



Nebrodi Mountains: The Billionaire and the Mafia

William Peace

Strategic Book Publishing

(280pp)

978-1-68235-699-9

Nebrodi Mountains is a novel about mafia intrigue and moral dilemmas in which a billionaire takes a stand against the mob.

In William Peace's novel *Nebrodi Mountains*, a billionaire moves to Sicily—and right into mafia territory.

Jerry came from poverty, but he was driven to make a fortune and start a family. Now a billionaire several times over, he decides to move to a castle in the European countryside and style himself as a cultured person. Thus he and his family settle in the shadow of the Nebrodi Mountains in Italy.

Hoping to persuade a neighbor to sell his property, Jerry seeks out the mafia's help. But then he becomes concerned when the mafia men use his name in a human trafficking scheme. They also try to steal paintings that Jerry had hoped to purchase from a local Catholic church. After tragedy strikes his family, Jerry finally decides to take the mafia on.

Driven by action, criminal acts, and grand melodrama, the novel juggles several subplots and a large cast in order to maintain its momentum. Violence arises, but always with a purpose. Characterizations are achieved via keen observations, as of how Jerry seeks to dress like Europeans while doing business with them to ingratiate himself, and how his mind operates at two levels during a conversation. There are layers of meaning in the cast's conversations, which deploy profanities and slang in some cases and concern heavy matters in others: a priest discusses good, evil, and free will with people as they try to weigh their moral decisions, infusing the work with a philosophical dimension.

Though it is undermined by typographical and grammatical errors, including random capitalization, the prose also includes a credible smattering of Italian terms. It is sophisticated in its presentations of Italian culture, high finance, and finery. "Look-at-me dwellings" are contrasted with "small, attention-starved bungalows":

Class distinction is maintained in the gardens: bounteous displays of roses, bougainvillea, lilies and dahlias in orderly plots versus sickly collections of geraniums and small cactus scattered randomly near the front doors.

Jerry's business meetings and transactions are also conveyed in authentic terms, including his involvement with a solar power project. And the story builds to a violent, unexpected confrontation that leaves no one unscarred. There are elements of catharsis—but also high costs.

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JOSEPH S. PETE (September 15, 2022)

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