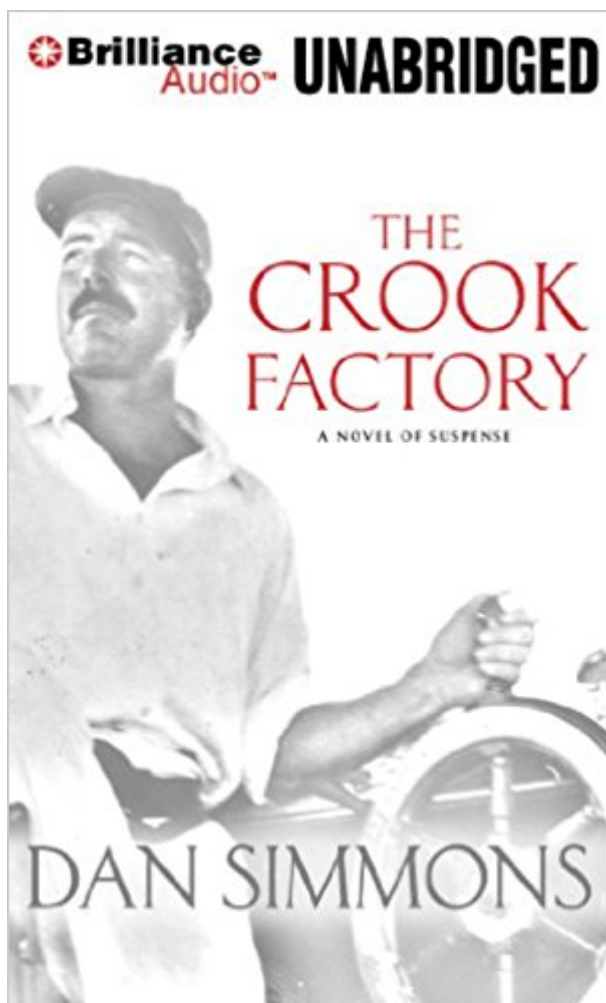




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The Crook Factory



Synopsis

At the height of World War II, the famous writer Ernest Hemingway sought permission from the U.S. government to operate a spy ring out of his house in the Cuban countryside. This much is true. It is the summer of 1942 and FBI agent Joe Lucas has come to Cuba at the behest of J. Edgar Hoover to keep an eye on Hemingway. The great writer has assembled a ragtag spy ring that he calls the "Crook Factory" to play a dangerous game of amateur espionage. But then Lucas and Hemingway, against all the odds, uncover a critical piece of intelligence and the game turns deadly. In *The Crook Factory*, award-winning author Dan Simmons expands a little-known fact into a tour de force of gripping historical suspense set in the sensual Cuban landscape of the early 1940s.

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Customer Reviews

In previous novels, Simmons has cast John Keats as an intergalactic emissary (*Hyperion*) and Mark Twain as an occult adventurer (*Fires in Eden*). His new excursion in fictional literary biography and first nonfantasy since *Phases of Gravity* (1989) is a gutsy speculation on Ernest Hemingway's exploits in wartime espionage, much of it apparently based on fact. In 1942, Hemingway petitioned the American embassy for help in establishing a counterintelligence outfit he called "The Crook Factory," designed to investigate Nazi activity in his adopted home of Cuba. Joe Lucas, a dedicated if unimaginative young FBI agent, thinks he has been assigned to humor the well-connected writer but soon discovers that Hemingway and his crew of colorful sycophants have stumbled on a Nazi spy nest abuzz with activity. Someone is channeling information through the island's intelligence

underground, all of it implicating a host of historical celebrities. The more deeply Hemingway's team probes, the more Lucas is persuaded that the Crook Factory has been deliberately set up as an expendable military subterfuge. As vividly depicted by Simmons, pre-Communist Cuba is an exotic locale whose volatile wartime intrigues are comparable to those of the cinematic Casablanca. It's the perfect milieu for Hemingway, whose larger-than-life evocation must be accounted one of Simmons's sterling literary achievements. The macho figure he cuts here is the stuff of countless Life magazine photos, and his development as Joe's friend and mentor is handled with intelligence and dignity. No one will mistake the novel's immersions in the numbing, repetitive detail of secret service operations for Papa's own concise prose. But the web of conspiracy Simmons spins, the zesty characters it entangles and its intricate cross-weave of fact and fiction distinguish this celebration of the Hemingway centenary. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This delightfully spry novel offers a fictionalized account of Ernest Hemingway, who during the 1930s set up a U.S. government-sanctioned intelligence network, a.k.a. the Crook Factory, in Cuba with a cadre of fishing buddies, waiters, prostitutes, and other unlikely operatives to apprehend Nazi infiltrators. Simmons (*The Rise of Endymion*, LJ 9/15/97) very cleverly takes one of the actual players, remembered only as Lucas, and morphs him into Joe Lucas, an FBI agent sent by J. Edgar Hoover to keep tabs on Ernesto. The plot quickly evolves into a real page-turning espionage story, complete with corrupt police officials, double agents, secret codes, and multiple murders. Without falling into hero worship, Simmons offers one of the best fictional portraits of Hemingway available. The writer is intelligent and tough but at the same time a hotheaded and reckless amateur. Though Hemingway is the hook, this would be an equally intriguing story without him. Fun reading for both Hemingway aficionados and spy novel enthusiasts.-?Michael Rogers, "Library Journal"Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Simmons is a big favorite as are stories by and about Papa. This story is about the time that Hemingway offered his services to hunt down Nazi subs in the Caribbean. Based on truth with the addition of an FBI agent sent to keep an eye on things SS a punishment for some slight against JEH. Consistently well done, very enjoyable.

Just like some other reviews out there, You've got Hemingway, Hoover, espionage, boats and booze all in a pre-Castro Cuba. What could be better? I loved every rollicking minute of this fast moving novel-memoir. Simmons is a master storyteller, and a new favorite author of mine.

Papa Hemingway, Cuba, WWII, Nazi agents, submarine hunting, marlin fishing, shooting Thompsons, BAR's, shotguns, .357 Magnums, .38's, .22's, ex-patriate spies, OSS, FBI, Adwehr, SS, MI5, MI6, Ian Fleming, Wild Bill Donovan, J. Edgar ("the tiniest feet of any man I've ever known"), Cuban prostitutes with hearts of gold, bartenders, drunken boxing matches, Marines, boxers, jai lai stars, Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, Gary Cooper, Winston Guest, large yachts, sadistic Cuban police, secret Caribbean islands— and more. Simmons packs it all into a 60% true/ 40% fiction account of Nazi hunting in Cuba by Hemingway's Crook's Factory in 1943. Well-done, like everything else Simmons writes.

This is a well-written thriller based on some mighty shady people, one of whom was J. Edgar Hoover. Then, if you throw in Cuba, Hemingway, some Nazis, spies, drinking, womanizing, espionage, and a fine writer, you have this book. Although it's technically fiction, it reads like the true history it is based on. If you like this kind of stuff, I think you'll enjoy this book.

Someone else recommended this book to me because they know I like Hemingway and have studied him, read lots of biographies, etc. When I learned it was a novel about Hemingway I was skeptical but decided to buy it anyway. I hadn't heard of the author. Dan Simmons writes in a genre that I typically don't read. The book surprised me. It's a fun page turner that (I think) captures the essence of Hemingway's personality and impulsive behaviors. It also addresses a period of time in Hemingway's life that is mostly ignored or neglected by other writers. Make no mistake, the book is a novel. It rings true and it's a good story. I recommend it.

Dan Simmons is a very talented author who has mastered many genre's. This is one of my favorites because it is not only an excellent story, but also a good historical study. Simmons has taken a collection of historical facts and woven a wonderful story involving Hemmingway, Ian Fleming, the Kennedys and several other interesting characters. I highly recommend this novel.

Another Simmons home run. He again weaves fact and fiction into a tapestry of spy vs. spy, as narrated by the fictional FBI agent who becomes Hemingway's constant companion and sometimes alter-ego. Simmons once again has energized Hemingway, the man, the myth, the legend, by injecting him with a serious dose of intrigue and patriotism. Simmons' style of blending real life and make believe makes for great reading, and repeats in the excellent novel "Abominable", and his

versatility shines through in other works. Compare and contrast the Ilium and Olympos epic and Darwin's Blade.

I enjoyed this biographical novel immensely. Simmons serves up a intriguing tale of counterintelligence that Papa Hemingway leads, outwitting the spymasters at their own game, who have attempted to use the literary giant as a naive puppet. However, his unflinching courage and savvy resourcefulness surprise everyone but Hemingway. In short, he becomes a strategic linchpin that enables a secret mission to succeed. Simmons fashions a mystery that embraces and embellishes the mythic, larger-than-life presence of Hemingway. He would have liked the book.

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