

Dynamic and descriptive, 'Daisy' is far from docile

By ANNETTE WILKERSON

Judith Krantz

Princess Daisy

Although *Princess Daisy* is a misleadingly sedate title, Judith Krantz's latest sizzles in the tradition of her previous novel, *Scruples*. A breathless tour of bedrooms, boardrooms and ballrooms, *Princess Daisy* has all the elements of a best-seller. It's pure trash — and it's impossible to put down.

Princess Daisy Valensky, the novel's namesake and the story's bedrock, is a grand-style heroine. Not only is she a real live princess, she's gorgeous, talented and witty to boot. To add a dollop of depth, Daisy has character — an unerring instinct for doing right, whether it's a question of morality or fashion. (And, since this is a Krantz novel, fashion is of utmost importance.)

The novel encompasses three generations of love stories. The first

two — the wedded bliss of her royal Russian grandparents and her parents' star-crossed affair — are incidental to Daisy's tale, but taken together they

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pack more of a romantic punch than one lifetime possibly could provide.

As the child of a stunning American actress who gave up her career for passion and an authentic Russian prince who has \$20 million, Daisy doesn't have the easiest of lives. But she does have a romantic past.

Daisy rides a roller coaster of riches throughout the novel, metamorphosing from have to have-not some four times in the story. The pampered-princess intervals permit us entry to the world of blue-blooded gentry, while the have-not jags get us into the world of advertising and big business.

Daisy works in a high-powered New York ad agency when she's down on her financial luck. Rather than turn to her wicked half-brother, Ram, for help, she strikes out on her own. No spoiled royalty here.

Princess Daisy is peopled with unequivocally black and white characterizations — caricatures, really. Bastions of goodness, intellect and honor are pitted against morally and mentally vacuous, malicious types. Daisy, who has a number of "character-building" burdens to bear, is the Snow White person. Evil characters are foils for her goodness, and the novel provides her many an opportunity to shine.

Since there only is one male character who can match Daisy in terms of integrity, it's not difficult to guess where her romance will develop. He is also a self-made multimillionaire, a prerequisite for the Krantz hero.

You might say the characters lack subtlety and sophistication. But they serve their purpose: They get into those boardrooms and bedrooms you're dying to find out about.

Whispers of romance quickly turn to shrieking sex in Daisy's world. Krantz is not the kind of author to discreetly close the bedroom door in her reader's

face. The novel's sideline characters supplement the main actors by indulging in countless romantic trysts.

Krantz is as adept as describing a lush setting as she is at providing the steaming details of her characters' sexual encounters. With the precision of a movie prop-man, she graphically arranges and describes every scene in terms of decor and attire. Just in case the reader isn't polished enough to recognize the labels being tossed about, Krantz explains their significance, setting standards for what is *gauche* and what is *de rigueur* in such high places. Characters are defined in terms of their grasp on what is in vogue.

Whatever Krantz may lack in sophisticated writing style and characterization (and she lacks plenty), she makes up for with inside information and the sheer audacity of her story. *Princess Daisy's* appeal is straight fantasy coupled with voyeurism. We're like peeping toms looking in on a never-never land of royalty, riches and ribald sex. And it's that dirty dose of insider's gossip that makes reading it such a pleasure. **M**

Annette Wilkerson is a book critic for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

Simplistic ending flaws the fantasy of 'Hidalgo's Beard'

By MICHAEL WADE

Conger Beasley

Hidalgo's Beard

Hidalgo's Beard, Conger Beasley Jr.'s first novel, is an imaginative modern-day fantasy that makes an ambitious attempt to combine the themes of escapism and initiation in a strange journey through the mind of 27-year-old Navy Dypes, its main character. The book cheats at the end, since the psychological and social conflicts it deals with seemingly are forgotten. But the fertile imagination Beasley weaves into so much of the 146-page book nearly saves it, and makes some of Navy's adventures refreshingly entertaining.

Navy has decided to escape from the Palm Springs society in which he finds himself trapped by living at the bottom of a swimming pool. He begins to take on the physical characteristics of an underwater creature, including green skin and even the beginnings of gills at his throat. His country club-set father and a doctor acquaintance both interpret the changes taking place in Navy as a physical or psychological ailment rather than an act of will, as Navy calls his new condition, and make plans to put him in the hospital. But an old woman named Hetty who has the same "condition" befriends Navy and tells him to go down the coast to Ensenada, where he is to look for a message hidden in the beard of a great bust of Mexican hero Miguel Hidalgo. The message, Hetty tells Navy, will enable him to communicate with all creatures and thus give him the power to overcome his father.

Navy doesn't realize as his guide sends him on the quest that his initiation into the world he has only

glimpsed before from the swimming pool will take him through such an incredible odyssey. During the fantasy journey, Navy rides through a huge forest fire with a daring Archie Bunker-like oil truck driver; learns about an Indian tribe that lives beneath the desert from an old woman who gives him an abalone-shell whistle which later proves its special powers; flies to the coast with a mysterious suicidal pilot in a glider filled with chickens and an array of interesting passengers; meets a third old woman who gives him further hints of the great secret he seeks; meets a well-known director of sex films who contracts with him to film his encounter with Hidalgo's beard; learns another clue to the secret he seeks from a prostitute in Ensenada.

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The surrealistic fantasy becomes even more strange at his destination. Navy learns that the giant bust of Hidalgo is one of three in the city — and that because of a peculiar, deadly characteristic of the three busts, he will have only one 10-minute period to get his message from the beard.

The book's ending is a complete disappointment; Navy simply wakes up at the bottom of the swimming pool, without the knowledge he sought so hard and apparently with no use for what he learned in his psychological odyssey. It seems that Beasley simply got done with exercising his vivid imagination and decided to end the book in the most meaningless way possible. The symbolic statements about the human condition and the state of society leave the reader rather empty because

Navy is not allowed to cope with what he has learned — nor can we be certain that there was ever anything he could have escaped to.

The novel does deal with the escapism theme in a unique way. The role of mature women as Navy's guides is unique and significant — particularly since he gradually discovers a mysterious power from a sound that is physically part of the womb, the starting place for life and all its secrets. Other sounds that are clues to the secret knowledge are beautifully described; in the pool; Navy listens to "the ultimate reaches of the universe, a most terrifying sound, a non-sound, the echoless din of a black hole, no bigger than a gumdrop, a spot of concentrated malevolence continually devouring itself... which moves through the universe like a murderous shark, gobbling everything in its path."

Beasley's writing at times is brutally powerful — and the imagery in his first book usually is original. He describes communities he sees during the flight on the glider: "Curling out from the Interstate in ugly brown cankers were developments and bedroom communities, whorls and tentacles of featureless housing, geometrically exact but inadequately spaced, an unchecked spillover from the urban centers fifty miles away, oozing like dirty sludge into unspoiled valleys and secret canyons."

Beasley, who holds bachelor's and master's degrees in comparative literature, at times irritates the reader because he seems to overwrite some passages for no apparent purpose except intellectual exercise. But the writing is refreshing even with its occasional lack of restraint, and for this reason the fantasy is worthwhile even though the book fails thematically. **M**

Michael Wade is associate editor for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

Weekend Fare

Cinema

Campus

You Can't Take It With You — With James Stewart. At 8 p.m. today in Carroll Hall. Free with UNC student ID.
An Unmarried Woman — With Jill Clayburgh. At 7, 9:30 and midnight Friday in Carroll Hall. Admission \$1.
Mean Streets — Robert DeNiro in Martin Scorsese's stunning film about low-life mobsters. At 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday in Carroll Hall. Free with UNC student ID.

Duke

Same Time Next Year — With Ellen Burstyn and Alan Alda. At 7 and 9:15 p.m. Saturday and Sunday in Page Auditorium on the Duke University campus.

Chapel Hill

Varsity—Cruisin'. At 3:15, 5:15 and 9:15 p.m.
Varsity Lateshow—The Rocky Horror Picture Show. At midnight Friday and Saturday.

Plaza I—The Electric Horseman. At 2:30, 4:50, 7:10 and 9:30 p.m.

Plaza III—Apocalypse Now. At 2, 5 and 8 p.m.

Carolina Blue—Foolin' Around. Final shows today at 5:45, 7:35 and 9:30 p.m. **Chapter Two** starts Friday. Shows at 2:45, 5, 7:15 and 9:30 p.m.

Carolina White—Kramer vs. Kramer. At 7:05 and 9:15 p.m.

Carolina Classics—The Thin Man. Final shows today at 2:15 and 4 p.m. **Seven Brides For Seven Brothers** starts Friday. Shows at 3 and 5 p.m.

Carolina Lateshows—Happy Birthday, Wanda June at 11:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday. **The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming** at 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Radio

In Focus—Featured artists are: Jethro Tull and Lou Reed today; Pink Floyd and Roy Buchanan Friday. Aired from 6-11 p.m. both days on WDBS-FM 107.

Inside Track—The Ramones' *End Of The Century* at 11 p.m. tonight on WXYC-FM 89.3
Classic Album Feature—Dan Fogelberg's *Souvenirs* at 11 p.m. Friday on WXYC-FM 89.3

Music

Recital—Wayne Layle, baritone, and Michael Ching, piano, at 8:15 p.m. today in the East Duke Music Room on the Duke University campus

Duke University Wind Symphony Viennese Ball—At 8:15 p.m. Friday in the Durham Civic Center.

Doc Watson—With Uncle Walt's Band at 8 p.m. Saturday in Memorial Hall.

UNC Jazz Band—At 8 p.m. Sunday in Hill Hall Auditorium.

Recital—John Hanks, tenor, Julie Hull, soprano, and Jane Hawkins, piano. At 8:15 p.m. Sunday in the East Duke Music Room on the Duke University campus.

Planetarium

The Planet Seekers—A science fiction show about aliens scrutinizing the planets in our solar system. At 8 p.m. today and Friday; at 1, 3 and 8 p.m. Saturday; and at 2, 3 and 8 p.m. Sunday.

Theater

Othello—UNC Playmaker's Repertory Theatre presents Shakespeare's tragedy today through March 2. At 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and at 2 and 8 p.m. Sundays in the Paul Green Theatre. Call 933-1121 for reservations.

Mark Twain Tonight—Hal Holbrook in a one-man show at 8 p.m. Sunday in Memorial Hall.

Steambath—The Durham Theatre Guild presents Bruce Jay Friedman's comedy at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 2:30 p.m. in the Durham Arts Council Building, 120 Morris St. For reservations call 682-5519.

The House of Blue Leaves—The Art School Gallery Theatre presents Linda Wright's drama at 8 p.m. Friday through Sunday in the Gallery Theatre in Carr Mill Mall. Call 942-2041 for reservations.

Gallery

Ackland Art Museum—Recent Art From Chicago today through March 9.

Morehead Planetarium Gallery—Photograph Images of the Seventies by Ron Kovacs through Feb. 29.

Horace Williams House—Works by 30 area sculptors today through Feb. 29.