ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

The Price of Liberty
Keir Graff
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A Marlboro man, living in a world of bulldozers and concrete mixers, has switched his brand of cigarettes to American Spirit. They have fewer chemicals, taste better, and last longer; they also indicate the leanings of a modern cowboy, as comfortable with the library, cell phones, and computer chips as he is with hunting, camping, table saws, and nail guns.

Keir Graff is an accomplished writer. His book's foundation is strong and reliable, firmly constructed with setting and character; it prepares the reader for the swift-moving plot. *The Price of Liberty* begins in autumn, in beautiful-sky, current-day Red Rock, Wyoming. Divorced heavy equipment operator, Jack McEnroe, shows interest in a pretty librarian as each relaxes in an after-work bar. All this is set up in the first three paragraphs. Soon, the action picks up, double speed, with each chapter switching to a different character's point of view. But the author has described each one carefully, and the reader easily separates the good guys from the bad.

Graff's story reads like current political and economic news. The US government authorizes the building of a federal prison, Camp Liberty, to house terrorists. A defense contractor gives a no-bid, cost-plus subcontract to a building firm in the small Wyoming town. In turn, the company hires locals, who value a paycheck and health benefits in tough economic times. The workers, including the clerical personnel, have little wish to delve into issues like the buying and selling of their Senators, who facilitate needless government spending, and a system that passes the inflated costs down to the taxpayer. All that continues until Jack McEnroe and his ex-wife, Kyla, find their safety and that of their children threatened.

This thriller is a tale of a modern, rural West, where the workers smoke, drink, fight, swear, spit, and love their vehicles, which are extensions of their personalities—with gears turning and pistons pumping. Psychological underpinnings are used to explain a powerful, yet honest employer tempted to risk "…his work, his reputation, his freedom…" The author deftly explores love triangles, father-son issues, and relationships between friends, young people and elders, bosses and employees.

As the characters in cowboy country get entangled in the greed and corruption around

them, danger, and their efforts to avoid it, take over their lives. Graff's writing keeps the reader anxious for the next scene. If a tale of murder and mystery, told with finely wrought characters, setting, and a delightful touch of humor, is of interest, this is the book to read.

Mary Popham