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A Cold and Distant Place

Bill Mesce Jr

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Winner, e-book category, 2016 Eric Hoffer Awards. Finalist, Hoffer Awards' Montaigne Medal for "...most thought-provoking books."

'No simple or casual read, it leaves the follower with more than a taste for what war truly leaves behind, and is recommended reading for fans of psychological military novels.' - MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW

1944, Germany.

To Raymond Peck, every incoming round of artillery sounds like the finger of God tearing through the firmament to get him. Inexperienced and ignorant of the true atrocities of combat, "green" radio controller Peck, is positioned in a clearing less than 750 yards north-northwest of Hill 399.

Hill 399, named because it's 399m steep, is hell on earth.

Attempting to trudge through the Kall Trail and crusade over the hill are the Love, King and Item battalions. With soldiers depleting at an astronomical rate and radio communications interrupted by the heavy fire, the American troops on Hill 399 are in trouble. No air aid comes and no ammunition reinforcements are in sight.

On the last day of attack, Dominick Sisto's battalion reach the crest of the hill but in front of them lies only death. Over the crackling radio connection that Peck desperately tries to channel, Sisto states he is retreating under Colonel Porter's orders. But Joyce, an ambitious and self-aggrandising Colonel orders Lieutenant Sisto to remain in position. Sisto doesn't. And when his battalion reach the bottom of the hill and Colonel Porter remains to be found, Joyce threatens to court martial him. Sisto is placed under arrest for desertion under fire and disobeying a direct order.

JAG Lieutenant Harry Voss, a lawyer by trade, positioned in Italy, is visited by pal Colonel Joseph P. Ryan from the Judge Advocate's Bureau on Thanksgiving Day. Colonel Ryan has snuck down from Liege to inform Voss of Sisto's predicament and draft him as Sisto's defense team. Voss decides to defend the boy who he had practically raised and pulls together a last minute research team comprising of lawyer Peter Ricks, Andy Thom from Sisto's battalion, and Eddie Owen, a Scottish journalist.

But they have their work cut out for them when Leonard Courie, a hotshot ADA from Cleveland, is chosen as their opposition. Courie's sly tactics, including moving the council and court to a new location, to Countess D'Audran's castle, further complicate the case for Sisto's team and cost them days.

At the grand but derelict castle, time is running out as the trial approaches. Harry Voss focuses on the case, Owen greets Sisto on the castle wall and the Countess rides off mysteriously into the dark every night.

Will this unlikely team be able to mount a defense in time? Will Sisto's charges be dismissed or will Joyce be proved triumphant and Sisto be confined to military prison for life?

'A Cold and Distant Place' is a fast-paced legal thriller set in the devastating battlefields of World War Two.

Praise for A Cold And Distant Place

"A riveting page-turner that reduces the glory of war, of even victory, to a very human scale." Thomas E. Kennedy, author of The Copenhagen Quartet

"...a mighty epic...A touching end to the trilogy...I can't get the words outta my head." - Sean Michael Rice, award-winning playwright

"...a bold, cruel, and ambitious examination of a small episode in an ugly war that unexpectedly opens up into a sweeping panorama of memory and emotion, culminating in some of the most stunning battle scenes ever put on paper" - Steven G. Szilagyi

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Rick Fairchild:

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