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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ THRILLER

Box 731

Paul McKellips
Authorhouse (Aug 16, 2013)
Softcover $19.95 (338pp)
978-1-4917-0280-2

Anyone looking for a fast-paced, wildly exciting espionage thriller with a huge twist at the end will do well to pick up this first-class book.

Bioterrorism is the new terror frontier. When high-grade anthrax becomes a hot commodity, US Navy Captain "Camp" Campbell and Lt. Colonel Leslie Raines have to overcome many obstacles to prevent the loss of more lives as revenge is exacted for an event that occurred years earlier in what was known as the Asian Auschwitz. A fast-paced and globe-trotting tale, *Box 731* takes the reader to political hot spots around the globe and ends in dramatic fashion.

Author Paul McKellips has a long résumé of successes in both film and print, and his skill is evident in this book. He adeptly moves the reader all over the globe, painting each setting with pertinent details. Whether the characters are at a snow-covered wedding in Vermont or the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta airport, McKellips adroitly creates a sense of the place. "A fresh blanket of snow covered all the old autumn leaves on the ground. The forest was lit with a heavenly glow as an arc of one hundred candles sprayed patterns of golden light up the white canoe bark."

Initially, the story line is daunting. The prologue is set in Tokyo in 1947. Suddenly, the story leaps into the present, the plot veering to save Camp's life from a gunshot wound inflicted by his partner, Leslie. The narrative then moves to Russian mafia members in Miami; spies in Aleppo, Syria; and a laundry detergent manufacturing facility in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The mind reels in an attempt to put all places and situations in some order. With steady reading, however, it all begins to jell and quickly becomes a wild ride.

Interestingly enough, there is a romantic subplot running through the main story line. Though Leslie shoots him, Camp still loves her, and their romance stretches throughout the book. McKellips always remains tasteful and never descends into the realm of sex for sex's sake. The rape of a CIA agent being held hostage takes place off camera.

The only real problem is the book's frequent and copious use of military jargon and acronyms. Frequent consumers of military espionage books will breeze through it, but general readers may struggle. Simply forging ahead is the best solution because the story itself is so exciting and well written that the military language is a very minor issue. Also, to a certain extent, the cover photo of blindfolded men facing execution is misleading because it is not indicative of the story.

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LYNN EVARTS (November 14, 2013)

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