



Nazi Gold, Latitude 55

A. Jay Collins

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In this adventure novel with a thrilling premise, risk-taking renegades work to right historical wrongs.

Inspired by conspiracy theories and stories surrounding eighty-four million ounces of gold stolen from victims of the Holocaust, A. Jay Collins's historical thriller *Nazi Gold, Latitude 55* imagines a clandestine plot to stash the plunder in British Columbia's outback, as well as a present-day mission to retrieve it.

A legend about a mother lode in Toodoggone entices several prospectors, though no one has returned from hunting it in the Canadian wilderness with success. Then, in the 1940s, Lucky, an emigrant from Sicily, finds a gold vein in a cavern. Turning to his mafia connections in hopes of developing a mine, he instead meets Lansky, who spies a chance to hide Nazi gold inside of the cavern for later use.

From this outlandish scheme, an adventurous story about Toodoggone's colorful opportunists and its rugged environment unfolds. In tone, there's both appealing, tall-tale flair and a sense of determination. But the book's coverage of Lansky's moves, from determining the logistics of transporting the gold, to his methods for refining and certifying it, is straightforward and brisk to excess. Details concerning standard practices in the gold trade, and asides about Argentina's history of welcoming Nazi exiles, are also shared in a detached, didactic manner that distracts from the book's action.

The book is swift in transitioning to the present, wherein two professional saboteurs in Vancouver are tasked by a cumbersome organization with finding and restoring the hidden gold to its multinational clients. Expository conversations about the mission undermine the suspense, though; there's little room for the duo to use its own ingenuity. The efficient background involvement of the organization also results in fewer major obstacles to overcome.

The saboteurs have murky backstories; indeed, most people are captured in imprecise terms, as with a "hooligan-looking guy with an Italian look." The book's women seem present only to add implied sensuality. Still, the list of the people and organizations involved is intriguing: the Vatican, Cosa Nostra, and banks all play in to these ominous, high-level collusions. Their financial maneuverings hold attention.

The novel is as entertaining as it is familiar: there's a classic man of mystery whose persuasions are intimidating and whose actions are calculated and bemusing. And the duo's adversaries panic and bumble, so that the ultimate results of their work are seldom in doubt.

In the ranging adventure novel *Nazi Gold, Latitude 55*, risk-taking renegades work to repatriate a fascinating treasure trove.

KAREN RIGBY (December 14, 2021)

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