Clarion Review

General

Covert Operations: Alpha
Eugene Nelson Jr.
AuthorHouse
978-1-4490-9027-2
One Star (out of Five)

Action and intrigue, advanced technology, limitless magic, and an alien race form the foundation blocks upon which author Eugene Nelson has built his first novel, Covert Operations Alpha. The book begins with a failed attempt by a character named High Spy to steal a disc of information from the technology company, Crem Dela Crem. From this starting point, readers are introduced to several more characters, including Yaud, Nannette, Dovacy, and Joseph. Each of them is plotting against one or more of the others as they attempt to gain power and control in the criminal and corporate worlds of Chicago. As events unfold, it is revealed that at least two of these major characters are actually members of a master alien race, and a whole new power struggle begins.

Eugene Nelson is clearly an imaginative writer. His universe is full of magic and advanced technology. Unfortunately, he does not establish any rules to govern the psychic abilities, healing powers, inter-dimensional teleportation, military smart suits, and cyborgs that constitute much of his story. Fantasy worlds need structure and natural law to temper magic and to allow the unbelievable to become plausible. Nelson has not provided either one. This is only the first of many problems.

This book has too many characters and not enough characterization. Each of the characters named above has his or her own supporting cast. Most of them are double crossing each other and they are all murderers. Many of them have more than one name, and the reader is given no information by which to tell them apart. Even the main characters receive little more than physical descriptions. For example, Yaud, an assassin, is introduced in a scene where she is applying lotion after taking a shower: “She applies a small amount to her hands,” Nelson writes. “Then she rubs it into her hard shapely calves one by one and oh so slowly. She applies a little more, then into her soft sexy thighs we go; you know the kind that forms around your hands

when you touch them." This description gives the reader no useful information about Yaud or her role in the book.

The plot and the author's writing style are also problematic. The book begins as a story about corporate espionage, but in the middle it takes a sharp turn toward intergalactic politics. Neither of these plots is successfully managed, and the book is primarily a series of bloody fights with an occasional pause for sex. Additionally, the author's writing is unprofessional and unpolished. In the end, poorly developed, unlikeable characters; a world without any rules or organization; and a mixture of plots that never come together make Covert Operations: Alpha an unappealing novel.

Catherine Thureson