ForeWord Reviews

THRILLER

Broken Angels
Molly Best Tinsley
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Intrepid CIA operative Victoria Pierce trades the sandstorms of Sudan for the Ukrainian steppes in the latest spy thriller from accomplished author Molly Best Tinsley. In *Satan's Chamber*, Tinsley introduced Pierce as a novice who nonetheless trekked to North Africa to find her missing father. In *Broken Angels*, the clever agent takes her crime-solving skills to Ukraine, on an undercover mission to thwart the illegal export of highly enriched uranium. It's a tall order, but Pierce is never one to back down from a challenge. Instead, she also takes on a ruthless gang of sex traffickers who prey on young girls. With Tinsley's expert research and eye for detail guiding the story, the two cases weave themselves into an elaborate web that even Pierce is challenged to untangle.

Tinsley creates emotional charge through breathtakingly close calls at border checkpoints and eye-to-eye confrontations with would-be slave traders. Victoria and her colleagues, including zealous archaeologist-activist Hannah, seldom back down. Still, they're not cookie-cutter heroines but real women. Tinsley makes sure we know this by including friendly banter and details like Victoria's disgust at having to wear high heels as part of her undercover garb. Light one moment, dark the next, Tinsley's writing can also be visceral, like when she describes the gaze of an approaching predator, burning "like a knife peeling off her skin." The combination heightens anticipation: you never know which way she'll turn next.

Similarly, the setting is both authentic and evocative, and Tinsley's deep knowledge of the area shows in her smooth inclusion of archaeological digs and Ukrainian history. She slips some political themes in here and there, contrasting corrupt modern-day politics with an egalitarian society from 7000 BC, for instance, but she never dwells on the background, always returning to Victoria's dual quest to save girls from their graves and the world from its bombs.

Sheila M. Trask