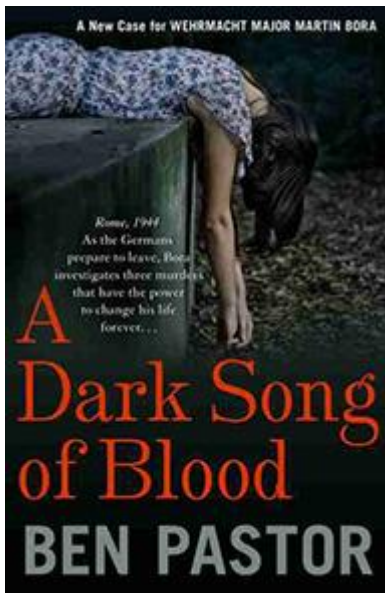


# San Francisco Book Review

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By

**BEN PASTOR**

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*A Dark Song of Blood* by Ben Pastor is the third novel to feature Martin von Bora, an officer in the Wehrmacht during World War II. We've now reached 1944 with the Allies working their way up the Italian peninsula towards Rome. Bora therefore has to balance his contribution to planning the defense (and, later, orderly retreat) and his desire to see justice done when three people are found dead in Rome.

In many ways this is a historical novel dealing in some detail with the German army's slow defeat through attrition in men and equipment, the increasingly hostile attitude of the Italian civilian population, the tangled political situation involving the Vatican, and the internal strains between the Wehrmacht and the SS. In the midst of all this, Bora and an Italian detective, Sandro Guildi, wrestle with first one death, and then two others who may have died as a murder/suicide. Although this is a dark period of history, the book rather nicely captures the moral dilemmas of all the different groups as the Germans more obviously begin to lose the war. Even though some of the events described are unsettling, this is a fascinating and powerful book as one man does his best to do what's right.

*Reviewed by David Marshall*