Clarion Review

General

The Bluebird Conspiracy
Jack Cade
Laurel Mystery Books
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Three Stars (out of Five)

In the near future America is nearly imploding as the first female President fails to undo damage wrought by the Bush administration. The country's potential savior who bears the Vonnegut-like name of Truman Trout turns coal into gold using an amazing nanotechnology machine called the Bluebird. The miracle of alchemy doubles the sagging dollar's value overnight. The desperate unemployed masses who have been turning rapidly into useless wrecks like those in the novel *Player Piano* find the means to rally.

Like Ron Popeil setting the hook Trout announces that the breakthroughs will keep on coming. He promises to eliminate energy shortages and cure disease with robotic blood cells. Trout puts himself forward as the presidential candidate who can both address the nation's woes and head off a huge fascist conspiracy. All he asks is that the people trust him to consolidate the institutions of power to serve their interests.

The story is told from the point of view of Julius Burton an elite engineer/spy who serves as a liaison between the San Diego Police the FBI and the CIA. Burton uncovers fascist policy planning and violent conspiracies while trying to clear Trout's background of campaign-derailing skeletons. He joins a group of power brokers known as the Club of Pericles at the behest of a man seemingly modeled on Henry Kissinger but struggles to determine if their members are working toward the solutions or pushing for darker goals.

This book's appeal is at a maximum when Cade describes hedonistic romps aboard the yachts of billionaires or delves astutely into troubling questions of constitutional ethics. Wasteful war spending is condemned as are economic policies which only hasten anarchy: "…these extreme imbalances were reaching explosive revolutionary proportions. There was a limit to how much those at the top could take out of the system before it collapsed."

The constructed reality suffers from contradictory logic such as discussing Hillary

Clinton historically while she simultaneously serves as chief executive under the name Helen Carpenter. The prose of some chapters sounds like abstruse scientific seminars surrendering the forward motion successful thrillers require. The most noticeable factual error pegs the date of Robert Kennedy's assassination a year late a surprising oversight considering Cade's experience as a Kennedy researcher.

The author is in fact a rocket systems engineer and has written two other books: *Secreto* and *Bloody Treason: The Assassination of JFK*. *The Bluebird Conspiracy* works from a compelling premise and nicely extrapolates the results of the current national mindset of favoring security over freedom.