



Hitman: Damnation

By Raymond Benson

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THE OFFICIAL, ALL-ORIGINAL, ALL-OUT THRILLING PREQUEL TO THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED NEW GAME HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

Since the devastating conclusion of Hitman: Blood Money, Agent 47 has been MIA. Now fans awaiting the return of the blockbuster videogame and film phenomenon can pinpoint the location of the world's most brutal and effective killer-for-hire before he reemerges in Hitman: Absolution. When the Agency lures him back with a mission that will require every last ounce of his stealth, strength, and undercover tactics, they grossly underestimate the silent assassin's own agenda. Because this time, Agent 47 isn't just going to bite the hand that feeds him. He's going to tear it off and annihilate anyone who stands in his way.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Raymond Benson is the author of twenty-seven published novels, including his latest thrillers *The Black Stiletto* and its sequel, *The Black Stiletto: Black & White*. His rock 'n' roll thriller *Dark Side of the Morgue* was Shamus Award nominee for Best Paperback Original P.I. Novel of 2009. He is also a prolific tie-in writer, his most recent work being *Homefront: The Voice of Freedom* (co-written with John Milius). Benson was the fourth—and first American—author of the official James Bond novels, and his 007 novels are collected in the anthologies *Choice of Weapons* and *The Union Trilogy*.

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One

Twelve Months Later

It was always a variation of the same dream.

This time I was, what, thirteen years old? Yes. Thirteen. I recognized the asylum's corridors and I passed a framed portrait of my father—one of them, anyway— Dr. Ort-Meyer. I saw my reflection in the glass, and it was how I remembered myself at that age.

But where was everyone? The asylum was empty. My footsteps echoed as if I was in a cavern.

I thought to myself that I should run. He was coming, but I hadn't perceived him yet. Usually I felt him coming. It was a sensation I was unable to describe, but I knew he was there. Just around the corner. Coming for me.

So I ran.

And then he was behind me, appearing out of nowhere. I could practically smell him. I could feel the coldness. It was always cold when he was nearby.

I dared to look over my shoulder as I ran. The dark figure was faceless, as usual. Almost as if he were only a shadow, but I knew better.

He was Death.

No question about it. Death had been coming for me in my dreams for a long time now.

I ran faster. I was fairly certain I could stay ahead of him, but the temperature around me grew colder. He was closer. How did he come to move so fast? He was getting better at the chase. He was learning.

But I was learning too. Wasn't I?

I turned a corner and faced an interminable hallway. It disappeared into nothingness, a long way away.

Could I make it to the end before he caught me?

I pushed forward and felt my legs working to put distance between the shadow and me. Did I hear him calling me? How could he call me? I don't have a name. Or did I? I don't remember.

Things were always crazy in a dream.

Suddenly my legs struggled to move. As if I were waist deep in invisible quicksand. No matter how hard I tried, I could only step forward at the pace of a snail. The muscles in my thighs and calves hurt from the exertion.

The ice-cold breath was now on my neck. He was directly behind me, perhaps close enough to reach out and touch me.

No! I had to get away! I couldn't let Death touch me.

I sensed his hand, outstretched and ready to clasp my shoulder. The only thing I could do was fall forward, as if I'd just toppled like a stack of building blocks. But I didn't fall fast enough; it was more like I was floating! Then I felt the icy, stinging pressure of his fingers.

I screamed as I landed on the hallway's tiled floor . . .

. . . and I woke up.

The disorientation lasted for a few seconds, as always.

That unpleasant ball of bees in my chest felt as if it might explode. Some might call it anxiety. I don't know what it was for me. Whatever I chose to call it, I didn't like it.

I immediately sat up in bed. The hotel room was dark. No, it was light outside. I had the curtains closed. The digital clock on the nightstand read 5:43. I'd meant to wake from the afternoon nap at 6:00. This had been happening a lot. My internal alarm clock was all messed up. At least I awoke early and not too late.

I had a job to do.

I stood and walked to the window. I carefully pulled back the drapes and peered outside. The Caribbean sun was bright and hot. I saw men and women in bathing attire. The resort's pool was full of guests, splashing and cavorting. I knew the beach would be crowded as well.

What would it be like to put on swim trunks, walk outside, and join the other people for fun? Ocho Rios, Jamaica! Didn't every human being want to lie on a recliner and relax with a piña colada while the sun baked your skin and turned it into cancer cells? Attend the nightly dance and hook up with someone of the opposite sex? Enjoy a weekend fling in paradise?

What a stupid idea. I knew I wasn't capable of that.

I released the drapes and plunged the room into darkness again.

I noticed that my hand was trembling. This always happened when I woke up. After so many hours without a

pill I got the shakes. Naked, I walked into the bathroom and turned on the light. I reached for the plastic bottle I kept in a pouch. I'd tossed it onto the counter after I'd checked in to the resort. I tapped out a pill into the palm of my hand and popped it into my mouth. Then I turned on the faucet, cupped my hands, and filled them with enough water to chug down the medication.

My reflection in the mirror stared back at me. I was certainly no longer thirteen years old. I wasn't sure how old I was, although I was "created" in 1964. That was the downside of being a test-tube baby.

I snapped the lid back on the pill bottle. There was no label. I'd obtained the oxycodone illegally, so there was no prescription information. Besides, no doctor in his right mind would have prescribed these powerful painkillers for as long as I'd been taking them.

I supposed people would say I was addicted, but actually I could quit anytime I wanted. I just didn't want to. I was pretty sure that, because of how I'm wired, the oxycodone didn't affect me as it would a "normal" person. I started taking the pills after the injury. I really needed painkillers at the time. But even after I'd healed, I found I liked the effects. The pills didn't dope me up the way they would most people. Instead, they cleared my head and calmed me down.

Granted, if I didn't take one after so many hours, I got a headache that was unbearable, I became anxious and jittery, and I had vivid nightmares. I never used to experience anxiety. Never. Now I did if I didn't take the pill. Did that mean I was addicted? In my own way, perhaps.

I returned to the room. I had a boat to catch. I had a target to eliminate. I had a job to do. Time to get dressed.

I knew I wasn't operating at 100 percent. I wasn't at the top of my game. Ever since the accident. Ever since Diana . . . It wasn't good for me to think about it, but sometimes I couldn't help it.

The difficulty was avoiding the Agency. They'd been trying to reach me. Messages had come through the usual channels. I didn't answer them. I had no desire to work with ICA anymore. I was past my prime. I wasn't the assassin I once was. I knew that. It's why I worked freelance now. It's why I supported myself with easy assignments like the one tonight.

Hector Corado. Mediocre scum who specialized in human trafficking. And my employer, Roget, was just as sleazy. But it was a job. And it was money. Not as much as I made with the Agency, but it was enough. I really didn't care about the money. As long as I had the means to carry on each day and dress the way I liked, I was happy.

Happy. What a concept.

If I could laugh, I would have.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nellie Davis:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive right now, people have do something to make these individuals survives, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice by means of surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated the item for a

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Richard Hennessy:

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Dawn Brown:

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