

The Insurmountable Edge: Book One

Thomas H. Goodfellow

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The Insurmountable Edge is an intriguing potboiler that portrays a frightening scenario of a US-China confrontation.

Thomas H. Goodfellow's timely political thriller *The Insurmountable Edge* imagines a world in which the US and China move close to open warfare.

Jack and Jeff belong to the elite special forces of the American military. They served in several foreign conflicts and fought numerous enemies, including the sometimes stagnant bureaucracy of Washington. Now young generals, they are tasked with executing some of the most daring and dangerous missions of the US government.

When not on missions, the men spend time at Jack's plush ranch in the High Sierra. Their personal bickering is highlighted in the early chapters, as are Jack's problems with his seventeen-year-old ward, Adelaide. Then, the men are called upon to address a worldwide conspiracy; it includes leaked Chinese war plans in the Middle East, the deaths of top-level US defense contractors, and the murders of two children in the California desert.

This first series title promises a lot more future action featuring Jack, Jeff, and Adelaide, not only because there's so much action here. In the opening chapter, masked men attack and torture a pair of young children. From there, the book progresses to scenes of international intrigue, coordinated action, and tit-for-tat violence stemming from Jack, Jeff, and Adelaide's decision to investigate the seemingly random murders.

Strong, direct sentences and active pacing that moves from one major development to another help with the story's progression. Its action scenes are balanced with those involving intelligence gathering; scenes of fighting are interspersed between sharp discussions of modern warfare, politics, and criminal investigations.

Jack and Jeff are realistic warriors whose foibles and scars are fleshed out, most of all Jeff's fight with a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder, an internal battle that's handled with care. Caricatures of PTSD are absent; in their place is a complicated human being who manages to thrive despite his anxiety and bad thoughts. Jack, Jeff, and Adelaide's relationship also holds attention.

The central mystery is concluded via a neat summation of connections between the various murders and military maneuvers. It involves a classic cliffhanger that remains true to the magnitude of the central conspiracy, which is too big to resolve in one novel alone.

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BENJAMIN WELTON (June 12, 2020)

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