



## **“Book Review: *Rage (Knights of the Air, Book 1)*”**

Reviewed by Toni Woodruff



### **An action-packed thriller in the skies of the Great War**

Lance Fitch has his eyes set on revenge. He’s here to serve his country, sure, but things are a bit more personal than that. This hard-nosed soldier will stop at nothing to do his job and do it well—especially when it comes to avenging his brother’s death.

But when he joins the British Royal Flying Corps, he realizes that death is always personal. That, beyond avenging his brother, he needs to avenge the deaths of pilots on his



side that are dying in inferior planes in their fight against nearly unstoppable German foes: Richthofen's Flying Circus.

It's during World War I that military aviation reaches new heights. No matter how good of a gunner Lance is, surviving these viciously efficient German fighter planes is something even he can see his demise against. All we can do as readers is hope that Lance and the British Royal Fighting Corps can make it out alive by the end of the war.

*Rage*, the first book in Iain Stewart's Knights of the Air series, is about as realistic & loyal to history as they come. The author's meticulous research is evident not only in its vivid strategy and action but also in its rich and textural detail. Each item in this world is specific and purposeful; the dialogue is nuanced and strategic; the book is packed with immersion into scenes that really happened and into the minds of people who really lived. If you're looking for a deep dive into World War I aviation, you just met your match with this Knights of the Air series.

***"When it came to chances, slim beat none."***

Not only does this novel thrive in its specific detail, it smartly explores themes of death and revenge in an honest way. There's never a doubt in my mind that Iain Stewart has the chops to weave me smoothly through a sentence either. With his dedication to the prose & history, Stewart targets his military history readers with a precision and accuracy that I can really appreciate.

But if you are looking for a novel heavy on plot and characterization, you're probably not doing to find it in *Rage*. Lance's story is the primary plot driver here; a man is seeking revenge for his brother's death but ultimately re-envision his revenge as part of a larger cause. While this could be enough to carry it, there are so many scenes of military action without developing changes in the plot that it's hard to really see narrative purpose in including all of them. It doesn't help that, beyond Lance, characters don't really develop or change much either. They're thrust into action on the page without us ever having the chance to know them; this is realistic and true of course, but for a novel with varying



points-of-view, I was hoping for more developing characters to get attached to and be saddened to see leave.

If *Rage* is any indicator for the rest of the Knights of the Air series, military history buffs better be making some room on their bookshelves now. This smart and action-packed novel may not be for the plot-seeking reader, but it is for those who want to dive deeper into military aviation history.