FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Far Bright Star
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
978-1-56512-592-6
(May 26, 2009)

Robert Olmstead is the author of the critically acclaimed *Coal Black Horse*. His latest novel *Far Bright Star* begins in 1916 when Napoleon Childs a war-hardened cavalryman guides a group of untried soldiers into the mountains of Mexico to catch Pancho Villa. It isnt that easy. "[E]verywhere they went it was the same story" Olmstead writes. "They had just missed them a day ago an hour ago the next high valley the next mountain peak and a cave that did not exist."

Their mission is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of an enemy in massive numbers not Villa and his men but something worse-Dorados gold-rush bandits "…armed with variety of Winchester and Remington carbines and rifles…and all manner of bladed weapons: knives swords and machetes…they would attack. They always attacked."

The Dorados chew through their ranks. Those unlucky enough not to be killed outright are taken prisoner tortured and humiliated. Napoleon was among these and then at last left alone in desert. Except here his mind begins to betray him plaguing him with doubts visions and long buried memories. He begins to second guess his simplistic soldiers perspective asking himself dangerous existential questions going places in his head that a warrior shouldnt go.

There is violence in this novel but its not filler and padding to a weak plot. This narrative is lucid and Olmsteads prose is tight disciplined vividly poetic. Readers who enjoy the western works of Louis LAmour like *Callaghen* and Cormac McCarthys novels *Blood Meridian* and the second volume of his Border Trilogy *The Crossing* will relish *Far Bright Star* as a great western that coils through psychological depths while remaining a minimalist masterpiece.

Lee Gooden