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Clarion Review ★★★☆☆ **THRILLER**

Butterfly Hill

Brendan le Grange
CreateSpace
(227pp)
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Butterfly Hill *is an action-packed suspense novel that is fresh in its plays on history and mythology.*

Brendan le Grange's compelling adventure novel *Butterfly Hill* blends history with engaging characters.

Hiko is an art thief with a taste for luxury. He also hates his mother. Conning his alcoholic father into being his fall man, Hiko plans an elaborate scheme to exact revenge on his mother once and for all. As Hiko follows ancient maps to hidden clues, he also dodges clandestine cult members and determined detectives, uncovering secrets about China's history and his family's loyalties.

Hiko is an anti-hero, a thief by trade who is made likable thanks to his cool demeanor and unwavering persistence. Hiko is driven equally by a thirst for adventure and his disdain towards his mother, though their relationship is never elaborated on and his drive for revenge is hard to understand without personal details. Hiko's resourcefulness as a thief is more expertly conveyed, lending believability to increasingly difficult situations.

Hiko's father, police officers, and members of a secret organization round out the supporting characters. Their inner monologues explain parts of the plot, and their dialogue is natural. They are described with distinctive characteristics and mannerisms, making them easy to imagine, though members of the mysterious order are less fleshed out, and the group itself is inconsistently portrayed both as a national threat and a weakened organization. The young woman whom the order protects plays a central role in the plot but is one of the least explored and emotionally relatable characters in the novel.

Set primarily in Hong Kong, the novel's locations are well-detailed and deepened through the use of historic facts. The relationship between Hong Kong and China is important to the story and is explained in context.

The action-driven plot balances fast chase scenes with informational content. Some of the conflict drama is dulled by chapter transitions that resolve suspenseful moments too quickly. The writing style is colorful and makes good use of metaphors and similes to heighten psychological understanding, like a description of Hiko's father "shedding" a booze bottle "like an alcoholic hermit crab." Hiko is described as "a repentant pilgrim" as he crawls into strange cave locations. Mythology surrounding the Chinese Zodiac adds intrigue but is not consistently used.

A surprise ending is exciting but not plausible, though it wraps up most of the main plot points and leaves room for more adventures. *Butterfly Hill* is an action-packed suspense novel that is fresh in its plays on history and mythology.

DELIA STANLEY (November 28, 2018)

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