Clarion Review

Mystery

The Methuselah Conspiracy
P.E. Peterson
978-1-4259-6888-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

"…the use of cloning for reproduction would irrevocably turn human beings into artifacts."
—Brent Blackwelder and others

In the terrifyingly uncontrolled field of genetic research, the difference between Frankenstein speculation and headline news is less than a decade. *The Methuselah Conspiracy* explores a fundamental alteration in the human makeup —a shutdown of the aging mechanism. The action carries over from Peterson's first book in the series, *The Chatelaine Connection*. Backers of the now-dead rogue geneticists, known as the Alliance, are flush with operating funds. Entire towns in France and the Benelux countries are in their pockets. The Alliance lacks replicable information and will stop at nothing to recover a girl whose unique genes could be the key to near-immortality.

> *'What if he did create a triple helix? How would that effect our human species that's based on the double helix? Did he already affect a change and what happens if that change gets out into the general population?'*

The earlier book focused on Emma Llewelyn, an up and coming young Welsh barrister who was the victim of harrowing Alliance experiments. This second installment features an ensemble cast of intelligence agents from Interpol and the House of Chaos. One of their more interesting players is Zack Judd, who must work with an old flame and deal with his hated doppelgänger. The ad-hoc leader is master spook emeritus Cyrus MacKenna, Emma's grandfather. His edge comes from a built in b.s. detector which is more sensitive than a middle school teacher's:

‘What’s the MacKenna insight sir?’

‘It’s a special trait peculiar to the Clan of MacKenna that gives them the power to know when someone is deceiving them…

Alliance villains are motivated by an in-house death penalty for those who miss their assigned objectives. The author shows a good proficiency in languages. All characters speak English, yet many also communicate in French, German and Italian, increasing the settings’ authenticity. The tone is very cloak-and-dagger with the characters using code words, safe-houses, disinformation, all manner of surveillance. Agents triple-dip on paychecks; loyalties are as convoluted as tax law.

One issue of form is a challenge to overlook. Nearly all events are treated with equal importance, though judicious summarization of some would have helped the pacing. Intelligence agents lay out extensive theories step by step and repeat them when new people arrive in a scene. This book could have been significantly shorter and retained the important events. In an uncommon twist, the author inserts her own spoilers. Those who wish to deduce for themselves the identities of moles inside the intelligence agencies should skip over names in bold print.

P.E. Peterson’s expertise centers around the intersection of medical science and the law. She is a Boston-area malpractice paralegal with over thirty years experience in nursing. *The Methuselah Conspiracy* is timely, insofar as it anticipates legal debates and scientific crimes of the near future. Humanity is no longer so easily defined.