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REVIEWS



Álvaro Enrigue knows that his novel *Sudden Death* is more than a little wild. It's a historical novel that invents history and a novel about tennis by an author who claims almost proudly to have never watched a tennis match.

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A MAN OF GENIUS

Rosen, Lynn

Una Publications (248 pp.)

\$14.95 paper | Apr. 1, 2016

978-0-9970738-1-2

The execution of an architect's will reveals complex relationships in Rosen's debut novel.

This narrative summons Samuel Grafton-Hall, fictional famed architect of the 20th century, and the relationships he had

with numerous women throughout his life. Rosen focuses on each of the important women who surrounded him, including his first wife, Catherine Chardon, whose architectural passions Grafton-Hall repeatedly stifled, and Daphne Paull, aka Camilla Iduna, a "nymphet" whom he kept at his second home, Hesperus' Walk—a massive, gothic eyesore that Grafton-Hall built out of spite for former client Von Mark (who then deeded the property to Grafton-Hall in an act of revenge). The Walk becomes the site of the novel's greatest dramas: a strange codicil to Grafton-Hall's will requires his widow and second wife, Elizabeth, who currently resides at the rustic but sumptuous Upana Rose, to go to the Walk to claim stewardship of it from its current occupant (whomever that might be). It's through this entry point that readers learn of a fire there that claimed Catherine's life; the Walk also played a role in Grafton-Hall's attempts to keep his young mistress hidden: might the fire have been more than mere accident? The drama unfolds amid passages brimming with vivid descriptions—crucial in a novel on architecture: "The structure seemed to hug the land in its endless arms, as its horizontal lines and the breadth of the field formed a picture plane that conspired to produce an elusive vanishing point." If only the inner landscapes were so eloquently sculpted; passages of self-reflection feature awkward rhetorical questions and often tell readers what a character feels before they have a chance to witness it. Still, effortless dialogue helps make the characters feel more complete. If readers continue through the only-hinted-at tension within the sluggish early chapters, they'll find more intense drama in the latter half.

Slow but lovingly crafted and complex; a nightstand book for lovers of *Wuthering Heights* and *Bleak House*.