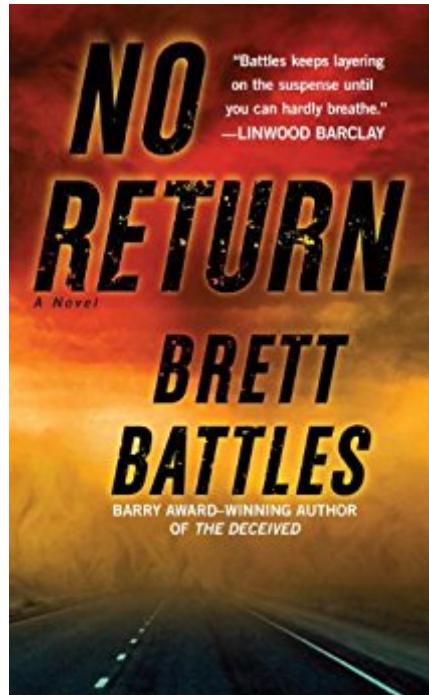


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No Return: A Novel



Synopsis

An F-18 Navy fighter careens out of the blue sky above the Mojave desert. A TV cameraman who grew up in a small town just miles away can see what is going to happen next. Frantically, Wes Stewart races to the downed jet and tries to save the pilot's life. When the plane explodes, Wes escapes without harm and plunges into a murderous conspiracy. It's been fifteen years since Wes has been back to the desolate land of his childhood. Now he finds himself up against the U.S. military, the local police, and someone who is tracking his every move. In the moments he spent with the dying pilot, Wes discovered something that could get him killed. But while he tries to untangle a web of lies and secrets surrounding the crash, another danger is stalking him. And this one he will never see coming. From the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

This is a lean, engaging thriller, different in kind from Brett Battles' Jonathan Quinn books with their tours of international capitals, government agencies and acronyms and a fascinating cast of killers. This is small town America with an unlikely hero, but the tension is high, the plot tight and the

satisfaction level perfect. Wes Stewart is a member of a film crew, shooting in the general area of China Lake in the Mojave. A Navy F-18 comes screaming across the sky, headed for the crew. It diverts at the last instant and crashes into the ground. Wes tries to free the pilot from his harness, runs off to get a knife to cut it and suddenly watches the cockpit become engulfed in flames. The event has been filmed by his crew. When the Navy releases a picture of the pilot to the local paper there is a very big problem. The face of the pilot in the picture does not correspond to the face of the pilot which Wes actually saw. This is Wes's first time home in a long time. His father had been in the Navy, assigned to China Lake and Wes went to high school there. One of his classmates is now a lieutenant commander assigned to the Navy base. Is the friend a stooge for the plotters within the base or is he Wes's best hope for getting to the bottom of things? And what is the nature of the plot which he appears to have discovered? The members of his crew begin to disappear. Is this the work of the rogue officers or the end result of a horrible experience from Wes's past? Wes investigates, despite the threats coming from multiple sources and sees the plot lines converge in a stellar ending. Brett Battles has a knack for plotting. He knows how much tension to heap on his reader and the precise moment for releasing it.

I first discovered Brett Battles with his excellent Jonathan Quinn series. "No Return" is a stand alone suspense thriller surrounding a doggone good mystery. Wes Stewart is helping film a documentary type fluff piece in the desert near China Lake Naval Base when an F-18 Navy fighter plane crashes nearby. Wes races to the scene and in a futile effort to save the trapped pilot, he sees something that quickly puts his life and those of his colleagues at grave risk. To make matters worse, no one believes him when he relates what he saw during the failed rescue attempt. He is stunned to see that the discrepancies he is concerned with lead to a cover up which leads to a deadly conspiracy. Wes grew up in the area but left 17 years ago and hasn't been back since but his return with the film crew turns out to be anything but a welcome home event. Wes is soon at odds with high ranking military figures, a person of interest to local police, and the subject of an unknown but deadly stalker. How widespread is the conspiracy that Wes is engulfed in? Who can he trust? Is his old high school buddy, Lars, now a Naval Lieutenant Commander looking after Wes's interests or the Navy's interests? Who is kidnapping Wes's colleagues and for what purpose? What are the hidden secrets from Wes and Lars' past? All these questions are part of a page turning engrossing narrative that ultimately concludes with a powerful and satisfying confrontation among all Wes's tormentors. Battles writes confidently with a fast-paced, sometimes frenetic style that quickly grows on his readers. His characters are fully fleshed, believable, and likeable--except, of course, the

villains.

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