

Nadine White



'Sign of the Cross' Review By Nadine White

What a work of art! Pure genius lies between cover to cover of 'Sign of the Cross' by Chris Kuzneski. I literally conquered this book in a matter of days, because the raw magic of the plot, the thaumaturgy of his writing, and secrets that gradually unfolded before my eyes, made me keep turning the pages. This book is what I'd call a "page turner", I simply could not put it down!

The novel opens with a very emphatic burst of short sentences, that plunges the reader right into this captivating series of events all, unbeknown to us just yet, incredibly linked, *"Erik Jansen was about to die, he just didn't know how. Or why"*. This is such a strong opening and it was executed perfectly, because I was hooked from that point onwards, an effect I'm sure was meant to be had.

There were definitely some 'laugh out loud' moments, *"there was something about his demeanour that said, If you fuck with me, I'll shit in your cornflakes"* - I'd love to meet this man, he appears to be quite the joker! I laughed at that line for a good 5 minutes...I s'pose that says more about me than it does about his wit and sense of humour...but I can assure you, similar laughable lines like this were peppered throughout the novel, like *"that's right, he was their rent-a-cop sandwich bitch"*, and *"Oh, it's not you. I love seeing your two teeth every morning"*.

So enchanting was this secret, that I found myself quite desperate to know what it was. As Boyd and Maria pondered different theories (I.e. 'who the laughing man was', 'who Tiberius' accomplice could've been'), believe I was pondering right along with them – It was that deep! I must particularly commend how, at the end of every chapter, there was always either a large revelation left, a small morsel of a clue left, or some kind of ominous sentence – but was never elaborated on, until due course...that is, until Kuzneski was ready for us to know, and you gotta love that! This even evoked excitement from the reader and creates suspense. For instance, *"little did he know that their paths would cross again, with a much more violent outcome..."*, *"If knowledge is the enemy of faith, then the Orvieto scroll is poison"*, *"Dr. Charles Boyd is the most wanted man in Europe"*. This technique evokes excitement in the reader, and creates an overwhelming suspense.

Although dealing with very historical issues, Kuzneski managed to write in a very refreshingly candid and modern style, all the while firmly engaging the reader. I noticed some beautifully placed writing devices, such as metaphors as *"Rose smiled in the face of evil (face of evil, being Benito Pelati)"*, *"the flames in the sky paled next to the fire in his eyes"*, similes such as *"blood squirted like a cherry geyser"*, *"sweat poured off his scaply like rain"*. Brilliant!

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My favourite part of the story...well, one of them, was an emotional reunion between Dante and Maria (I am an old sap!). Being a family orientated person, I deeply empathized with Maria when she revealed to Boyd how her father resented her, her mother (whom she was very close to) had committed suicide (which, might I add, never sat right with me from the jump), and how she had no relationship with her brothers. I felt for the little girl who had to find out her mum had died via telephone, from a boarding school in England (away from her native Italy). I thought that all of these negative things must have had an impact on her life, despite her being the fighter that she was. So, when her brother – whom she once abhorred – told her that he had been following her life closely since she left home, and how he loved her, I felt it was a beautiful moment. It made me smile, even. How devastated I was to read that Dante had been shot not too long after this reconciliation, by their own father. I loathed that unscrupulous , black hearted old man.

This leads nicely onto my other favourite part of the novel. I loved it when Cardinal Rose shot him. I loved the irony of the situation (a priest shoots the bad guy. While the cop bares witness. Oh, the jokes!). I feel that Cardinal Rose, so eager to make a martyr of himself (I believe), was quite foolish to take his own life (nobody likes a hero) - but I appreciate the dramatic edge that his suicide gave. As for finding out the secret, well, what a secret! Being familiar with the crucifixion tale, I felt quite the idiot for not considering Pilate myself.

This book does wonders for the imagination; imagine if the whole thing had been a big, old sham? Wouldn't that be something? I'm sure all Christians would go into complete denial, and in the long run it would affect us all, because though religion is at the root of most conflict in society, it also brings hope and comfort to the masses. I noticed that in the afterword, Kuzneski refused to address whether the information included in the book was based on factual information or not – a wise decision. I suppose, for now, we can all regard 'Sign of the cross' as the beautiful, intensely riveting work of art that it is.

11 out of 10, for sure!