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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ THRILLER

Platinum Quest

Thomas Bagot
Baclesit Pty (Nov 23, 2012)
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Ecological idealism meets corporate greed in *Platinum Quest*, Dr. Thomas Bagot's second novel involving mining operations in South Africa.

Ben de Bruin and his family are struggling to manage a potentially profitable platinum mine. Their goal to accomplish the mining with minimal impact on both the environment and the people of the area proves an uphill battle as they combat financial and technical difficulties. Their efforts are further complicated by the machinations of the power-hungry head officer of a corporation with interests in the site, who is willing to go to any length to make a profit. Ben and his sister, Clare, are joined by consultants Rebecca Rosslyn and Matthew Clements and others as they try to prove their operation viable for financing.

Bagot's novel is heavy on technical description, and the details of mining equipment and operations are explored thoroughly and explained well. Many readers will enjoy following Ben and his associates as they do all they can to fight against a heartless corporation's interference.

While the author's enthusiasm and knowledge is apparent and well realized within the novel, *Platinum Quest* stumbles in other areas. The primary focus on technical detail results in a narrative that often reads like reportage. Many of the action scenes lack urgency, and the overall pacing is more leisurely than the plot demands.

Characterization is acceptable but deficient in terms of depth. While Bagot provides background information for the primary characters, their actions and interactions are often lacking in emotion and sufficient detail. For instance, when one of Ben's family members is brutally attacked, Ben utters a few words of concern but quickly turns the subject back to business. Another curious instance involves a female character whose presence during Ben's travels with a mining engineer is not mentioned until that scene ends. Even being shot at doesn't draw her into any of the conversations, and her appearance at the end of that chapter seems a tacked-on addition: "Anne remained silent trying to contain her trepidation." This tendency to gloss over both details and character emotion results in a lack of reader engagement.

Platinum Quest appears to be a continuation of Bagot's previously published novel, *Out of a Southern African Furnace,* but no relationship between the two books is clearly referenced. Certain situations and circumstances need further explanation for those readers who are unfamiliar with the author's previous novel.

Bagot's latest novel has the potential to be a compelling story, and his vast knowledge of South African mining operations cannot be disputed. A deeper emphasis on character development and pacing would help *Platinum Quest* reach a larger and more appreciative audience.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (January 14, 2013)

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