Clarion Review

Science Fiction

Chasing the Meridian: Kiara's Gambit
Donald W. Bacon
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

In the first of a projected trilogy, Donald W. Bacon introduces a science fiction tale that spans millennia but focuses its narrative on events in the previous two decades. Last survivor of an ancient alien race when our earth was young, the being known as Sarah Levine has died and been “reborn” too many times to count. So many times, in fact, that she is dying for the final time. This drives her to pass her knowledge to another generation. To accomplish this, she bears three children who are themselves descendants of an ancient Earth people. But there are forces working against her and the survival of her heirs: powers who want her knowledge for themselves, and powers bent on preventing that knowledge from living on in Sarah’s children.

Sarah’s three children are beset by memories that begin returning when they are adults. Chance isn’t the reason they are eventually brought together, having been raised apart from each other: their reunion is pre-planned, not only by their mother but by those who seek to control either Sarah’s progeny or what they’ll be given as their birthright. Each child has certain mental capabilities that can protect them in part, but one of their enemies has become insane in her quest against them, and she plots a relentless course toward each of them as she bulldozes her way through people and property. Despite their gifts, death is a real possibility for all of Sarah’s children. Only a book clutched by a human woman committed to a mental health-care facility holds the keys to their future.

Bacon wrote this novel in third-person present-tense viewpoint, a technique that gives the events related an immediacy not otherwise possible with other tenses. The effect is that of action happening now, as the reader reads it, providing a hook that is nearly irresistible. The urge to discover what happens next is strong as a result, and Bacon takes full advantage of this by keeping the flashbacks to a minimum and letting the tense rule the novel’s pacing. Of course, even the finest engine will run poorly on bad fuel, but this novel is fed by an engrossing story

line that never lets the reader down. The ending is quite spectacular without closing off the route to the second book and gathers up all the threads scattered in the book's earlier pages.

Fresh, exciting and addictive, *Chasing the Meridian: Kiara's Gambit* begins a journey that readers should find fascinating, whether they're veteran science fiction devotees or general readers.

J. G. Stinson