ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

Blue Fall
B. B. Griffith
Griffith Publishing
978-0-9824817-4-5
Five Stars (out of Five)

In B. B. Griffith's *Blue Fall*, Frank Youngsmith, an overworked claims investigator for Barringer Insurance, is sent to investigate potential fraud on a large claim. Frank just wants to finish the assignment so that he can go home and get some sleep. Events conspire to pull Frank into the shadow world of the Tournament—a set of high-stakes, contemporary gladiator games that a particular doctor wants to expose to public scrutiny. Though Frank is reluctant to take on the doctor's crusade, he can't resist a chance to help justice prevail over greased palms.

While Frank hunts for answers, the Tournament is set in motion for another round. Each three-member team represents a country, and each uses ammunition that shuts down an opponent's body systems until a counter-acting drug is injected. When this happens, an EMS team—on the Tournament payroll—rescues players before further damage can be inflicted. In this way, even when a team is destroyed, the players can be brought back to life to fight again in the next Tournament.

In the latest round, two teams are competing for more than the usual stakes. The opponent countries are using the Tournament to settle their own dispute, unbeknownst to the players. The outcome of the game will decide their fates. Meanwhile, there is a player on one of the teams who has a personal ax to grind, and this could undermine the purpose of this critical match.

Blue Fall is densely packed with details, but it never loses its focus by veering off on tangents. The details flesh out the characters and their motivations while building the story structure. Griffith has introduced a simple and elegant solution to the bodies-strewn-everywhere result of warfare by inventing the diode projectile—a technological element that ingeniously makes the story work.

The characters represent the book's cultural homelands in terms of motivation and behavior, but there is some modern-day stereotyping in their portrayals. However, Griffith generally moves beyond those stereotypes in believable ways. Readers will root for Frank as the

“everyman” and underdog. They will jeer at the villains, and perhaps at the book’s end, heave a sigh. With at least one sequel planned, there are plot threads still to be resolved and more vengeance to be dealt out, so the story is not over yet.

Blue Fall successfully combines two categories of thriller—conspiracy and techno—in just the right balance. This conspiracy-techno thriller is sure to please readers who enjoy either genre.

J. G. Stinson