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Clarion Review ★★★★☆ THRILLER

The Torch Betrayal

Glenn Dyer
TMR Press (Dec 1, 2017)
Softcover $15.99 (345pp)
978-0-9991173-0-9

The Torch Betrayal *is the best mix of genre standards from a fresh voice.*

Glenn Dyer's *The Torch Betrayal* is a well-oiled novel of suspense. While it opens with a rash of overly descriptive adjectives, the story quickly takes over, and the plot is expertly handled in medias res. The unnamed hero is developed in rich, staccato bursts, screaming "big screen blockbuster coming soon!" before the first explosion even ripples across the page.

The plot seems simple enough: It's World War II, 1942, and the Allied invasion plans are missing. A hero—Conor Thorn—must get them back. He has sixteen days to recover the plans that will save the world.

Thorn, still stinging from being chucked out of the navy and wanting to prove his worth, is more than willing to do whatever is necessary. And, as every hero needs a challenging and engaging sidekick, Thorn inherits Emily Bright, an MI6 agent who is brilliant, vivacious, and dead set on exterminating Nazi rule.

Tension crackles between Thorn and Bright, and the dynamic duo never stay in one place for long. The pace starts hot and keeps climbing, criss-crossing the globe from the Allied airbase in England to the deserts and winding city streets of northern Africa. Not even the Vatican is safe from the action.

Every international stop is steeped in danger, making for rollicking fun. And it's not just the locales that are sprung traps. A multitude of characters are present—spies, allies, clergymen, military officers, sympathizers, politicians—and everyone has an agenda, though it's not always clear whether they should be believed. Readers will follow every twist and turn, second-guessing motives and allegiances until the grand finale.

The Torch Betrayal is the best mix of genre standards from a fresh voice. In tone and form, the story stands apart from the espionage thrillers to which it pays homage. The excitement and clarity of the writing means small points of contention can be overlooked.

Dyer uses the real-life inspiration of Operation Torch to parade historical figures and political operatives through the story, infusing it with historical context. Dialogue and situations can sometimes feel forced, but dialogue is strong as a whole, between both heroes and bit characters who are only on the scene for a short while.

With crisp writing, plot reveals that pop like firecrackers, and cinematic excitement, *The Torch Betrayal* is good, old-fashioned fun.

KATIE HARDY (December 4, 2017)

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