



The God of War

By Chris Stewart

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It's meant to be the triumphant debut of the Ares, a U.S. super-jet named after the Greek God of war. With its ultra powerful laser and ability to easily outmaneuver anything else in the sky, the Ares opens a new era in warfare. But when it is stolen before of a crowd of international dignitaries, the President and his defence staff must use outdated technology to try to stop their creation from sparking a war between civilizations. It's up to Colonel "Jesse" James to save the world from impending doom. But, the obstacles will be numerous. He faces suspicion from the President's chief advisor, a romantic interest with unknown allegiances, and a terror plot that seems too obvious to be true. In his fourth novel, Stewart is in top form- fusing a high octane plot with hair raising flight scenes drawn from his career as a fighter pilot.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this rousing action thriller from Stewart (*The Fourth War*), the United States Air Force has built the most advanced fighter jet in the world, the F-38, known as the Ares. Armed with a brand-new weapon, a solid state laser, the Ares can identify and track up to fifty-eight airborne targets and shoot them out of the air instantly. One hundred percent accuracy. The United States, for geopolitical reasons, decides to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding Ares by showing off two of them at the Paris Air Show in front of a huge crowd. The super-plane taxis out of its hanger, blasts off, roars over the awed spectators and then things begin to go very, very wrong. Human characters include U.S. Air Force Maj. David Jesse James, the pilot who must save the world; a beautiful, mysterious love interest; and skulking villains aplenty. The plane's the real star, of course, and the book soars when it's in its natural habitat, the sky. (*Apr.*)

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About the Author

Chris Stewart is a bestselling author, world-record setting pilot and president of The Shipley Group, a nationally recognized consulting and training company. He is a member of the Renaissance Organization, a private group of leaders from across the globe who meet to explore the “Renaissance spirit.”

Chris served for fourteen years as a pilot in the United States Air Force, where he piloted both the B-1B bomber and rescue helicopters. On June 3, 1995, he led a flight of two B-1S on a nonstop flight around the world, setting three world-speed records in the process, and received the MacKay trophy for the “most significant aerial achievement of the year.”

Chris is the author of three highly popular military techno-thrillers. His books have been selected by The Book of the Month Club and published in twelve different countries. He has also been a guest editor for the Detroit News, commenting on matters of military readiness and national security concerns.

Chris and his wife, Evie, are the parents of six children and live in Utah.

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Chapter 1

Upper Bitterroot Mountains
Central Idaho

The man masked his power very well.

He looked to be about fifty, though he was almost ten years older and clearly in good shape, with long legs and well-defined arms. He had dark hair with tints of gray and a small tattoo of a star on his shoulder, which would have shocked three hundred million Americans had they known.

Everything he had on was new: his logging shirt was pressed, his jeans stiff and clean. Even his waders glistened, smelling more like fresh rubber than fish. He stood eleven feet from the rocky bank. The late morning sun had finally broken over the mountain peaks, glistening on the whitecaps as they rolled over the

boulders in the stream. The man cast the artificial gnat, a Rio Grande King (dark red tail, hand-tied in a small room off of the Lincoln Bedroom at the White House), the same way he did everything else—deliberately. No beauty, all power. Pulling back his arm, he jerked it forward while snatching his wrist, floating the leader, fine as human hair, out before him. The artificial gnat lay on top of the water, caught the current to wash over a large rock, then was pulled upriver in the backwash to hover in the shade of stone.

There he let it linger.

A native cutthroat trout was hiding in the backwash behind the stone. The man hadn't seen it yet, but he'd sensed the tiny ripple and knew it was there, resting in the null area where the water pooled. The cutthroat wasn't a monster—eight, maybe ten inches is all—but large for this stream, which meant he'd been smart enough to survive in the river awhile. Which meant he would be hard to catch.

But the man was going to catch him and he smiled again as he cast.

The gnat caught a sudden current and was spit into the main stream again. The man let it drift downriver, pulled out a little more line, then took in the slack and cast again.

Forty feet behind him, the small stream spilled down a rocky bank and poured into the Salmon River with a constant roar. Above his head, the wind blew down from the Rocky Mountain peaks. Thirteen thousand feet up, there was still a lot of snow, most of it piled in the glaciers that had been there for ten thousand years. Two hundred meters downriver, the Forest Service campground had been completely taken over by his men. Three huge helicopters had been towed across the grass to the shade of the old pines. The choppers were unmarked, dark green and black, with odd-shaped bubbles behind their main rotors to hide the antennas of the top-secret communications gear stuffed inside. The camp's main lodge was crowded with his men, but the fisherman stayed away from them as best as he could, choosing to stay in a tent by himself, twenty meters back in the trees.

As the man cast again, he caught a shadow to his right. The agent hadn't moved in almost three hours, and he was impressed. Still, though, he mumbled. "Two thousand miles I come, to the most isolated river in the lower forty-eight, and yet I can't be alone!" Not even for a moment! Not even out here!

Providing security in the mountains was a nightmare, and he felt bad, knowing it was hard on his security forces, but he needed time alone, time to feel the presence of no one but the mountains and the wind, to look at the sky and imagine he was the only man on the earth, to smell the pines and hear the river and simply be by himself.

He glanced at the agent in the trees, then turned back to his line.

The gnat was sucked into the backflow again, and he saw a shadow in the water. "Come on, you little bugger," he whispered. "It's you and it's me, baby. Man against nature. Now who's going to win?"

The shadow rose and then fell. He tugged lightly on the line, a subtle move of his fingers that pulled the tiny gnat across the water, seeming to give it wings. "Come on, you little wise one, come on."

The shadow started rising.

"Good morning, Mr. President," a man shouted from behind him.

The shadow dropped out of sight, falling beneath a large stone. The president swore, his face angry. He didn't even turn around.

Not alone for ten seconds! Not even out here.

"Mr. President," the national security advisor called to the president again.

The Secret Service agent in the trees dropped to his knees. Behind him, another agent emerged from the shadows to stand in the sun.

Patrick Abram reluctantly turned around.

The NSA stood uncertainly on the edge of the bank. He wore dark jeans, a white shirt, and black loafers, as authentic a Western look as the Massachusetts boy could muster. The president ignored him and cast again. The NSA waited a full two minutes, then took off his shoes, rolled up his pants, and waded knee-deep. The water was ice-cold, fresh off the glacier. This would be a short conversation; the water and the president's demeanor made that pretty clear.

"The Chinese have wrapped up Angry Tiger," the NSA said as he moved to the president's side. He stood back, allowing enough room for the president to cast.

The president glanced in his direction. "And?"

The NSA cleared his throat.

"Keep it short, John. I've got a fish waiting."

The NSA adjusted his weight, his feet already turning numb. "Bottom line, Mr. President, is the Chinese could kick our teeth down our throat. Regular army forces could be in the capital of Taiwan before we could grab our bathrobes and climb out of bed. Two weeks, maybe three, and it would be over, I'm afraid."

The president grunted. "That's not what I wanted to hear."

"I understand that, sir. But let me remind you again: the Chinese started their military buildup in earnest in the midnineties, picked it up after 9/11, really kicked into high gear after we went into Iraq, and have been rolling ever since. They have built a true blue-water navy that can protect their oil tanker lanes from the Persian Gulf to their own eastern shores. The new Luyang II Aegis-class destroyers passed their sea trials with flying colors in the first two weeks of Angry Tiger. They've got the missiles, the warheads, the fighters and bombers, and now—"

The president cut him off. "The KC-40s?"

The NSA looked away, embarrassed. The dull ache in his feet felt like nothing compared to the red burn on his face. "Yeah. We finally saw them. They used them to refuel their fighters over the Gulf of Taiwan."

The president stared, then carefully cast again. "So the Chinese have developed an air-refuelable fighter and an air-to-air tanker right under our noses. They've developed two completely new weapons systems, and we didn't even know!"

The NSA shook his head bitterly. He'd been wrung out over this issue for months and had nothing more to offer in his own defense.

He knew his days were numbered. He read the morning papers, same as everyone else.

The president frowned, wiping his hand across his jaw. "Have you talked to Edgar?"

The NSA pressed his lips at the mention of the chief of staff's name.

Edgar Ketchum. Doorkeeper to the president. Flaming Sword at the Gate. Saint Peter could only hope to be as efficient controlling access to heaven as Ketchum was at controlling access to the president. The NSA would rather drive toothpicks under his nails than talk to the president's chief of staff.

The president watched, seeing the hesitation. "Brief him," he told the NSA. "Tell him everything. He and I will talk later on."

The NSA nodded and tightened his jaw. "Of course, sir. But as you must know we still—"

"What I know, Mr. Feldman, is that for the past thirty years our military has been unmatched anywhere in the world. But that is no longer true. The balance of power has shifted. Shifted on my watch, and that's a hard thing to take."

The NSA leaned again against the current as President Abram fell silent.

Taiwan wasn't the only problem that he faced now, he thought, not by a long way. The Chinese were now as interested in secure oil as they were in Taiwan. They were as interested in expanding as the old Russian Army was. And the opportunity for mischief had now spread far and wide. From the Southern Pacific, through the China Sea, across the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf, the Chinese had developed the navy and the air forces to control that half of the world, the only part of the world that was experiencing double-digit economic growth, that contained the two fastest-growing economies, two emerging superpowers. Now a dozen Chinese ports had been built from Beijing to India, across Bangladesh to Iran. A dozen air fields. Tactical and strategic aircraft. Aircraft carriers. Nuclear missiles from Russia on a par with anything the United States had.

Abram grunted. "Angry Tiger has proven they could take down Taiwan in less than a week. General Shevky called it the most impressive military exercise he has ever seen, quite a compliment coming from the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, I would say. They have proven they have the missiles to soften up the Taiwanese defenses, the landing craft for two hundred thousand soldiers, the submarines to protect them, the air forces to land their paratroops, and the C-four and satellites to control the battlefield."

The NSA didn't answer. His mind was already somewhere else. He would sit on the board of a couple corporations, nothing where he had to make any decisions, just throw around some advice, something that paid well, a little travel, but didn't require too much thought. He wouldn't wait for the president to fire him. He'd give it two weeks, let things settle down a little, then submit his resignation on a Friday night, just before the weekend news cycle went into hover mode.

The president glanced at him, noting the far-off look in his eye. "Hide our capabilities, bide our time," he said, bringing the NSA back to the present, his shame and his feet aching in the cold stream. "Isn't that what the Chinese always said? But they don't hide it any longer. And their biding is done. They'll go after

Taiwan. And we can't stop them! There's not a thing we can do."

The NSA didn't answer. His feet and legs were aching so badly he wondered how much longer he could stand.

The president looked at him, noticed him shaking, and cast once again. "I have three choices," he said. "One, we sit on the Ares and no one knows. One day soon, we will have to use it, but it will be already too late.

"Two, we leak its existence and let the chips fall where they may. But leaking the story means the results are unpredictable, and worse, beyond our control. Maybe it's enough to dissuade them. Maybe it's not. We really don't know.

"Three, we have a coming-out party that will shake up the world. We reveal everything about the Ares, show them all its power. Then the fighter becomes a deterrent that will keep them in line."

"But sir, by revealing its capabilities, we also compromise—"

"We compromise nothing! We've been through this before. But if we show them exactly how deadly this new fighter can be, they will have to think very carefully before loading up their amphibious ships and sailing off to Taiwan."

The NSA took a step against the current. "Alright, sir," he said.

"Peace through deterrence. That's the smart thing." The president teased his line, slipping it across the pool of water behind the rock one more time. "I'm as certain of this, Mr. Feldman, as I've ever been of anything. Our enemies can't be deterred if we keep our ace in the hole. Yes, we could destroy them with the Ares, but is that really what we want? Isn't it better to show them what they'd be dealing with than to surprise them in war? If it comes to war, Mr. Feldman, then we will have already failed. I don't want that to happen, not when there is another way."

The NSA nodded. They had argued before; the generals and politicians had been arguing for months now. And maybe the president was right. Either way, he didn't care.

The president turned and faced him, dropping his vintage fiberglass pole to his side. "I've been watching those Chinese snakes for almost seven years. They've been stretching their muscles, hoping to impress the world. Now it's my turn to stretch. I want to put on my own show. I want you to set it up for Paris, just like we discussed. We're going to roll out the Ares. And I want to be there when we do."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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What do you think of book? It is just for students as they are still students or it for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Merely you can be answered for that question above. Every person has various personality and hobby for every single other. Don't to be pushed someone or something that they don't wish

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Adam Perlman:

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