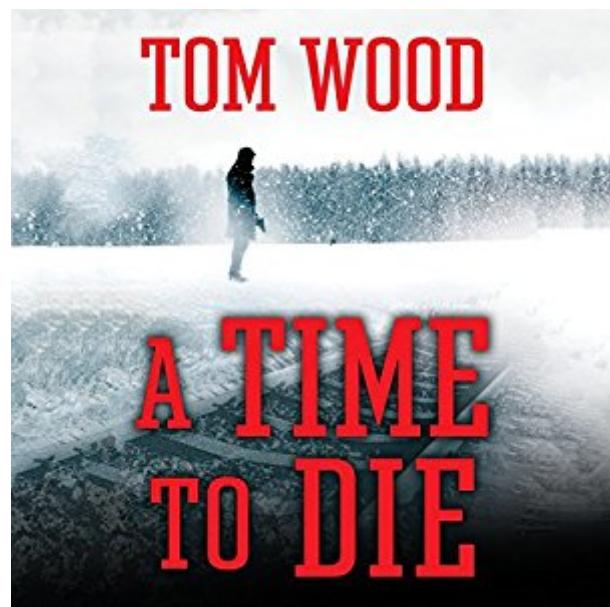


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A Time To Die: Victor The Assassin, Book 6



Synopsis

It's not how long you'll live.... Now that professional assassin Victor is indentured to British Intelligence, he is tasked with eliminating the worst of the worst. One such man is Milan Rados, a former Serbian paramilitary commander wanted for war crimes and now head of an organized criminal network in Belgrade. He has escaped justice once already, so it's Victor's job to take the justice to him. It's how soon they'll die. Victor might be the best in the business, but with powerful friends and an entire crew to protect him, Rados is a hard man to corner and even harder to kill. To get close to his target, Victor will need more than his deadly skills. An unlikely ally can provide him with the edge he seeks, but there's a price on Victor's head - and a killer who won't quit knows just how to find him....

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The fact that this book is out of print should be seen as a black mark against the conscience -- or lack thereof -- of American society. It indicates that we Americans are again suffering from a sense of collective amnesia; that we have willfully chosen to forget a shameful event in our history: the prison uprising at Attica prison in upstate New York that ended with the undeserved deaths of more than two dozen inmates in 1971. Wicker, a fine journalist who was at the time of the revolt an editorial writer with the New York Times, was one of a group of outsiders summoned to the prison by inmate spokesmen to observe negotiations between the inmates and prison authorities. "A Time to Die" is a detailed account of what he saw during the several-day standoff as he and his

colleagues struggled to piece together a settlement that would avoid shedding the blood of the revolting inmates and of the prison guards the inmates had taken hostage during the insurrection. Wicker's analysis lays bare the conditions at Attica that led to the uprising. Dietary and sanitary conditions were far less than adequate; guards were poorly trained and particularly ill-equipped to deal with large numbers of African-American and Latino prisoners; attempts to rehabilitate prisoners or to prepare them for productive life outside the walls of the prison were woefully inadequate; and the labor of the prisoners was exploited for the benefit of the small town in which the institution resided. The blueprint for a tragic ending was mapped early in the violent revolt that sent hundreds of inmates into the prison's D Yard, where they set up an informal society. One of the prison guards was badly injured and died shortly thereafter.

I've been following the Victor the Assassin series from the first book and while I've enjoyed it immensely, I'm still at a bit of a loss as to explain its attraction. The stories themselves, while nothing original, are well-crafted and filled with suspense and action. I won't get into the specifics of this one since other reviews have already covered that ground, but it follows the formula of previous entries: Victor is hired to kill someone and must confront brainless thugs, charming psychopaths, shady government representatives, femme fatales, deadly rivals, and heavily armed former military operatives. He must plan for every contingency, prepare for all possible outcomes, and be able to improvise at a moment's notice. The plot moves along briskly, the dialogue sounds true-to-life, and the bad guys are suitably reprehensible. You won't find fault in these areas. No, the difficulty lies in trying to clarify the strange allure of its protagonist. Victor is only ever depicted while on the job: spending hours doing surveillance, countersurveillance, studying his target, acquiring tools and weapons, plotting escape routes, sizing up opponents' strengths and weaknesses, ad infinitum. Unlike Lawrence Block's hitman Keller, who devotes his free time to collecting stamps, Victor is always in "assassin mode," so to speak. We don't know if he has any hobbies, if he enjoys fine art or classical music or nouveau cuisine, or pretty much anything of substance that would add more dimension to his character. He is analogous to the Terminator, a killing machine that is continuously scanning the world around him with ruthless efficiency. He talks in a flat, even tone most of the time and the only emotions he seems to express are minuscule degrees of surprise and irritation.

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