



## A Bend in the River

*Todd J. Jones*

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September 1942- The battle of Stalingrad is in its second bloody month. As the battered Soviet Army struggles for survival against Hitler's forces, a Russian sniper roams the ruins of the city killing Germans almost at will. The Soviet press, desperate for any positive news from the front, heralds the deeds of Vassili Zaitzev in newspapers throughout the country. In weeks he becomes a national hero and soon begins training others in a bombed-out factory.

Through the same press reports, German intelligence learns of Zaitzev's identity and dispatches their best sniper, Major Kurt Konings, along with his aide, Corporal Hans Oettl, to Stalingrad to hunt down and kill him. Unbeknownst to Konings, a second sniper and former student, SS Major Heinz Thorwald, is sent to Stalingrad with same mission. Thorwald, a devout Nazi, vows to kill Zaitzev for the glory of the Reich, yet he has a hidden agenda all his own: to kill his former teacher.

As the battle rages and Zaitzev begins training his men, a beautiful young partisan, Tanya Chernova, crosses the Volga River into Stalingrad. Driven by hatred and vengeance, she vows to kill any German she lays eyes on. Tanya joins up with Zaitzev and soon becomes a deadly marksman. The two become lovers and as the German snipers begin their hunt, Zaitzev must somehow outwit them while trying to protect the woman he loves.

After weeks of desperate fighting, the tide of battle suddenly turns and Konings, Thorwald, Oettl, and 300,000 of their comrades find themselves surrounded on the steppes and trapped in the frozen ruins. Now both sides must prepare for the final struggle; a struggle that will test the bounds of their loyalty, honor, love, and humanity.

Based on actual events, *A Bend in the River* moves through shattered ruins and murky sewers of Stalingrad, to the command bunkers and trenches of the Russian steppe to tell the story of one of the most important and bloody battles in history.

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