

Piercing the Veil

Eric Wentz

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Grant Chisolm, a chivalrous U.S. Navy Seal, is recruited by a covert anti-terrorist organization associated with MI6. Chisolm's grandfather was friends with the organization's founders, but went missing while investigating a World War II operation gone wrong. In his work with this secret group, Chisolm must face a panoply of subversive and power hungry men. The most perverted of these villains is Jomo Raphael, a self-proclaimed leader of Christ's Army of Liberation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Funded by the blood diamond trade, Jomo is bent on unifying Africa under his leadership. Chisolm's assignment is to eliminate this charismatic masochist, who is allied with other evil personages in an intricate network.

At 380 pages, *Piercing the Veil* is not a quick read. Author Eric Wentz packs in convoluted storylines featuring Catholic priests, a family of Nazi South Africans, and British intelligence officers. Several lovely women add color; a family on vacation gives a sense of normalcy; and assorted Arab, Pakistani, and Turkish terrorists bring the story into the twenty-first century. The author, an English professor, tucks in plenty of references to literary figures both military and mythical for an additional layer of interest.

Dialogue and exposition fluctuate between stilted and poetic, sometimes muddying understanding and interrupting the action: "They raised their guns to fire when two machine guns suddenly fired upon them like the wrath of Jehovah from on high or some demon indeed scouring the earth for victims," Wentz writes.

Readers must be on their toes in order to remember the names and biographies of a host of complicated characters, and also to keep up with the constantly shifting scene locations. The novel's setting jumps from the Scottish Highlands in 1941, to the present in Sub-Saharan Africa, to a mission in South Africa, to the Union Jack Club in London, and then to yet another site.

Eventually the pieces fit together and prove that this novel has a purpose beyond giving step-by-step descriptions of perversion, torture, and humiliation. Some passages are quite intense—especially those that describe various torture techniques—but as an action-adventure story, tighter writing would only add to the suspense and enjoyment.

With some judicious editing and a more straightforward presentation of pertinent information, this book could easily become an intriguing terrorist-inspired action adventure with a knight's quest twist. Readers will like the historic and familial ties between past and present, as well as the maniacal villains and secret organizations clashing in a timeless good vs. evil conflict.

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