



## Safe Havens: Primed Charge

*J.T. Patten*

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A team of CIA contractors travel to South East Asia to investigate a series of bombings that have taken the lives of Tier One Advance Force Operators. When the mission fails, intelligence specialist Sean Havens is sent to the jungles of Burma to determine the missing soldiers' whereabouts. On the ground, Havens learns of an unlikely axis of Russia, China, and Iran that may have plans beyond illicit trafficking. But is this a ruse to distract analysts from assessing global financial movements and political elections?

Out of his element and looking to disrupt the looming global threats, Havens struggles to use his adaptability, guile, and tradecraft, as his personal losses wrestle for attention. His actions may have further consequences when the Shadow Masters learn of his meddling sending Havens again into the deadly game of secret societies and a New World Order. From Chicago and Fayetteville to Burma, Thailand, and New York, Death continues to follow Havens and those in his wake.

## **Safe Havens: Primed Charge Details**

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# From Reader Review **Safe Havens: Primed Charge** for online ebook

## Samuel says

HOW TO KILL PEOPLE AND PULL STRINGS.

“I’d love to change the world...but I don’t know what to do...so I’ll leave it up to you...”- I’d Love to change the world by “Jetta”.

“Freedom isn’t free”. – USAF Colonel Walther Hitchcock.

“World domination, same old dream”. - James Bond, Government Assassin.

Let us face it, the most iconic fictional professional killer did have a point. World domination is bloody difficult to accomplish. The world’s just too complicated. Not to mention full of people dedicated to killing those of a tyrannical bent. Many have tried to become rulers of the world, but the track record is one of consecutive failure.

Hitler, Imperial Japan and international communism just to name a few who ended up on history’s dustbin. But sadly, people still keep trying to make the most tantalizing of pipe dreams into a reality. But, what if it was really actually possible to run the world? The most efficient way of doing so is through a covert manner. Become a puppet master in other words. My favourite network TV show, POI does this with an omniscient artificial intelligence that possesses large sums of money and legions of killers who it uses to shape events from the shadows. But without such science fiction, sometimes you have to fall back on old fashioned methods. Greed. Terror. Death.

These three things are the pillars of “Primed Charge”, the second spy novel written by the mysterious, ‘JT Patten’. Mr Patten is a former member of the US intelligence community and seen all its parts, from the analytical brain to the paramilitary knuckles. His first book, I found, was like a John Le Carre novel playing out in American suburbia. While bringing all the insider details of a Brad Thor novel (although in this case, the author had been an insider himself), Patten juxtaposed this with psychological brutality that is almost non-existent in American spy fiction.

When we first met him, his hero, Sean Havens hunted men who wished to drive him to the brink of madness. Having failed to complete the hunt and lost the life he had once treasured, in book 2 of the Shadow Masters series, Havens attempts to get even with his enemies, but is sucked into a war of spies, one which would decide the fate of the most geopolitically important black operation in the history of spying. Now to the review. What happens when democracy turns out to be a gigantic con?

The novel begins seconds where the first book ended. Only this time, it’s from the perspective of two killers who open up on Sean Haven’s Chicago home with Heckler and Koch G36 assault rifles. In a harrowing scene, Havens and his house guest, a spymaster known as Jerry resort to lethal force in dealing with the unwelcome home invasion, the former utilizing a rare automatic shotgun to ventilate one of the killers. This incident is the straw that breaks the back of Sean’s mental state which was in the process of collapsing in the previous book.

Seeing his host break down in maniacal laughter, Jerry quickly takes charge of the situation, phones his son and makes off with the man he deems a potential asset for a war in the darkness of international espionage

that has just begun. Several months later, Havens has undergone advanced combat training and is being prepped for the opening salvos of the war. Across the world in South East Europe, his enemy, the insane intelligence officer Prescott Draeger indulges in vice and sin tucked away an ultra-modern Albanian Chalet.

In Burma, a US Special forces team is shot down over Myanmar airspace by what appear to be Russian helicopters. And back in the USA, the Company comes under attack, with multiple employees dying from a coordinated series of unfortunate events. With a war that will decide the fate of American foreign intelligence in full swing, and Jerry reeling from the blows, the spymaster dispatches his new asset Havens to investigate how these events are connected. What Havens uncovers has shocking repercussions for global geopolitics and even the very concept of democracy itself. With his enemies advancing on the front and also looking to stab him in the back, only one question remains. In a world with no Safe Haven, how can a man who keeps his country secure stay safe as he walks through the dark?

In terms of plot, Safe Havens is a meticulously constructed and intricate spy thriller. As the second chapter in protagonist Sean Haven's "walk into the darkness", it's an unpredictable, literary minefield of a novel, with plot twists hidden in places where you wouldn't expect them to detonate. The author has crafted a story which perfectly taps into the chaos of 2016, or what I like to call the year "extremism became fashionable". Focusing on the chaos caused by the new round of present day terrorism, and with modern democracy seemingly burning down around our ears, "Primed Charge", the story is one of the finest explorations of that shadow world which increasingly fails to remain hidden behind the rotten stage curtain of civilization. With an onyx black atmosphere and a level of paranoia that will leave you shuddering with each chapter, Mr Patten combines all this with a superbly constructed complex plot, multi-layered character interaction and a simply astounding fictional conspiracy, one that ranks with the great classics.

Action and setting? I find this book like Le Carre's "The Honourable Schoolboy", sequel to the legendary Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy novel. What Primed Charge is like in the same way "THS" was to "TTSS", is the "actionized sequel, with the violence getting bumped up a big notch. While the gambits and mind games remain prominent, the author in this book lets himself loose. And the results are surprisingly good. From grisly bombings in Thai nightclubs to a harrowing night in Myanmar with attack helicopters, this book successfully ups the level of thrilling killing from its predecessor and does so on an impressive backdrop. Much of the book takes place in South East Asia and Mr Patten brings to life the environments very well indeed. A highlight would have to be the Burmese sections, with its legendary jungles portrayed very accurately indeed.

Research? Having been one of the intelligence community insiders other spy novelists try to wrangle juicy information from, the author didn't need to do a lot of work for this book. All the real world details were on point in the copy I read (except one which I will get to). A true standout would be his dead accurate portrayal of the geopolitics in Myanmar, a highly important state which has just began to open up to the world. He shows the multifaceted nature of a nation hardly any American would know existed, how, despite the genesis of a democracy, the country is still ravaged by a campaign of tragic ethnic and religious genocide courtesy of a corrupt military that seeks to utilize it as a tool to retain their power even when the world has changed around them. Another bit of research I found impressive is the use of UAVS in this book. Gone are the days when only the CIA had a robotic air force. The technology has miniaturized with smaller drones being able to whist and the elements and fly high. Such advantages as Mr Patten terrifyingly points out in this book, mean small UAV's have lethal applications. In a chilling scene, he has a quad rotor drone packed with C4 fly into a hospital room, demonstrating how useful the technology can be in the realm of paramilitary work and assassinations.

Another standout of the book, is the fictional conspiracy that the story centres around. In the previous novel,

the author built a conspiracy that was surprisingly plausible and very realistic in what it sought to achieve, unlike many of its grandiose and fantastical counterparts. In “Primed Charge”, Mr Patten does something interesting. He takes a grandiose conspiracy/trope, namely “world domination” and attempts to make the most realistic conspiracy on how such a goal which has been parodied to death could be achieved in an efficient fashion. Using his personal knowledge of global finance obtained from his past life, I think he succeeded in what he came up with. Unlike other conspiracies, the one in “Primed Charge” is already in operation rather than about to be shot down by a James Bond type gunman. It also doesn’t utilize any sexy WMD’s like the 1970 Bond movies. Just a lot of men with guns, explosions and plenty of cold hard cash. Such a scheme, if it existed would make a total mockery of the very concept of democracy itself and judging by the spate of elections around the world this year, it’s hard not to wonder now and then if there is a real life conspiracy like the one the author has skilfully drawn up with aplomb.

Now to the characters. There were quite a few. This time around, I’ll go into depth with two and then spend some time on some of the secondary characters.

First Sean Havens, the hero of the piece. After the tragic events of the first book, Havens has decided to go forward into the dark world of intelligence gathering. Traumatized after barely surviving his enemy’s attempts to push him to the brink of madness, he starts the book in a very bad place, with his sanity in shreds and struggling to take care of his daughter even with the help of his brother in law. Over the course of the story however, he makes a recovery of sorts, by attempting to become an intelligence operative who bridges the gaps between the analytical and paramilitary sides of the business. And instead of the fellow who was caught unawares by the plot against him, in this book Havens is on the ball, surviving everything from explosions set off by crazed assassins to helicopter gunships. The man takes a beating physically and mentally but Haven’s is on the way to take the title of spy fiction’s energizer bunny if he keeps things up. Takes a licking and keeps on killing everyone who comes after him.

Secondly, Prescott Drager, a villain of the story. Drager’s character arc is interesting in this one. At the start of the story, we find that his sanity has continued to deteriorate, with him embracing his inner madness and creepily taking it out on the sex slaves he’s arranged to have an Albanian criminal syndicate send to his new home. Soon kidnapped by the mysterious intelligence service which is running the conspiracy that is the focus of the story, they attempt to cultivate him as an asset, the hard way. But as readers of the first book will know, Prescott may be crazy but he’s a very savvy spy in his own right. And in this book, he proves it with a very shocking gambit of his own. Drager even contributes to by far the funniest scene in the story, mouthing off to an omniscient power player and talking lip during said power player’s attempts at recruitment.

Finally, we have Mr Passport and Tanya Crowe. Passport is the power player who gets on the wrong end of Prescott. A very formidable and scary fellow, he’s like a down to earth and realistic version of Blofeld. Devoid of the hideous Nehru jacket and cat, but in command of a shadowy army which can erase you from the face of the earth. Tanya Crowe is the deuteragonist of the story, a mysterious figure from Haven’s past, at the start of the novel, their reunion is disastrous. But as the novel goes on and she acquits herself to the crazy nightmare Havens is stuck in, she begins to warm up to him. She provides an added dimension to Haven’s life which I really would like to see develop in the next books.

Now for the constructive criticism. In the opening chapter of the novel, there was a glaring editing oversight. The gun Jerry was using is supposed to be chambered for the .45 ACP round but instead due to a mix up, the round turned into something that the subcompact baby Glock is not chambered for. Specifically the ACP was turned into a “mm”. The error however does not detract from the story. (It has since been corrected in a re-release). Apart from that, all I can say to the author is keep editing and refining the writing style.

So, “Primed Charge”. My verdict is this. Tired of seeing certain conventions in the spy genre pop up again

and again? Looking for something fresh? JT Patten's second book is the story for you. Taking various tropes in spy fiction, and exploring how they could be executed in the real world, what results is by far the most terrifying look at 21st century espionage in contemporary spy fiction to date. Boasting outstandingly nail-biting plotting, compelling, damaged characters searching for redemption in the cruel world they work in and what I would consider the fictional conspiracy of the year, "Primed Charge", is an outstanding work of spy fiction, equal to many of its mainstream published rivals, if not superior and braver in the scope of its vision. With Sean Havens having just survived his first battle with the men who rule the world, in a few months' time, we are going to find him in Martha's Vineyard shadowing someone who could become the POTUS. Whether he can stop that person suffering a series of unfortunate events remains to be seen. But one thing's for sure, I wouldn't miss him for the world, and neither should you.

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### **Dylan Simon says**

I had the honor and privilege of being a beta reader for JT on both the first draft and the final version which readers will get to enjoy and I will explain why they will enjoy it.

From page one the reader is plunged into the murky world of clandestine operations. A world where friend from foe is hard to distinguish and the line between right and wrong is blurred or virtually nonexistent. JT captures this world well as readers join Sean Havens as he battles the more present opposition forces, the less present forces that have continued to follow him since Shadow Masters (the Pond), and as he battles the issue of whether to continue his career in the conspiratorial underworld or to improve himself as a father.

Readers will be angered at moments, saddened, confused, or scared as they witness Sean Havens and his compatriots work against the opposition that lies in the grey murky world of clandestine operations. Bottom line, buy the book but don't just read it, as is stated on JT's website, but "...get read in."

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### **J.T. Patten says**

OK, it's not cheesy to review your own book if you've read it a bajillion times--and still like it.

First I'll start with the Pros. I tried to write an authentic thriller that blends the real world aspects of intelligence and operations. So my hero is a 40 something Intelligence professional who is battle weary yet really coming into his prime by leveraging his brain with physical abilities. But he's fallible and certainly breaks. I also cover his family aspects. Warriors don't exist in a vacuum. When they deploy, someone is left at home. In this case, his daughter. As a father, I try to capture heartfelt moments as a dad tries to raise a young woman when the instructions are not included. The bad guys come from real places in conspiratorial aspects of past nefarious entities. You can look them up. They're real, but they are not the tired old story of Islamic terrorists. Yawn! The twist is that the bad guys believe in what they are doing, and in many cases can justify it. So who really is good or bad in a world painted grey? Often it's simply a matter of what team you are playing for.

I love spy novels but most bore the hell out of me. So my spy thrillers are a bit more like an action movie spy thriller but I layer in the twists. A lot of them. Why? Because you paid for me to totally mess with your emotions. The darkness of my writing will also do this. I want you to feel uncomfortable. If you liked the

world of black ops, you'd be a sociopath. It's bad stuff. You should want to walk away and cringe. There's no PG-13 version of it. So in that sense, my readers' contract is this: I know what I'm talking about and Safe Havens is my house. It says beware on the door. I won't hurt you, but I can rattle your cage. And I hope I do. I'd like to think of myself as a Stephen King style of action thrillers (but I don't write as well as The King).

Cons. Sometimes this may seem over the top. I get it. That may also mean that at times its confusing. It may be a roller coaster, but its also a theme ride with a lot of details. So look around and remember things. It isn't a linear plot line thriller, so it may be more complex than a guy with a gun is going off to save the world, and does, The End. Also, I'm an indie so no one paid me the big bucks to edit this on a big budget. That said, I think it's a pretty clean copy and did have it professionally edited. You may find some typos and my writing style is getting better, but I still have POV challenges. I also have a lot of F-bombs and in this case some religious extremist content that may offend some--because it may hit home. That's not really a Con of my writing or the story because it is authentic, but reviews are subjective so I'll give you that realism may be a negative to people who don't read the warning.

Aside from that, let me give you the capstone. Primed Charge is a fresh action spy conspiracy that questions today's power players while capturing the hearts of the black ops warriors. My hero may just as well be a soccer coach, but he's a patriot and tries to do the right thing. My female partner is a strong person but she is also damaged goods. Aren't we all? The bad guys are people you may see on TV politics or could be pulling strings on horrific terror events. Sure Scot Horvath, Mitch Rapp and Reacher may be tougher and have cool super powers, but that's not who shows up to work on the front lines every day. People like you and I do. I want you to see yourself in this story. Bottom line, I wrote what I would like to read as an individual who has seen and knows a lot of stuff. I give you a taste of that place. Come inside and bring a friend.

I think I did a pretty good job.

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### **Dom729 says**

No where good as the 1st in the series. I hope #3 is better.

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### **Bodo Pfündl says**

Kill a few people at random, nothing changes. But kill the right people...

Warning the following review contains major rambling and minor plot spoilers! So if you just want to know how good this book really is, skip to the last paragraph.

Conventions and clichés can be a true pain in the ass, especially in today's spy thriller novels. That doesn't mean I wouldn't enjoy a well-executed formula f thriller, where the "good guys" must stop the evil terrorists from launching a devastating nuclear strike against the West. But unfortunately reality is rarely that simple. The world just can't be divided into black and white (especially not in the spy business), because such things don't exist. They never did. Today's times in particular require a much more sophisticated worldview, in

order to see the million shades of gray that define the shadow world of global politics and international espionage.

That's why I'm always more invested in books that not just entertain me, but also make me think about the world we are living in and the greater questions that come with it. J.T. Patten's debut was such a book, which showed the world of black-ops for what it is. A very dark place in which honorable and not so honorable people alike, make morally ambiguous decisions, because they think the outcome will be better than the alternative and where the darkness can destroy even the most honorable man's soul.

I'm happy to report that Patten succeeds where many of his peers have failed, surpassing the gold standard set by his mesmerizing debut novel! "Primed Charge" has all the elements that made the first one so great, but the scope and scale of the story Patten tells, have grown significantly.

There are bombings happening around the world, taking out civilians, soldiers and diplomats alike and even some high ranking CIA officials and analysts on US soil. They seem random and unconnected until formidable intel asset Sean Havens discovers a possible link to some ambiguous activities from China, Iran and Russia around the golden triangle. But as always, nothing is as it seems, in the shadow world of intelligence entities, international conglomerates and ancient old secret societies...

The author – who has worked as a counter intelligence and financial fraud analyst for many years – again displays a profound knowledge of global affairs, military tactics and the inner workings of the intelligence community, that can't be acquired just through thorough research, but only through personal experience. The heart of the story however, is again his grounded everyman protagonist Sean Havens.

For over 20 years, he traveled through the dark places of the world as a highly specialized intel asset, who provided backup for elite military units, implemented schemes to destabilize terror groups and created opportunities for the US government to exploit. Basically he helped making the world a little safer or that's what he thought. Betrayed by the very government he gave everything for and because of reasons he doesn't fully understand yet, Havens' family fell victim to a vicious false flag attack on home soil, leaving his wife dead and his daughter in a coma. Now one year later, Havens struggles with his duties as a single dad to his recovering daughter, while at the same time trying to come to grips with his addiction to the work that caused his life to unravel in the first place. It is due to the author's nuanced characterization, that Sean Havens doesn't come across as just another Mitch Rapp or Jason Bourne type of an indestructible larger than life superspy, but a flawed and broken man, who is deeply damaged in his soul after the traumatic experiences of the last book and who's indelible need to right the wrongs of the world and helping comrades in danger, make him the perfect pawn for the shadow masters. Seeing Havens struggling with both global threats and his obligations as a father truly let my heart go out to him and I really could identify with his mental struggle and the driving motives behind his actions. There is one scene in particular, where he promises his teenage daughter to kill the people responsible for her mother's death, which feels so real, that it almost made me cry!

Next we have the female lead Tanya Crowe, a brilliant intelligence analyst, who shares quite some history with Sean and guards a secret with the potential to make his life even more complicated. Many authors overdo it when they try to create strong female characters, making them seem almost invincible and more like larger than life stereotypes than real human characters as a result. Tanya is a great example on how to create a strong and independent female character that is very tough but also can be very sensitive and self-conscious at times. In a way she is broken, like every one of us, strong on the outside, but conflicted and vulnerable on the inside. Tanya is the perfect shimmer of hope on the horizon for Havens and was someone I as a reader, not only cared and rooted for from early on, but also admired for her strength. And the end



suggests we haven't seen the last of her, which is great!

Now to the main villain of "Primed Charge": Paulo Violaro, an Italian intelligence officer, explosives expert and fanatic Freemason master. He is a bit more "outlandish" than Prescott Draeger from the last book (who also plays a big role in this one) but no less compelling. Paulo is a true believer of God and a "Christian fundamentalist" in his own right. I found it very refreshing to see a believable portrait of a holy warrior of Christ for a change, instead of the ever repeating stereotypical Islamic Jihadists. The author places little tidbits of Paulo's backstory through the book, helping the reader to better understand how this guy ticks. But just when you think you figured him out, wait for what he does at the end. It really rattled my feelings about him!

Now to the last character I will introduce here (there are some more very interesting lads but analyzing them all, would truly be beyond the scope of this review). He is the one who secretly steals the show. Meet Jerry a spy master in his eighties, who you would probably slight as a cold war relic at first sight, but rest assured, you couldn't be more wrong about the coveted Director of the CIA's National Clandestine Service! He takes the sentiment "to play both sides of the fence" to a whole new level. As a Yale absolver and longtime member of the secret Skull & Bones society, he seems also to be the only one, who keeps the forces aligned against Sean Havens at bay or is he? Jerry surely knows his way around the shadow games of international intelligence and he is a perfect example of a morally gray character. Is he a villain or just someone trying to pull the world back from the brink of disaster, by all means necessary? After Jerry's gut-wrenching trade at the end, the readers will probably lean towards the former, but everything else aside, Jerry might be the only one capable of stopping the ongoing conspiracy and impending doom.

Which brings me to the next big standout: Patten's ability to mix fact with frighteningly plausible fiction to create a realistic conspiracy, which is not of the "could really happen" variety, but is quite possibly already happening, for all we know. The Pond, a once truly existing radical anti-communism offspring of the CIA (which was already established in the first book) makes a return in "Primed Charge" and continues to wreak havoc around the globe. Additionally Patten introduces P2, a secret Italian Mason lodge, with ties to the Mafia, intelligence services the world over and even the Vatican. The author's inside knowledge as a former financial fraud expert, makes the whole conspiracy highly plausible and ring true with authenticity. Being an independently publishing author, also gave Patten the time flexibility to weave recent events into the schemes of P2 and the Pond – namely the Belgium attacks and the Panama Papers – which lends even more credibility to the whole story. The author proves that the biggest threats for the western world mustn't necessarily come from the Middle East, but could quite possibly originate from power hungry factions embedded in our own institutions!

Also of note is one of the book's main themes, which is not only very important to the story the author tells, but also highly relevant in today's times: Those who walk the thin line between light and darkness, sacrifice their health and often their sanity to protect their country, but what does their country do to help them and their families? The sad answer becomes more and more apparent as the story progresses and Patten shows through different characters, how the government's unwillingness to take care of the people who protect it, creates shattered lives in abundance. Some are over the edge and beyond saving and therefore become perfect surrogates to be exploited by the puppet masters pulling the strings in the shadows of plausible deniability. But there are also some people, who despite experiencing unimaginable losses and suffering in the line of duty, still feel only alive if they can help others in need! The message sounds clear: It are men like Sean Havens giving their all, so that normal people like us can go peaceful and blissfully unaware about their lives, that should receive our uttermost gratitude!

The verdict: J.T. Patten crafts the most memorable thriller I have read in a long time, combining his inside

knowledge, crisp writing and unconventionally realistic portrayal of action scenes and the inner mechanisms of the intelligence world, with a multi-layered and fast-paced plot full of twists you won't see coming, until they hit you with more velocity and stopping power than a 357 Magnum slug, to create a dark, action-packed and highly relevant masterpiece, which at the moment ranks without equal in the military/spy thriller genre! The author is now in the same sphere (if not a little above) as the likes of Tom Wood, Terry Hayes or Stephen England and easily surpasses heavyweights, such as David Baldacci, Ben Coes and Barry Eisler! If you read only one book this year, make it this one!

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### **Robert Lawrence says**

Loved it. Sean Havens is one of my favorite characters. Not too much overkill with the descriptions that some authors use to get the word count up.

I won't go into the story line as others have done, just want to tell you to read the first Havens book before this one to get the full story.

Wish J.T. would speed up his writing.

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### **Erik Orrantia says**

The story had some promised, but half the time I felt lost. Plus, I don't think there was enough character development for me to care on way or another about any of them.

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### **T.W. Barton says**

When you crack open a book and start reading, it's those authors that write what they know that have the most authentic feel to the story, characters, and plot.

I recognized this right at the beginning of the first book in this series and have been patiently waiting for its sequel.

These first two books do not have a conclusion so each book builds on the events of the last. In most cases, that is a death nail for me as I like to have something new in each book. It always just seems like a cop-out by authors as you get to string out the bad guys and plot line instead of building new plot lines and characters.

In this case, I got wrapped up in the story, so I decided to stick with it which is another testament to Mr. Patten and his ability to write a story intriguing enough to squash my usual objections.

Sean's troubles from the first book are still at the forefront of his mind and I wish I could tell you that he gets it all worked out but that would be a lie and if anything, they just get worse. Just when you think he's making headway another viper pops up to pile on more misery to the Havens' family.

It's a dark and tangled world he lives in. It's a world where loyalties aren't always as strong as you'd think they are and it seems that everyone has an agenda.

There is a big shock in this book that will shake Sean to his core. It highlights how men of power will always do things that they think benefit themselves no matter how terrible or reprehensible you may find it.

We can only hope that in the third book Mr. Patten will have exhausted his sick pleasure of seeing Sean take blow after blow and stumbling around like a dazed boxer unable to see or protect himself from his opponents blows and unleash the animal inside, paired with the mind of the man. It could be a great story of righteous vengeance.

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