

## The CEO



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This is a story that needs to be told again and again. The avarice and self-serving attitudes of the principle character are depicted graphically and chillingly. People like Douglas Aspine should be locked up as quickly as possible and ‘re-educated’, before they can do more harm.

There seems to be a general feeling that most CEOs of large companies are primarily interested in their own enrichment and aggrandisement, with the fortunes of the company coming in second and everyone else (employees and the CEO’s own family) coming in a poor third. There have been a number of excellent non-fiction books and essays in which this has been the theme, but this is the first fictional work I have read which explores it. The author knows what he is writing about, being a chartered accountant who has worked for years in corporate recoveries and reconstructions.

I expected the protagonist to be a terrible human being and he is, but I hoped for some glimmer of salvation. I found none. Douglas Aspine lurches from one disaster to another, although *he* seems not to notice until well into the book. As the reader, however, the lurching and the disasters were obvious, even predictable; although I wished they would not occur and I hoped that he would see sense after a while. This was partly what made this a page-turner – the hope that there would be a turning point leading to a different outcome; the hope for redemption.

Although the inexorable journey of destruction that Aspine seems to be on was excruciating to me, it did not take away from the enjoyment of reading a riveting yarn. There were, however, some aspects of the book that did diminish my enjoyment; these I would put down to possibly poor editorial intervention.

There are too many instances in the book of the author feeling he needs to take the reader by the hand to explain something that a half-savvy reader does not need to have explained. For instance: “The shares had come on the market at \$2.05, but now... were trading at a measly 40 cents, *and a lot of punters had lost over eighty per cent of their initial investment*” (my italics).

There were also too many clichés for my liking (“she [had] ... legs that never seemed to end”), although the author may argue that this is part of the style. The style reminds me of genre detective novels, where you expect the right clichés in the right places, but they seem out of place here. There are also some typographical errors which niggled me and were another example of possibly poor editing.

All in all, I enjoyed the story and felt pulled along by my expectations, my hopes and the bloody-mindedness of the main character. The ending was a surprise, but everything I had wished for. I can recommend this book to everyone who hates the current corporate climate and to everyone who needs convincing that it stinks.

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