



## Feeding the Tiger

**JC Bourg**

Three Greyhounds (Sep 24, 2015)

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*This interesting, quick-moving adventure, set in an exotic locale, is a tale that keeps pages turning while mixing in a forgotten struggle for independence.*

In his quick-moving action-adventure novel, *Feeding the Tiger*, JC Bourg shoots across Southeast Asia following Vietnam vet Reno James, a target of ruthless racketeers.

It's the early 1980s. Reno's washed up on Thailand's coast among other disenchanting Vietnam vets. Most suffer from "Soldier's heart," post-traumatic stress disorder complicated by an inability to reintegrate into society. It's a sun-and-surf, girls-and-bars lifestyle, which Reno finances by selling "souvenirs"—AK-47s, M16s, and other war relics; there's steady demand from stateside wannabes and nostalgic veterans.

Feminists won't be pleased by the bar-girl atmosphere early on, but the ribald party attitude fits. There's a good variety of expat characters, one married to a Thai, one a hard-living amputee, and one a loner known as Longboard. He lives to surf, perhaps attempting to symbolically wash off the guilt he carries from being part of the CIA's assassination group, the Phoenix Program.

The novel's early narrative attempts a Hemingway-esque tone, with short declarative sentences one after another. However, as the story moves into Thailand's shadowy underworld and Sri Lanka's killing fields, action flows smoothly. It begins when Reno is approached by a mysterious man called S.A. who wants Reno to provide weapons—caseloads of "souvenirs"—for Tamil rebels in Sri Lanka, a land in revolution where "the Singhalese and Tamils live in different worlds... Their cultures are divided by religion and language."

After Reno successfully makes a modest shipment to Sri Lanka, S.A.'s next order is so big that Reno needs financing. Aided by Longboard, he approaches the Triad, a local Chinese syndicate. At this point, two shoot-'em-up narratives begin—first, adventures in Sri Lanka for Reno and Longboard, and second, troubles with the Chinese gangsters.

Island characters are solidly sketched. There's privileged Rolph van der Wall, whose "close-cropped silver bristles encircled a liver-spotted bald head," as well as Reno's romantic interest, a beautiful Dutch doctor named Sandy DeWitt, who is on the island as a medical relief worker. Best-described, with ample motivation and backstory, is Chola, van der Wall's housekeeper's son. The Dutchman considers Chola a surrogate son, financing his education. Now Chola's been radicalized by mistreatment of Tamils, and he's joined the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Island descriptions resonate—"skinny chickens kicked up dust"—with many Sri Lankan action scenes echoing gunfire and smoke, especially one in which Reno and Longboard are chased by a helicopter gunship while riding a classic BSA motorcycle.

While the writing might not reach Clancy or Ludlum levels, this is an interesting, quick-moving adventure. Set in a rich locale, it's a tale that keeps pages turning, all while mixing in a forgotten struggle for independence.

GARY PRESLEY (November 24, 2015)

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