Clarion Review

General

The Snow Leopard and the Ibex
Douglas W. Farnell
AuthorHouse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Whenever predator hunts prey, there is always an element of risk. Sure, an animal like a lion may have claws, sharp teeth, and superior strength to bring down another animal, but the swift kick of a hoof in a lion's snout could knock out incisors, break a jaw, or put out an eye, making eventual survival for the lion near impossible. This element shows the balance of power, strength, and vulnerability that all beings possess, a theme that Douglas W. Farnell explores in his novel *The Snow Leopard and the Ibex*.

The story introduces Daniel Prescott, a simple man dedicated first to his Seattle-based software company and second to Arianna, an attractive, single friend. When his company has capital problems on the eve of the 2008 financial crisis, Daniel learns that he can raise the capital that he needs from a Turkish friend.

Once in Turkey, Prescott is struck by a woven rug that depicts a scene of a snow leopard and an ibex, predator and prey. The imagery sticks with him on the flight home, as the plane is hijacked by Georgian terrorists. Faced with a life-or-death situation, Prescott and Arianna, who learns of the hijacking from half a world away, know what they each must do and leap into action.

The Snow Leopard and the Ibex is one part action thriller and one part chase story. From the opening of the book, it's clear that Farnell has a real knack for writing dialogue, but his true strength is creating action scenes. After the hijackers take the plane, Farnell kicks the writing into overdrive and crafts some of the most tensely written and compelling scenes in the book. For example, as the head terrorist, Giorgi, talks to the captain, Farnell writes, "As the captain completed his sentence, Giorgi turned away from him while he pulled an assault knife from its hidden location in his jacket pocket. Quickly, he dispatched the captain by slicing his neck from behind and left him to bleed to death."

Farnell's story flows well until Prescott's objective shifts from matching wits with a hijacker to climbing a mountain. This plot turn transforms the story from a hero-versus-antagonist or even a hero-versus-environment tale to a story about a hero versus himself. The change of direction may agitate some readers who were expecting one story only to find themselves in another, but savvy readers will be able to see and appreciate Farnell's overall story arc.

The Snow Leopard and the Ibex will catch the interest of readers who enjoy the works of Robert Ludlum or Tom Clancy. The story puts readers in the tracks of the real snow leopard as it stalks the ibex, takes it down, devours it, and is hungry for more.

Katerie Prior