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Clarion Review ★★☆☆☆ THRILLER

Timeless Revenge

Frank Warburton
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A gritty thriller shows the extent of evil some soldiers are capable of during wartime.

Loyalty, honor, betrayal, and the effect of time on psychological wounds are themes of Frank Warburton's new novel, *Timeless Revenge.*

In the closing days of the Vietnam War, Tom Warburton and three fellow British Army buddies—J Dub, Jock, and Geordie—find themselves assigned to extract an operative from the country in order to hand him over to American intelligence. When Tom and his compatriots realize US soldiers have been slaughtering and terrorizing villagers, a firefight results in casualties on both sides. Tom and his remaining crew rescue a Vietnamese girl, called Sue, from certain death at the hands of the Americans. A game of cat and mouse plays out over years and across continents as the CIA tries to silence Tom and his loved ones for good.

To page 112, the book lives up to its billing as a thriller, thanks to Tom's suspenseful first-person narration. One can feel the wariness and terror Tom and his compatriots experience upon learning they must turn over all personal identifying information to complete their assignment. Tom realizes, "'If this thing goes tits up we will be held responsible and the Yanks could then pressure our Government in their favour. It's all about deniability.'"

Punctuation and grammar problems and capitalization of words like "Government" and "Boss" are tolerable because of the immediacy of the first-person dialogue and adept character building. One feels the strong bond between Tom and his friends and shares their mounting suspicion that all is not right. Dread mounts as they uncover increasing evidence of US soldiers committing war crimes. The young men's determination and desire to save Sue warms the heart, as they befriend her and keep her safe, although they lack a common language. Suspense builds over how the group will escape safely with Sue.

After page 112, the level of suspense drops dramatically. The narrative all but leaves Tom's first-person viewpoint. The chapters jump across time and locations in a disconnected way. Tom and his former colleagues have taken on new identities and faked their deaths to avoid discovery by the CIA. Outside the theater of war, the Americans become cartoonishly evil maniacs instead of people who want to keep the truth quiet. Relatives of Tom's compatriots are barely introduced before they are summarily murdered. Tom's clandestine communication with Sue as their friendship grows to love is often mentioned in summary sentences.

As the plot becomes more disjointed, punctuation and grammatical problems increase. Dialogue has periods within the quotations, instead of commas. The quotation marks around speech alternate between single and double marks. Sentence fragments abound, and the text is littered with unexplained military jargon and abbreviations.

Had Warburton stuck to Tom's point of view and edited the manuscript for clarity, *Timeless Revenge* would be accessible to a larger audience. Those with patience and extensive knowledge of military lingo may enjoy the novel.

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JILL ALLEN (July 24, 2014)

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