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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ THRILLER

Cobra Strike

Patrick E. Thomas
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As commando revenge fantasies go, Patrick E. Thomas's *Cobra Strike* is predictably broad and outrageous, with lots of action involving its muscular and highly trained hero.

Suspension of disbelief and willingness to ignore military and other government protocols are vital to enjoying this book. Readers who are able to do so will get a quick jolt of high-wattage entertainment; those who want a believable story with a more authentic feel should look elsewhere. No soldier, let alone a Navy SEAL on a secret mission, would be allowed to take along a pet, especially not a poisonous, one-hundred-forty-pound king cobra, and no fighting man would want or be able to carry such a creature on a fifteen-mile forced night march through a hostile desert in enemy territory. Yet this is exactly how Thomas's hero Captain Zakkova Ikanovich—millionaire playboy, badass biker, and Medal of Honor winner—burdens himself in the opening chapter.

If Ikanovich's antics while in uniform are the stuff of pure fantasy, what he does after leaving the service is even more outrageous. It's hard to imagine a covert operative that is a six-foot eight-inch, three-hundred-fifty-pound muscle man, especially when Thomas writes that, "people would stare at him like he was some type of god."

This is not the kind of man any organization would select to secretly infiltrate a hostile capital. Nonetheless, Ikanovich is sent to hunt down drug-cartel bosses in Mexico, conduct acts of sabotage, and kill the heads of state in Iran and Syria. Such assassinations of government leaders, except in times of declared war, is forbidden by U.S. law. When so many details don't ring true, even readers' ability to suspend disbelief is undermined. Everything comes far too easy for this cartoonlike hero, so the story never offers any tension. The reader will feel as if they are in a video game where the hero never dies and never has to duck an incoming round.

Some readers may derive a bit of fun and satisfaction from the video-game violence that permeates this action-packed little novel. For many, this book will be a guilty pleasure, as Thomas delivers more booms and bangs than can be found in a whole collection of Schwarzenegger, Stallone, and Willis movies. Thomas writes in a loose, easy-to-read style, and for those who want their action heroes to be "some type of god," this might just be the book for them.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (November 14, 2012)

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