ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

Federal: A Stephen Vinson Financial Thriller
Hotse Langeraar
CreateSpace
978-0-615-64551-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

As conspiracy-theory adventures go, Hotse Langeraar's *Federal* is pretty good. Subtitled *A Stephen Vinson Financial Thriller* on the cover and *A Mystery Novel* on the title page, it is far more thriller than mystery, with the emphasis on "financial" in the first half of the book and "thriller" in the second half.

Those familiar with tales of the Illuminati, the gnomes of Zurich, or similar plots of a cabal of powerful bankers and industrialists bent on manipulating and taking over the world for their own profit will settle right into Langeraar's story as if it were a comfortable chair. They will eagerly turn the pages to follow the stock manipulation schemes, commodities trading scrambles, and insider double dealings described in often minute detail. Readers who are lured in by the opening gun battle may drift away as they seek more action and less exposition, but if they stay the course, they will be rewarded once the midpoint of the book is reached.

As Stephen Vinson becomes drawn into the secret world of the ultra-rich conspirators, readers who are predisposed to believe in similar conspiracy theories will be enraptured by Langeraar's exposé of a clique whose members are believed to foment unrest, start wars, manipulate markets, and fix elections purely for their own aggrandizement. Some may find it difficult to believe that the United Nations is controlled by money worshippers, while others who hold the international organization in less regard may find that the story supports their worst suspicions. Readers holding any of these points of view, however, should take into consideration the author's final notation: this is "a fictional book."

If the first half of the novel is a bit dry and heavy on the financial details of the conspiracy, the second half is an old-school adventure with firefights, car chases, hand-to-hand combat, and hide-and-seek escapades. Langeraar delivers slam-bang scenes, and he delivers them well. Those who enjoy the more thought-provoking expedition into the lair and mindset of the villains that the author set out in the first half of the book, however, may squirm restlessly as their initially comfy chairs start to feel a bit lumpy with so many dead bodies lying about.

Federal is a well-thought-out piece of conspiracy-theory fiction that draws on both the historical and the contemporary to make its villains and their villainy believable. Some of the action sequences (notably, the middle-aged hero taking on a group of mercenaries) are a bit less credible, but fans of the genre expect the lead character to be larger than life.

Each half of *Federal* is sure to please some readers but will probably lose others. Some sort of shuffling of the deck, alternating exposé with action, might have worked better, as it would have kept both types of readers engaged.

Mark McLaughlin