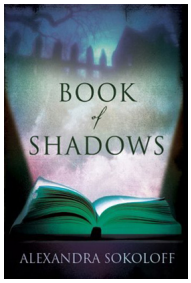
Adam Garrett is a hard-nosed homicide detective whose life changes forever when he discovers the dismembered body of a wealthy college student at a landfill. Examining the corpse, he notices a bizarre symbol and the ominous number 333 carved into her flesh. As Garrett investigates the case further, he is visited by Tanith, a mysterious witch who draws him into a dangerous world of the occult and satanic worship. With all the evidence pointing to Jason Moncrief, a troubled misfit and singer in a Goth band, and more murders lurking on the horizon, Garrett must take matters into his own hands and solve the case before its too late.



In BOOK OF SHADOWS (St. Martin’s Press), Alexandra Sokoloff (pictured), award-winning author of THE UNSEEN and THE HARROWING, craftes a well-told tale, featuring highly visual descriptions that pull the reader right into the story. Sokoloff turns the screws effectively and builds the suspense right until the final chapters. It’s obvious from the opening pages that BOOK OF SHADOWS is going to be an entertaining experience, and while the novel isn’t heavy or thought-provoking, the smooth storytelling makes this a perfect summer-vacation read.

Sokoloff clearly is an author with a command of the language who can hold your attention even when her narrative lags in the middle chapters. The characters aren’t people you’ll necessarily care about or fall in love with, but the casual reader will have no issues with sticking around as the tale unravels and the plot points intersect. At the very least, BOOK OF SHADOWS has a cinematic quality to it, and this reviewer was able to visualize the author’s scenes perfectly.

Unfortunately, as talented a wordsmith as Sokoloff is, BOOK OF SHADOWS suffers from a lack of originality. The characters are typical clichés—the tough-as-nails and skeptical police detective; the seductive and beautiful witch with a heart of gold—and the storyline is uninspired and filled with poor red herrings and unnecessary romance. And despite Sokoloff’s evident

in-depth experience with literary techniques, her knowledge of the occult sees to derive mainly from Wikipedia and the New Age section of Barnes & Noble. Pop-culture icons like Aleister Crowley are tired and have been used so often that it’s difficult to find a story that name-drops them especially imaginative. Setting much of the action in Salem also feels too obvious. Really? There are witches in Salem? No way.

The ending suffers from the same lack of imagination, and feels like it was thrown together. While BOOK OF SHADOWS has elements of a mystery, there is no real mystery to be solved, and the final moments are as predictable as the actions of the hollow characters.

All that being said, if you’re looking for a fast, easy read, you might want to give this a chance. If your expectations are low, and you need something light to kill time on the beach, then you won’t be incredibly disappointed. BOOK OF SHADOWS and Sokoloff definitely have potential, but this reviewer was hoping for something more.

{jcomments on}