ForeWord Reviews

THRILLER

The Bleiberg Project: A Consortium Thriller
David Khara
Simon John, translator
Le French Book
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In David Khara's *The Bleiberg Project*, Wall Street hotshot trader and millionaire Jeremy Novacek is descending into a very dark emotional hole despite his worldly gains.

His father's abandonment when Jeremy was a boy continues haunting his life, and he's reached the point where he's slowly killing himself with cigarettes and alcohol. The morning after celebrating a particularly lucrative trade, a knock at his door brings Jeremy the news that his father has died. This initiates a series of events that take him from the United States to Switzerland to Belgium in search of the answer to one question—what's so important about the Swiss bank safe-deposit box to which his mother gave him the key after hearing of her husband's death?

The answer to that question, and many others, tumble into Jeremy's life one after the other. Something in that box is of great value to someone else—someone who wants Jeremy out of the way. There are also those who have been assigned to protect him, but for different reasons.

Too often, thrillers feature near-breathless pacing and not much else, and the road from beginning to end becomes predictable after the reader figures out the formula. But the discerning reader who prefers thrillers to have more meat on their bones will easily be attracted to *The Bleiberg Project*, the first book in a planned series.

Khara has a more than suitable background for writing thrillers, having variously been a lawyer, business owner, athlete, and reporter. The parallel stories of Jeremy in the present and the titular doctor in the past (World War II) weave together expertly. Jeremy's interaction with his two traveling companions rings true throughout the book; there are no cardboard cut-out characters here.

The pacing is indeed thriller-quick, but not so fast that one loses the thread of the story. Details of character and setting insert smoothly into the narrative, and the changes in viewpoint are not a distraction. While some dialogue passages tend to be didactic in tone due to the information being provided all at once as opposed to a more spread-out pattern, any other

approach would give away the major story points. Khara can certainly be excused for this minor infraction due to the skill and panache his writing style brings to the novel.

Novel translations must walk a tightrope between the home language and the translation language. Simon John's translation from the original French to English seems accurate without being stiff or stuffy. This implies a good working relationship between Khara and John, a key ingredient in any successful translation project. John preserves the personalities of Khara's characters, and Khara writes American characters with no visible effort. The skills and experience of both author and translator are obvious, with a subtle delivery.

The Bleiberg Project is familiar without being predictable, romantic without being saccharine, and fun without being vapid. Khara has written a book that should appeal to a wide range of readers.

J. G. Stinson