Clarion Review

Thriller

Conspiracy of Wolves
Ernie Hasler
CreateSpace
978-1-4664-4359-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

Ernie Hasler's thriller, *Conspiracy of Wolves*, tackles corruption at its deepest level.

The protagonist, Douglas Hamilton, grew up in a Scottish coal-mining family. During a hotly contested miner's strike, Douglas's father, Sandy, receives a list of three hundred powerful people who control the world in secret. The list contains names of leaders from the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Saudi Arabia, China, and India. Under the cover of night, the family members bury the list in a graveyard. Shortly afterward, Sandy dies a mysterious death while in police custody.

These events and their consequences haunt Douglas for the rest of the novel, clouding over everything and most powerfully affecting his relationship with his wife, Kelly. Tensions rise during the couple's time at Glasgow University, especially when they become involved in protests against nuclear weapons. The couple is targeted by the Ministry of Defense police and other forces, and the plot becomes increasingly ominous. The ending, while providing some resolution, leaves readers with the sense that all is not well.

Hasler opens each chapter with a biblical verse that illuminates rather than limits the text. The presence of proverbs may suggest that the book is Christian fiction, but it stays decidedly outside the conventions of that genre. The characters' religious beliefs are not central, and Hasler does not shy away from gritty topics. The setting in London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom provides a captivating backdrop for the narrative.

The novel's greatest flaw is its pacing, as Hasler does not maximize the tension of climactic events. Each small action is recorded, and major events are told with after-the-fact summaries. Readers will likely feel they are reading a news report rather than being engaged in the action as it unfolds; this also makes it difficult to invest in the characters. The text contains numerous punctuation errors as well, and while the dialogue itself is clear, it often feels too

simplistic or stilted—increasing the use of contractions would soften it considerably.

Conspiracy of Wolves is an intriguing read that will resonate with action lovers who oppose the corruption that runs deep in the realm of world power. That said, while the premise of the novel is interesting, the writing robs Hasler's book of its full power.

Melissa Wuske