

Unknown Rider

Jack Stewart

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In Jack Stewart's military thriller *Unknown Rider*, a navy pilot crashes into a global conspiracy.

Colt is a Top Gun instructor who's sent to investigate mysterious lights by an aircraft carrier. But he loses control of his plane and nosedives toward a cruiser escorting the ship. When the flight data contradicts his account and he faces severe military discipline, he goes rogue.

Colt teams up with Emmy, an NCIS investigator; he works to uncover the traitorous marine who set him up. They also have to foil a Chinese plot to steal national security secrets and hack into fighters. It's a high-stakes case of espionage, and few can be trusted.

Though it covers well-trodden ground, this high-speed book excels at pacing and plotting. Its action moves at a rapid clip, juggling intertwined narrative threads and traversing locations across the globe. It also includes grounding details, as of pilots bracing against G-forces and straining to not pass out; the challenge of sleeping on a canvas cot under a poncho liner; and about how time at sea is measured "by the sheer volume of meaningless and asinine conversations one engaged in to pass the time." Elsewhere, chests tighten with fear, heart rates spike, and pistols are swept around in search of a murderer. And the rousing conclusion features climactic showdowns, intense action, and a postscript that sets up a sequel.

In the high-octane thriller *Unknown Rider*, a jet pilot is framed by a turncoat saboteur and foreign spies; he tries to clear his name and thwart a scheme to deploy a weapon that can hack into jets.

JOSEPH S. PETE (November / December 2023)

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