



2-1-2012

Zero Day, by David Baldacci, Grand Central, 2011

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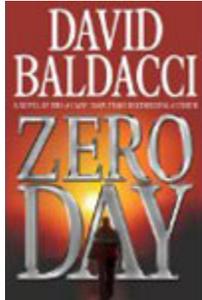
Riggs, Larry, "*Zero Day*, by David Baldacci, Grand Central, 2011" (2012). *LAS Faculty Book Reviews*. 100.
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Recommended Readings



Zero Day

by David Baldacci, Grand Central, 2011

Reviewed by Larry W. Riggs

I am not generally a fan of suspense novels built on the military heroism/corruption in the corridors of power model. That is why I gave up on David Baldacci a couple of years ago. However, something in the dust-jacket blurb for this new book interested me, and I do not regret buying and reading it. Until the very end, this is a readable, interesting story. John Puller, son of a legendary commanding officer and brother of a former officer who is serving a life sentence for treason, and veteran of combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, is a crack investigator of crimes involving military personnel. He is sent to West Virginia coal country to investigate the murder of a high-ranking army officer and his family. In passing, Baldacci explores the horrors of mountain-top-removal coal mining and the harshness of life in the polluted, poverty-stricken places where it is practiced. The writing is sometimes a bit awkward: imagine using military acronyms and then trying to find ways to inform readers of what the acronyms actually mean! However, the story is well-constructed and the crime seems truly mysterious. Puller is the usual combination of awesome killing machine and sensitive soldier who grieves for his brother and for all of his lost comrades. The book's characters are mostly well drawn. The story raises important and interesting issues.

- Larry Riggs is Professor of French at Butler University.