ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

Escape from Paradise
Walter F. Wild
Xlibris
978-1-4415-6427-6
Five Stars (out of Five)

Walter F. Wild, a native of Hawaii and former psychologist, gives new meaning to the phrase "trouble in paradise" with his second book and first novel, *Escape from Paradise*.

Who would want to leave the lush paradise of Oahu? Does something sinister threaten his island home? Psychologist Linc Steadman becomes suspicious when a former client calls him, claiming to be held captive and mistreated at a mental institution called the Makiki Center run by Steadman's friend, Dr. Owen Carter. Steadman's attempts to investigate the center are thwarted by Carter, the police, and even the client who called Steadman for help. To get to the bottom of the mystery, Steadman enlists the assistance of investigative reporter Sue Flower. The pair soon uncovers an insidious plot by Carter and his staff to create peace and equality all over the island using mind-control techniques similar to those used at the Makiki Center. Steadman and Fowler find themselves with a three-pronged mission: expose Carter's dastardly methods to a duped public, dismantle the center, and rescue its patients. *Escape from Paradise* is a compelling thriller that details the efforts of the due to discover and put a stop to Carter's plans.

Wild writes like a seasoned novelist. His story grips the reader from its first lines of suspenseful dialogue, and it keeps the reader's attention long after the last page, thanks to the thought-provoking questions it raises even as it entertains. Wild wonders whether people prefer to be controlled or to be free to make their own decisions, and he questions where the line is between genius and madness. He expertly explores these philosophical conundrums while offering snappy dialogue, developed characters, thrilling suspense, and burgeoning romance.

Every character is multilayered. Linc Steadman is a believable Everyman who becomes a hero as he expresses realistic qualms about and disbelief of damning evidence of his former colleague's wrongdoing. He often finds himself wanting to trust others, despite whatever misgivings he may have. Wild pits Steadman's belief that people and systems will do what is best against Carter's assertion that people must be shown what they want. While Carter is power-hungry and unhinged, he clearly believes that his methods are benefitting humanity, giving him

more depth than a one-dimensional maniac. His charisma and ability to make the media his mouthpiece call to mind chilling dictators both past and present.

Like Steadman, the story's supporting players are fleshed out. And Wild introduces readers to Hawaii's flora, fauna, and culture. Indeed, the native Hawaiian author gives readers a fascinating introduction to his home state, while integrating his tour seamlessly into the plot.

Similarly, the author's experience as a psychologist lends authenticity to both the moral qualms Steadman faces in opposing his one-time friend as well as Carter's outrageous methods. Thriller aficionados won't want to escape from the entertaining paradise that is *Escape from Paradise*.

Jill Allen