

State of Terror, by Louise Penny

Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy

Bill Clinton had teamed up with James Patterson to write two blockbuster novels, *The President Is Missing* and *The President's Daughter*. Not to be outdone, Hillary Rodham Clinton co-authored her own espionage thriller, *State of Terror*, with mystery writer Louise Penny last fall.

State of Terror begins with Secretary of State Ellen Adams returning from South Korea on her first diplomatic mission. She had been appointed to head up the State Department by President Douglas Williams soon after his inauguration. The two are long-time rivals. Ellen and her media company had opposed Williams' candidacy, and now President Williams is setting her up for failure.

Aside from Betsy Jameson, her best friend and State Department counselor, Ellen is mistrustful of the new administration's staff members. Ellen, however, must spring into action quickly when an international calamity arises. In rapid succession, bombs go off in three European cities. Bashir Shah, a devious Pakistani arms dealer, is thought to be the mastermind behind the terrorist plot.

As the global crisis intensifies, Ellen consolidates support with international allies to stop Bashir Shah before he strikes again. Her daughter Katherine, now head of their family's media company, goes on a secret mission to the Middle East, while her son Gil, an investigative reporter with a questionable past, gets caught up in the fray. Amid it all, there appears to be a mole in the White House, and everyone is deemed a suspect.

A disclaimer on *State of Terror's* copyright page declares: "This is a work of fiction. All of the characters and events portrayed in this novel are fictional." Nevertheless, some characters, particularly one-term former President Eric Dunn, are thinly disguised. In one absorbing scene, Ellen flies to Florida to interview Dunn about his relationship with Bashir Shah. Arriving at Dunn's ostentatious mansion, Ellen muses that it "would have been splendid had it been an actual palace and not a monument to overcompensation. She'd had her media outlets do profiles on Dunn as his empire had grown, then crumbled, then risen again. Each time more audacious. More bloated. More fragile."

Back at the Capitol, Ellen devises a clever plan to expose the traitor within President Williams' administration. With its twists and turns, *State of Terror* is a plot-driven novel. Secretary Clinton's debut novel, indeed, will appeal to readers who are fascinated with political intrigue.

(Note: *State of Terror*, *The President Is Missing*, and *The President's Daughter* are part of the Heritage Hills Library and Somers Library collections. For a list of new books at the Heritage Hills Library, please see page 8.)