

Book Talk

The Last Operative: America's fate rests in the hands of one man

By Lee De Bevoise

Think international intrigue, add in a potential terrorist attack, and a generous measure of hope and redemption and you have one of this summer's best reads – **The Last Operative**. Written by well-known N.Y. Times Bestselling author Jerry B. Jenkins, this action-packed international spy thriller is sure to please even the most demanding reader.

The novel opens with Jordan Kirkwood, a seasoned agent for the National Security Agency (NSA), who is meeting Rosemary, his wife of 20 years, for a long overdue vacation. A terrorist makes an appearance and the action never stops throughout the 254 pages of **The Last Operative**.

Jenkins, probably best known as the writer part of the team that brought us **The Left Behind Series**, originally wrote this novel in 1987 under the title of **The Operative**. The idea to do a rewrite came from the staff at Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. "I added a whole new ending, took it further with the family stuff... I did change the character's last name... I really wrote it with a different sensibility from a 20-year perspective," explained Jenkins. "The enemy in the original was the Soviet Union, which doesn't exist anymore. Of course then we didn't have cell phones and personal computers, and stuff like that."

Flashbacks are used to set the foundation for the plot. Jenkins' style is minimalist by his own admission. He doesn't waste a lot of energy noting hair color and other minute details. Rather, Jenkins prefers to tap into the reader's mind using character and personality, and also by dialog and action to bring readers into the story.

Although an escapist-type novel, family dynamics and the issues with personal and professional relationships that each of us face daily are skillfully woven into the backdrop of this spy thriller. Jenkins also adds a Christian perspective to the story – one of hope and redemption that is possible for everyone.

Jenkins' characters are well-developed and believable. As for the author's favorite character, Jenkins replied, "You know, I kind of like Jordan's Uncle Dexter Lee. He just seemed like a cool, old guy, and the kind of guy you'd like to be when you get to be that age. He seems worldly wise, spiritual, and yet very earthy too."

"The characters are very real, I think, and flawed and not perfect people. But the thing that sets apart a Christian novel is that it should end with hope," he explained. "I really get tired of gritty, realistic novels that are beautifully done, yet in the end, either everybody dies or everybody is in despair and that's the end. Is that what people really want to read? Even if it's realistic, there should be something different in the Christian novel. Ours is a philosophy of hope, and that in the end in essence, God wins. I want people to read this book and see realistic characters, but also realize that in the end there's redemption, hope, and forgiveness."

The plot has its share of twists and turns, making it hard to put down. The ending left some unanswered questions, leaving the door open for a possible sequel. According to Jenkins, writing a sequel will depend on the success of **The Last Operative**.

If you enjoy spy novels of the type written by Robert Ludlum and Tom Clancy, you will certainly like **The Last Operative**. To me, the lack of gratuitous violence, sex, and profanity is refreshing and not even missed. **The Last Operative** is the ideal beach or patio read.

Editor's Note: Lee De Bevoise is an award-winning former newspaper and magazine editor, who currently lives in S.E. Nebraska.

*For a chance to win an autographed copy of **The Last Operative**, visit <http://www.knowaboutjesus.net/contest.shtml>.*

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