



Absolute Vengeance: The Alex Shepherd Story

C. W. Lemoine

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Absolute Vengeance is a richly constructed adventure thriller made strong through its painstaking details and compelling characters.

Absolute Vengeance by C. W. Lemoine is a contemporary thriller about a man who joins an anti-terrorist organization to exact revenge upon ISIS for killing his family.

Alex is a sheriff's deputy in Louisiana, and the cozy opening scenes of the story are ones of sentimental domesticity. His wife, Lindsey, is a teacher at his daughter Chelsea's school. The book's beginning reads like a romance novel rather than a thriller, masking the sudden violent turn that the book soon takes.

One day, Lindsey and Chelsea's bus driver is diverted by a terrorist's car, and Alex witnesses his wife's beheading and his daughter's immolation. Their horrific deaths instantly alter the comfortable narrative; the shift is extreme and graphic, and undermines the story's believability.

Alex travels to the Middle East and commits himself to taking out the terrorist leader who indirectly masterminded the deaths of his family members. He comes to be known as "the Wolf" for his military prowess. His rage is acute, and is expressed in blood-boiling, seething anger that is overtly pronounced and that does always not come across as credible or nuanced.

The book is technically sophisticated. Scenes are set with details about weaponry, law enforcement, tactical maneuvering, the hardships of war, and a thorough familiarity with terrorists and their activities. Battle scenes are composed with knife-edged tension, softened by camaraderie between those in battle.

Asmin, the so-called "Lioness," is one of the novel's most compellingly constructed characters. She has also experienced great family loss and pain. She reminds Alex of his wife, but she is no damsel in distress. She is one character among many who makes difficult choices for the greater good, and she exemplifies the legendary status that becomes attached to wartime heroes. Through characters like her, the book avoids glorifying violence for its own sake. Characters remain humble, shown to do their jobs to help others.

This is a compelling, engrossing story about a well-intentioned American abroad whose inadvertent allegiance to destroying the bad guys results in horrific turns. The plot developments stand out among contemporary thrillers centered on anti-terrorist activity.

Absolute Vengeance is a richly constructed adventure thriller made strong through painstaking details about the current state of terrorism, those who incite it, and those who fight it.

PHILIP J. KOWALSKI (September 28, 2017)

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