

The Perennial War of Paramours

Rock Kitaro

Stage in the Sky Creations (Aug 27, 2023)

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Diverse characters representing opposing viewpoints face each other down in the action-packed thriller The Perennial War of Paramours.

In Rock Kitaro's provocative thriller *The Perennial War of Paramours*, a secret society of women seeks to dominate the world and will stop at nothing to have their way.

The story begins when Marcus, a columnist, gets a whiff of the society's existence after an unknown man dies in front of him and he becomes a suspect. Using the man's last words as his starting point, Marcus goes down a deadly trail replete with secrets and attracts the attention of the society, resulting in sweeping consequences that play out throughout the book.

The diverse characters propel the story forward. Some are crazy, vengeful, or self-righteous; others are noble-minded and naïve. Some even address the audience directly, explaining themselves or justifying their actions. They also proffer insights into the society and reveal much about its adversaries too: the Paramours are people wronged by the society who seek to foil its plans.

Five voices are centered, though the switches in narrative perspective too often occur in the middle of their individual storylines. Only later in the book do their tales begin to flow together well. In explaining their feelings and motivations, the book is raw, with multiple beliefs expressed and debated—and with people on contrasting sides quite sure that they alone hold the correct beliefs. Still, some do weigh the opposing viewpoints, struggling to come to terms with where they stand. However, characters' exchanges are unnatural in tone.

Details about the changing scenery flesh the world out:

Leaves. Branches. Vines. Gray sky and the nasty feeling when one's body heat blended with the moist frosty air.

And because it is packed with action scenes, intense training regimens, and unexpected revelations, the plot retains intrigue as tensions come to a head in the latter half of the book. However, beyond the action scenes, the prose is prone to indulging in rants regarding the state of the world:

In many of these countries, women are still treated like cattle, like currency, like a bartering chip between families. I've seen women stoned for exposing too much skin. I've seen teenagers beheaded simply for reporting they were raped. I've seen entire villages beating a woman for walking without a man's supervision or daring to take off her hijab in the scorching sun.

Further, parts of the narration are formulaic, made up of explanations that unite the story's parts, as when one of the characters meets his mother in a fashion that's abrupt, resulting in him having to remain undercover and limiting his efficacy for the Paramours. Such scenes serve limited purpose in the book, which jolts its way toward an outcome that

feels too predetermined.

The Perennial War of Paramours is an intricate thriller that considers the power struggle between genders.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (April 8, 2024)

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