

Extraordinary Retribution

Erec Stebbins

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There's intrigue, murder, ethics, religion, romance, an international setting, and characters you really come to know and care about.

Erec Stebbins nails it with this book. Just when you think you have the recipe down for international thrillers, an author upends it and creates multifaceted characters and a plot that never stops. The author has packed everything into *Extraordinary Retribution*. There's intrigue, murder, ethics, religion, romance, an international setting, and characters you really come to know and care about. The Whore (Agent Sara Houston) and The Priest (Father Francisco Lopez) dodge interdepartmental corruption, terrorists, and The Wraith (a shadowy Pakistani-American assassin) to find out who is responsible for the murder of Father Lopez's brother.

Father Lopez simply wants some answers about his brother's strange death. When Lopez discovers his brother's body in a cabin in the mountains, a wall of the cabin is missing, blown apart by what had to be an explosive device. Later, when Lopez is shown pictures of the murder scene, the wall is repaired, and he's told by the investigators that it was simply a burglary gone wrong. Burglars don't use semiautomatic weapons and bombs to break in, and Lopez's questions lead him to Agent Houston, who agrees to help discover what really happened. Event after event quickly changes The Priest's attitude and skill set, and soon he is fighting terrorists alongside Agent Houston.

The pace of this novel is spot-on. While it's a lengthy book at four hundred-plus pages, Stebbins's clear, crisp writing and exciting plot twists keep the story moving at breakneck speed: "Lopez winced seeing the quantity of blood. *Did she hit an artery?* He knew Houston was a trained agent and had seen her toughness before. But he was frightened by what he now saw. She was predatory. Cruel. *Or in a corner fighting for her life.*"

A layer of religion is introduced into the story when The Priest pursues The Wraith, which creates an excellent jumping off point for the use of scripture and The Priest's knowledge of the Bible. The use of angel imagery also works to add more depth to the good-vs.-evil premise. But, to further mix it up, is The Wraith entirely evil? Are The Priest and The Whore entirely good?

Stebbins publishes his own books, and he is a master at both writing and production. There are virtually no copyediting errors, and the format, cover, and page setup are professionally produced. The cover is eye-catching and leads the readers' thoughts to spy thrillers and international intrigue.

LYNN EVARTS (November 22, 2013)

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