

The Perfect Warrior

L Ray Vinson

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Steve Vining leads a charmed life. Physically fit and handsome enough to be the object of amorous attention from neighborhood housewives, he is a gifted research chemist by the time he reaches his early twenties. But everything changes on September 11, 2001, when terrorism claims a loved one, setting him on a path for vengeance in *The Perfect Warrior*.

Steve's invention of a chemical compound that could change the profitability of the food industry leads to an even greater discovery—one that could affect his personal safety as well as the security of the entire country. Steve brings his concerns to the White House and soon becomes part of a plan to cut off terrorist financing by infiltrating the largest drug operations in the United States and Mexico. The plan makes use of Steve's natural physical and intellectual abilities as well as the chemical formula he seeks to protect.

L. Ray Vinson, a former member of the U.S. Air Force, delivers a complex plot in *The Perfect Warrior* with some success. The first one-third of the novel explores Steve's personality and the evolution of his chemical discovery, culminating in his vow to seek vengeance against the terrorists while protecting the potentially dangerous formula. Rather than following Steve as he seeks to avenge the terrorist attacks, the story switches gears at that point, and the remainder of the novel is devoted to pursuing and eradicating drug dealers.

Steve and his friend Sammy, who partners with him on dangerous assignments, are well-developed characters. The majority of other characters are only superficially explored; they exist primarily as foils to Steve's activities. Because women are characterized by their sexual attributes or in terms of their lack of usefulness to the protagonist, the book is unlikely to engage an audience of female readers.

Steve is a typical macho hero. He is extraordinarily strong, uncommonly brilliant, and effortlessly adaptable. His initial determination to avenge the terrorist attack is admirable, but his flaws appear as the story progresses. When the novel begins, he is a slightly paranoid but otherwise extremely self-confident scientist. When the novel ends, he is a single-minded, lethal action hero. He has no moral qualms about killing, and he feels no guilt over humiliating those who are not his direct target. For instance, he secretly watches a young woman disrobe for her lover, even blithely broadcasting the subsequent events for his comrades. Overall, his desire to be a hero is marred by his decidedly less than heroic antics.

The novel's numerous typographical errors betray a lack of editing. Vinson ends the story with enough threads hanging to set the stage if he chooses to write another tale. Despite its flaws, *The Perfect Warrior* is often interesting, and will find appreciation by those who enjoy fast-paced action movies and books.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (February 20, 2013)

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