Clarion Review

General

Hulagu's Web: The Presidential Pursuit of Senator Katherine Laforge
David Hearne
Subterfuge Publishing
978-0-9755976-9-9
Four Stars (out of Five)

David J. Hearne's first novel is a ripping good political thriller. Republican Senator Katherine Laforge is running for president on a platform that threatens both the wealthy and powerful oil industry by advocating green energy and the IRS and all associated with the cumbersome and costly US income tax system by replacing it with a universal sales tax. Moreover her unorthodox views on foreign policy which include befriending—rather than bombing—Iraq have made her a target for those who reap benefits from war and aggression.

When Katherine's bullet-ridden campaign bus is discovered by the side of the road with multiple bodies inside and the senator herself is nowhere to be found it is difficult to know where to look for those responsible. The plot grows yet more complicated when it becomes known that the senator has a clone whose mind is filled with Katherine's memories. Although the clone was designed to self-destruct a malfunction has occurred and she is now determined to have a life of her own.

Under the guise of entertainment Hearne investigates issues of importance including the motivation behind Islamic terrorism the corruption of American politics including the buying of congress by oil interests the attitude toward women in positions of power and the deliberate bungling of efforts to move the country to green energy.

The author a former military officer knows what it's like to wear a gas mask and chemical protection suit in the heat of the desert to feel wind-driven sand in one's eyes and under one's collar and what death smells like. He is also at ease describing the green technology that could be America's salvation from dependence on foreign oil and he does not flinch from naming the interests that intend to see that its promise is never realized.

The story is fast-paced the dialogue is compelling and the stakes are high as the characters are impacted by the horrific events that mark the progress of Senator Laforge's

campaign. The author is at his best in action scenes where his ability to engage readers with graphic description shines; the development of character is less skillfully handled and the various storylines and sub-plots would benefit from fuller treatment even at the risk of slowing the pace a little. The book would benefit from a thorough proofreading and in some cases fact-checking (the composer mentioned early in the story is “Elgar” not “Edgar”) as a lapse in one fact may weaken readers’ trust.

David Hearne besides having served in the military was involved in the IT industry for twenty years and has written numerous articles on technology. The title of this book is taken from a gruesome chapter in Iraq’s history the bloody Mongol invasion of Baghdad led by Hulagu Khan grandson of Genghis Khan.