ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Diamond Eye From Siberia
Coco Max
AuthorHouse
978-1-4490-5739-8
One Star (out of Five)

In his debut novel, Coco Max, a Bulgarian-born Canadian citizen, tells a confusing, maze-like story of intrigue surrounding the valuable diamond mines of Siberia. Jocko Bonatty, a Washington Times reporter, is sent to Russia after a clairvoyant tells him there will be a double murder in Moscow and that the US and Russian presidents will be assassinated in Canada. Jocko learns that Siberia's diamond mines are being sold to the highest bidder—De Consolidate, a South African company owned by the wealthy Heckman family. The Russian mafia intervenes and carries out murder, mutilation, torture, and kidnappings in its attempt to profit from the deal.

Meanwhile, an unnamed secret society with connections to the US president hopes to snuff out the life of the elderly owner of De Consolidate and the son of the head of the Russian mafia. The book ends in Canada, where Jocko provides officials with details about how the assassination of the presidents will be carried out, but his information is wrong, and luck intervenes.

The Diamond Eye From Siberia reads as if the text were translated from its original language by a foreign-language translation Web site. The result is a painful rendition of the English language. One of the most serious problems is the stilted dialogue that reads like a "Boris and Natasha" segment from The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show. For example, after a character named Valerie speaks with Jocko, she says, "Obviously the dandy is going to turn right in what he had said to me…What's left is to me to watch of how rich I'm going to become."

The convoluted sentences are not helped by the author's misuse of quotation marks and other punctuation; it is difficult to determine who is speaking and when the speaker changes. Pronoun issues add to this confusion, occurring so frequently that understanding the action is possible only after several readings. Past tense verbs are often missing their "-ed" endings, and meaning is lost in the translation of phrases like, "over jamming their segments with foamy stories." All of these elements make for very difficult reading.

The author claims that any resemblance to persons, places, and things is coincidental. He then proceeds to use an odd practice of renaming proper nouns. For example, the KGB is the GKB, Katherine the Great is changed to Ekaterina the Great, and Dom Perignon becomes Don Perrino. The most humorous is the name of the 1960s Russian leader: Boris Yelpin.

Max has tried to create an exciting story, but it is often derailed by prolonged, unbelievable action and too much detail. If this book is to succeed in the American market, it needs to be revised by a qualified editor whose native language is English.

Dolores Sparrow