale of marital infidelity, international financial fraud, and unrequited love. The lawyer-mystery writer has cleverly whetted readers' appetites with a well-seasoned morsel of a story, leaving them to complete the meal with their imaginations. Gaille's novel is captivating and fast paced.

The story opens in remote Alaska, as Cameron Cain, a Houston lawyer, is dragging the body of a man he shot and killed to a river where he knows it will be devoured quickly and completely by bears. Gaille artistically sets the scene with just the right brush strokes: "The low twilight of the Arctic midnight made the forest look purple. As far as I could see in every direction were gnarled trunks of windblown spruce trees, which seemed to change shape as I walked." The story starts out ominously dark and stays shadowy until the very end. Questions are left without full answers. Why does an otherwise conventional lawyer, husband, and father end up furtively disposing of the body of a man he killed?

Macie Cain, Cameron's wife, is another enigma. Macie is a devoted mother and successful international business person. She is also obsessed with her own physical appearance, power, and sexual conquests of men who can provide her more power and money. When Cameron firsts discovers his wife's infidelity, he is seemingly and appropriately shocked. He considers the cost of divorcing Macie in a calculating moment: "Yet the thought of divorce seemed too exhausting. Macie was like a bank account into which I had sunk years of currency." These characters are regular folks living a conventional life together, but they are, at the same time, devious, shallow, and amoral connivers.

It is nearly obligatory for lawyer-novelists to include court scenes in their books. This is true of Robert Traver, John Grisham, and Scott Turow. Gaille follows suit in The Unmerciful Lawyer. His court scene is convincingly presented and written with care, so as not to be overly

technical. To his credit, Gaille refrains from portraying the prosecutor as an evil force. Rather, Kenneth Horsmandon is developed as a quirky tactician, who creates art objects out of paperclips, the way other people doodle.

In an ending that would make American writer O. Henry proud, Gaille wraps up this morality play in a gauze-filtered final scene that fades to black. Cameron and Macie Cain are not a leading couple like Nick and Nora Charles from the classic novel The Thin Man, but they provide interesting company for the duration of The Unmerciful Lawyer.

John Michael Senger