ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

Fourteenth Colony
Jeff Altabef
Tate Publishing
978-1-62510-452-6
Four Stars (out of Five)

With a statement on today's economic crisis and political climate, *Fourteenth Colony* is a fast-paced, futuristic political thriller.

In America in the year 2041, the Originalist party has taken over the government, clearing the way for big business to do what it pleases, including making the middle class smaller every year and pushing more people into ghettos. As a result, the threat of a violent uprising is coming to a boiling point.

Jack is a member of the underground group Fourteenth Colony, which aims to nonviolently bring America back to a better time. Jack stumbles across information that could help the movement, but it almost gets him killed. His genius younger brother, Tom, must find the information in order to exchange it for his brother's life, fighting against time and also against Warren, a powerful, rich, eccentric man who wants to sell the information for his own purposes.

Jeff Altabef's clean writing style shines in *Fourteenth Colony*. His descriptions are thorough and fresh without overloading the reader: "Rachel leaned back in her chair, looking a little disappointed, her shoulders slumping back slightly as she closed her eyes." His ideas of the future are believable, and they function as an extreme version of the path some believe America is headed down. At the conclusion of the book, instead of events and characters being drawn in black and white, as one might expect, they turn gray in an enjoyable turn of events.

Both the text layout and the font used are basic and make the book easy to read. Part of the title on the bold red, white, and blue cover graphic looks worn and bloody, lending some edginess to the image. Altabef includes almost fifty footnotes to give the reader extra information, such as American “history” of 2041, humorous backstory, and interesting tidbits about the characters. At times the footnotes distract the reader from the story, especially as they may take up a half page or more. Some footnotes could have been easily added into the narrative, while others do not add to the context at all and could have been left out entirely.

The main characters are well fleshed out, and readers can easily understand their motivations. Other characters are added throughout the story, and some are a bit two-dimensional. However, instead of leaving them at the wayside as many authors do, Altabef gives closure to the stories of these secondary players by including bits of epilogue, by way of footnotes. Some of these characters even get happy endings.

Altabef, a New Yorker, is a storyteller and a volunteer at the writing center of a community college. He is donating half the proceeds of this book to Covenant House, a safe environment for homeless youth that provides counseling, medical assistance, and a place to sleep.

Readers who enjoy futuristic and political thrillers would like *Fourteenth Colony*.

Beth VanHouten