

“The Paris Vendetta” by Steve Berry. Ballantine Books, 2009. \$26.00, 418 pages.

If you like historically accurate fiction that is well researched you should give Steve Berry a try. His newest book, “The Paris Vendetta” is about the treasure Napoleon Bonaparte stole while he was Emperor. His British captors tried to obtain the location of the stolen items looted from palaces and treasuries as Napoleon neared death in 1821. Napoleon had been exiled to the island of St. Helena living in a converted cattle barn. Napoleon died not saying a word about the hidden treasure and there was no mention in his will. Did Napoleon leave any mysterious clues as to the location of the treasure?

The timeframe of this fast paced novel is present day. Cotton Malone, a retired Justice Department operative, owns a book store in Copenhagen. His quiet life is troubled by a recurring dream of being shot in a plaza near the embassy. One night he awakens in the middle of this scary dream and he hears footsteps on the stairs. Not one to give up old habits, he grabs his Beretta stored in his rucksack near the bed to protect himself. Cotton’s night quickly becomes much more complicated when the intruder, Sam Collins, identifies himself and says that people are going to kill Cotton’s friend, Henrik Thorvaldsen and the thugs are also chasing him as well. Surviving the firefight with the assassins, the two men go to help Thorvaldsen.

Why exactly are hit men after Thorvaldsen? Does Thorvaldsen have an ulterior motive for investigating the Paris Club, a group of multimillionaires bent on manipulating the world economy? Thorvaldsen’s nemesis is the rich aristocrat who murdered his son. Cotton is caught in the middle of deep seated emotions – revenge of a parent, loyalty to a friend, and patriotism to his native country. It is up to Cotton to avert collapse of world financial operations by locating hidden treasures while simultaneously fending off lethal terrorists. The plot moves from Denmark to England and then Paris. The book is a quick page turning read and you will enjoy the historical research and the codes identified as Cotton unravels clues Napoleon left behind.

The author has an addendum which separates fact from fiction which I enjoyed. Many fiction and non-fiction books have been written about Napoleon. He is of continued interest to each generation. Berry ends the novel with this quote from Napoleon:

For all of the attempts to restrict, suppress, and muffle me, it will be difficult to make me disappear from the public memory completely.

Steve Berry has also written “The Charlemagne Pursuit,” “The Alexandria Link,” “The Templar Legacy” and “The Third Secret.” He lives in Georgia and has a passion for preserving our heritage.

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