

Quotes from Field Grey by Philip Kerr

2018-04-08 01:08:05

This is the 7th novel of Bernie Gunther series. I thought (why?) that this was 4th book before start but the topics are mostly independent, there wasn't anything that I felt I've missed from books 4-6.

I began this on February 21, 2018 and finished on April 7th.

Page 008

"I think it has something to do with the fact that unlike white women, black women have a pelvis that's almost as big as a man's. An anthropoid pelvis. And before you ask me how I know that, it's because I used to be a nurse."

Page 008

I'd heard it said that you had a better chance of surviving cardiac arrest at Casa Marina than you did at the University of Havana Medical School.

Page 013

"I won't deny that things could be better. But every revolution smokes well before it turns to ash. Yours will be like all the others that went before. I guarantee it." Melba was shaking her pretty head, but warming to my subject, I kept on going: "Because when someone talks about building a better society, you can bet he's planning to use a couple of sticks of dynamite."

Page 015

It wasn't that she wanted me. I can never figure why a woman wants a man at all—not when women look the way they do. It was just that she was young and scared and lonely and wanted someone—anyone would have done, probably—to hold her and make her feel like the world cared about her. I get like that myself sometimes: You're born alone and you die alone, and the rest of the time you're on your own.

Page 020

After about three or four hours it got dark and I could see the lights of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo, twinkling on our port side. It was like staring at the ancient stars of some near galaxy that was at the same time a vision of the future in which American democracy ruled the world with a Colt in one hand and a stick of chewing gum in the other.

Page 033

You can stand being locked up almost anywhere so long as you manage to establish some sort of a routine.

Page 043

I got a good view of the Statue of Liberty as we took off. I had the peculiar idea that the lady in the toga was giving the Hitler salute. At the very least, I figured the book under her left arm was missing a few important pages.

Page 045

The fact was, they were wearing uniforms but they didn't belong to the U.S. military; they were Pentagon bureaucrats, prosecutors from the American Department of Defense. Only in America could they have given lawyers a uniform.

Page 061

[R]emember what Goethe said. He said the greatest happiness for us Germans is to understand what we can understand and then, having done so, to do what we're fucking told."

Page 090

It's one of life's little jokes that whenever you think things can hardly get any worse they usually do.

Page 092

American tobacco, that much was clear from the sweet smell. Probably they put sugar in it the way they put sugar in almost everything—in coffee, in liquor, on fresh fruit. Maybe they put sugar on their wives, too, and if the men were anything to go by, they probably needed a little sweetening.

Page 101

Nobody really believes in the euphoric dream that's built on this book or that historic vision; they believe in a kind word, a kiss from a pretty girl, a ring on a finger, a happy smile.

Page 127

“I take it back. You’re much worse than the Gestapo. They didn’t pretend they were defending the free world. It’s your hypocrisy that’s offensive, not your brutality. You’re the worst kind of fascists. The kind that think they’re liberals.”

Page 133

“Tell me, Gunther. Did you ever read it? Hitler’s book.” “Yes. I prefer Ayn Rand. But only just.” “Do you like Ayn Rand?” “No. I think Hitler would have liked her, though. He wanted to be an architect, too, of course. Only, he couldn’t afford the paper and the pencils. Not to mention the education. Plus he didn’t have a large enough ego. And I think you’ve got to be pretty tough to make it in that world.”

Page 170

It was said that Hitler had been gassed and was temporarily blinded, and if that was so, it explained a lot.

Page 198

He must have thought I was a beefsteak Nazi: brown on the outside, red on the inside.

Page 209

“If you’re going to be a philosopher, you’re going to have to grow an enormous beard or a silly mustache. Those are the only people we take seriously in Germany.”

Page 248

We walked to Gebhardt’s hut. Halfway there Savostin saw some guards and barked some orders in a language that wasn’t Russian and, noticing my curiosity, told me that it was Tatar. “Most of these pigs who guard the camp are Tatars,” he explained. “They speak Russian, of course. But to make yourself clear you really have to speak Tatar. Perhaps you should try to learn.”

Page 258

“You wanted a detective from the Alex, Colonel, and that’s what you got. You think those bastards always play fair? By the book? Rules of evidence? Think again. Berlin cops have planted more evidence than the ancient Egyptians. This is how it works, sir. Real police work isn’t some gentleman detective writing notes on a starched shirt-cuff with a silver pencil. That was the old days, when the grass was greener and it only snowed on Christmas Eve. You make

the suspect, not the punishment, fit the crime, see? It was always thus. But more especially here. Here most of all. That Major Savostin isn't the laughing policeman. He's from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I just hope you didn't sell me too hard to that coldhearted bastard, because I tell you this.

Page 300

"Imagine how we felt when we discovered that the GVL was helping to train Egyptians and Syrians for a war with the state of Israel. With the Jews, Gunther. Talk about history repeating itself. I would think a man like you, someone who wasn't ever anti-Semitic himself, might want to do something about that. Israel is our friend."

Page 300

France was a fascist country during the war. Even more so than Italy or Spain. But even now, they like to portray themselves as victims. To hold others responsible for their crimes and misdemeanors.

Page 308

"They were criminals recruited by Knochén," said Eyebrows. "Armenians, Muslims, North Africans, mostly." I smiled. This, or something like it, was what the French always said when they didn't want to admit that almost as many Frenchmen as Germans had been Nazis. And given their postwar record in Vietnam and Algeria, it was tempting to see them as even more racist than we were in Germany. After all, no one had forced them to deport French Jews—including Dreyfus's own granddaughter—to the death camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka.

Page 326

"Berliner Luft" and I was clapping and whistling in all the right places for a true citizen. In Berlin it wasn't about being German—Hitler and Goebbels never understood that—it was being a Berliner first and telling anyone who wanted to change that to go to hell.

Page 331

"It's just that I don't trust our Western allies not to use us as cannon fodder in a new war that some lunatic Confederate American general thinks he can safely fight on German soil. Which is to say, a long way from America. But which in reality no one can win. Not us. Not them."

Page 335

"Trouble?" I smiled ruefully. "Life is trouble. Only the naïve and the young imagine that it's anything else. It's only trouble that finds out if we're up to

the task of staying alive.” “Because if you are in trouble...” “I hate to ask you another favor...” She took my hand and kissed the fingers,

Page 354

In my experience, women like the idea of jewelry no matter what it looks like. If they like you, then they’re almost always pleased to see a ring of any size and color.

Page 354

“My wife died, twice. The first one after the first war and the second one soon after the second. That’s not a record you can be proud of as a husband. If there’s another war, you should probably take the precaution of divorcing me quickly. But frankly, I’ve always been better at finding other people’s husbands or sleeping with their wives. What else? Oh yes, I’m a born loser. That’s important for you to know, I think. This, at least, explains my current situation, which is not without its hazards, angel. I daresay you’ve gathered that. A man doesn’t work for his enemies unless he has little choice in the matter. Or no choice at all. I’m just a cheap paper knife. People pick me up when they need to open an envelope,

Page 356

You would have thought we were expecting to see West Germany’s FIFA World Cup team arriving home, victorious, from the “miracle of Bern” and not a train carrying SS and Wehrmacht, none of whom had expected ever to be released from Russia and who were all of them entirely ignorant of the fact that Germany had won the World Cup or even that Konrad Adenauer, the former mayor of Cologne, to whom they owed their freedom, was now chancellor of another German republic—this time the Federal Republic of Germany.

Page 357

“There’s something about nurses that always attracts me. I used to think it was the uniform, but now I don’t know. Maybe it’s just sympathy for anyone who has to do someone else’s dirty work.”

Page 363

“Any fool can solve a crime, Frenchman. It’s proving it that wears you out.”

Page 364

“I wish someone would write and offer to marry me,” said Wenger as he drove the car. “Or, at the very least, offer to take the place of the wife I already have.”

Page 390

And lately, as if to remind myself of this fact, the little black knight's head was often held tight in my fist the way a Mohammedan might have used a set of beads to utter the ninety-nine names of God and bring him closer during prayer.

Page 410

might even have mentioned something about the unquestioning assumption of all Americans that they had right on their side—even when they were doing wrong—and the irritation that the rest of the world felt at being judged by them; but that would have been to overstate the matter on my part.

Page 418

[T]hey preach about the magnificence of their democracy and the enduring power of their constitutional freedoms, while at the same time they're trying to fuck your wife and steal your watch.

Page 422

No less incredible is the fate of Martin Sandberger, who commanded Einsatzkommando 1a (part of Einsatzgruppe A). Sandberger was, until his death in a Stuttgart retirement home on March 30, 2010, at the ripe old age of ninety-eight, the highest-ranking war criminal known to be alive. A doctor of law, he presided over the murders of some 14,500 Jews and communists and was sentenced to death in 1951; this was commuted to life imprisonment, and Sandberger was paroled in February 1958.