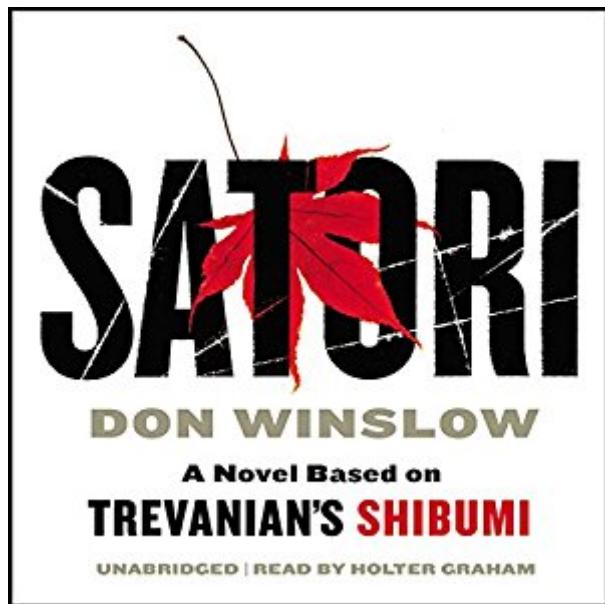


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Satori



Synopsis

Nicholai Hel--genius, mystic, and the perfect, formidable assassin--was first introduced to readers in *Shibumi*, the classic #1 bestseller by master storyteller Trevanian. Now, critically-acclaimed author Don Winslow continues Hel's story for the first time in this all-new, blockbuster thriller. It is the fall of 1951 and the Korean War is raging. Twenty-six year-old Nicholai Hel has spent the last three years in solitary confinement at the hands of the Americans. Hel is a master of *hoda korosu* or "naked kill," fluent in seven languages, and has honed extraordinary "proximity sense" - an extra awareness of the presence of danger. He has the skills to be the world's most fearsome assassin and now the CIA needs him. The Americans offer Hel freedom, money, and a neutral passport in exchange for one small service: go to Beijing and kill the Soviet Union's Commissioner to China. It's almost certainly a suicide mission, but Hel accepts. Now he must survive chaos, violence, suspicion, and betrayal while trying to achieve his ultimate goal of *satori* - the possibility of true understanding and harmony with the world.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 12 hours and 28 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: March 7, 2011

Language: English

ASIN: B004QXZPYS

Best Sellers Rank: #81 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers > Espionage
#421 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Historical Fiction #542
in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Thrillers

Customer Reviews

Trevanian was no Hemingway, but Winslow is no Trevanian. That was the first thought that came to mind. I really fought the urge to arrive at a harsh judgment of *Shibumi*'s sequel. I really did because I wanted *Satori* to be so much more. In fact, I wanted Winslow to be the new Trevanian, just so I could get over the fact that one of my favorite writers had died. No such luck. Trevanian had a delicate way with words and thoughts. Winslow's well Winslow is not quite so delicate. Where Trevanian slid through concepts Winslow took to a bulldozer. Where

Shibumi described sensuality without explicitness Satori envelops the concept in vulgarity. Where Trevanian sliced through the villain with a razor blade Winslow carves him up with a machete. If you are looking for a spoiler, belated as it may be, this is the wrong place. I do not give away plots. I do however thrive on style and catchy stuff. Winslow’s most original thought was “a liberal is a man who will not take his own side in an argument.” The rest is trite: “Tortured, he had learned what no man should have to learn” “the sounds of his own screams” “Small victories, Nicholas thought, ought to be savored.” “Never consider the possibility of success” “consider only the impossibility of failure.” There were moments of wordsmith artistry: “A cloud of cigarette smoke hovered like protective coverage over the triumphs and disappointments.” Later: “Two hours later, the room was full of stale smoke and fresh tension.” And, finally: “When tigers fight, one is killed, and the other is mortally wounded.” But the moments were few. By all means, read the book; especially if you didn’t read Shibumi first. Then, read Shibumi and experience the quality that Winslow could not bring back.

A disappointment. There was moments of great potential, but this "prequel" never re-captured the original characters' temperaments or motivations. Hel was not the Hel from the original, there was none of the hubris from the original and the melodramatic love story. There was the very jarring misapplication of giving De Lhantes the swearing style of Le Cagot's from the original book. Like this author confused the two characters from the original. Most characters were two dimensional and pale. Shibumi was an interesting parody of spy novels with a unique anti-hero in Nicholai Hel. Shibumi was not great literature or subtle, but entertaining for it time, its anti-hero approach and the unusual history surrounding Hel. This prequel lack any of the social criticism and "bite" of the original book and at times descended to "fan fiction" quality. I kept thinking this was author's first draft rather than a fully fleshed out story. When I finished I deleted from my Kindle. Its was not like I would ever re-read this book. I was expecting more

The author has a tremendous task to live up the the near perfection that was the novel Shibumi, a novel so beloved by me that I still give new copies out as gifts forty decades later. Normally, something based on, from the world of, featuring the characters of....is but a pale imitation. Not so with Satori. Don Winslow has darn near accomplished the impossible, creating a surprisingly good

prequel novel. Many of these one star reviews are simply people ticked that it's not Trevanian. No, it's not. That doesn't make it trash. Give it a chance, it took me years to do so and I regret having waited.

I first read *Shibumi* in college. I still remember the TV commercial in the Los Angeles market that came out for the paperback version: two hands holding a string of pearls describing Nicholai Hel's skills and then suddenly turning the string into a garrote. *Shibumi* is one of my favorite books of all time. Trevanian has a fantastic writing style and a clever sense of humor; I love *The Eiger Sanction* (and the Clint Eastwood movie) and *The Loo Sanction*, but his other books are mostly knock-offs of other stories/themes. I didn't know that Trevanian (Rodney William Whitaker) had passed away and his estate had given the rights to Nicholai Hel's story to Don Winslow. So readers of this review will want to know: given how truly fantastic the classic *Shibumi* is, is *Satori* worth buying and reading? The answer is a definitive "yes" You can read *Satori*'s back story in the Publisher's Weekly write-up or other reviews. Don Winslow takes the Nicholai Hel characters and "develops" him further. The Naked Kill skills are there, along with the "Go" way of thinking, in an interesting historical context. I've had the fortune of visiting present day Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Beijing, and Cambodia, and it was interesting and realistic to "visit" these places in 1952 with this book. Don Winslow's style of writing is different, and Trevanain's best is hard to beat, but I'll give Don Winslow my highest complement: I hope he continues his telling of the Nicholai Hel back story, and I'm now interested in his other books.

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