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Savages: A Novel



Synopsis

Part-time environmentalist and philanthropist Ben and his ex-mercenary buddy Chon run an independent Laguna Beach-based marijuana operation, reaping significant profits from an established clientele. But they may have come up against something that they can't handle---the Mexican Baja Cartel wants in, and saying no is unacceptable. When they refuse to back down, the cartel kidnaps Ophelia, the boys' playmate and confidante. O's abduction sets off a dizzying array of ingenious negotiations and gripping plot twists that will captivate listeners eager to learn the costs of freedom and the price of an amazing high.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brilliant! I don't usually read this genre and to be honest, I only picked this up because I know Oliver Stone has turned this into a film. Winslow does something rather different in this book in that he makes the non-person narrator a character of its own. This may feel like author intrusion to some, gimmicky to others or just down right annoying but I loved it. It was something I'd never seen before and I found it hilarious, which helped to lighten the otherwise dreadfully dark and violent content of this story. As for the story itself, maybe nothing too original. Drug cartels, weed growers, gangs etc. but Winslow definitely delivers this old tale in a refreshing format and I loved his characters.

Perhaps they're a bit over the top, like exaggerations of themselves but it didn't stop me from loving the weird threesome at the heart of this story. And a relationship between two guys and a girl like this one isn't often portrayed the way Winslow did it. My only beef is that this book could have been

longer, could have had more plot complications, some deeper exploration of certain characters. There was a lot of backstory given for each character, even the minor ones and what I really wanted was more on Chon, Ben and O - the three protags of the book. Meh, can't please everyone. I can't wait to see what Stone does with this novel and how he realises it on the big screen.

Winslow has written some great crime fiction, complete with the requisite humor and irony. He has also written some very grim fiction about the drug cartels that I find unappealing. This book is right on the cusp. Some gruesome scenes punctuate this novel (which lapses from prose to poetry on numerous occasions) but they do not overwhelm it. Watered down a bit for the film version (no happy ending here) this book is pure Winslow. I love Bobby Z, Frankie Machine and Winslow's other early works. I dislike the unrelenting violence of the cartel books. Savages is Winslow at his peak. This is his most memorable work. Read it! Own it! Try not to live it.

Ben is a dogooder/social justice idealist; Chon (formerly KA John) is an ex-Seal. Together they grow hydro weed in the OC. Lots of it. One day they receive a message from the Baja Cartel. The BC wants to deal the product (where the big profit margins lie) and force Ben and Chon to be their growers. To enforce the point they kidnap their mutual lover, Ophelia, and threaten her with GBH (or worse). Another option is negotiated. The boys can stop supplying the BC if they fork over a cool \$20 mil. While the boys find a (very bloody) way out of their problem, Ophelia persuades her sympathetic jailer to let her have pizza, wi-fi and the opportunity to watch missed episodes of The Bachelorette. In a jacket blurb Christopher Reich describes Savages as "the finest novel I have read in years." I wouldn't go that far, but I'd put it in my top ten or twelve, along with Don Winslow's lovely The Winter of Frankie Machine and his epic, The Power of the Dog. The latter might actually be my number one, tied with Ellroy's Blood's A Rover (who also hypes Winslow's book) and anything written by James Lee Burke. Savages is part Elmore Leonard, part Cormac McCarthy, with each at the top of their game. It is, by turns, laugh out-loud funny and seriously grim. The blood flows like the Nile and the jokes come rapid fire. Welcome to the other side of life on the border. Winslow has now taken his seat at the table of the crime fiction gods. Whatever he attempts, in whatever mood, form, tone or sub-genre, the result is the same--a masterpiece. Very highly recommended.

This is my first Don Winslow novel and I found his style to be pretty engaging and the overall book to a fast and entertaining read. It read more like a film screenplay than it does a book, although that is not a bad thing. Winslow even adds some touches that reinforce the likelihood that he wrote this

as equal part book/screenplay. Centered on two Southern California pot dealers, Ben and Chon, (and their mutual love interest O) who find their territory under assault from a Mexican drug cartel, "Savages" captures the current role that Mexican drug cartels are having in their own country and across the border in the US. While Chon, a former US military soldier in Iraq, is the more outwardly aggressive, take no prisoners character, we see the "Savage" in the mild-mannered Ben when circumstances turn and threaten what he most cares about. Winslow deftly does what all drug crime movies or books do. He doesn't glorify the reality of drugs and problems that it creates since they all ultimately lead down the same path and to the same ending. The most compelling character, even though "Savages" was not built on deep character development, was Elena Lauter, female head of the Baja cartel. She reminded me of Omar from the HBO show, "Wire" -- ruthless, thug but somehow you find yourself rooting for them at certain points. Some readers didn't like the ending, thinking it was predictable. I thought the last couple of paragraphs reinforced Winslow's eye on Hollywood, but the final scenes were built up with the right drama and conclusion to make the "Savages" worth the time investment.

A resident of Orange County, this is certainly the world I live in...the title says it all... Savages... I can't relate to these people but the fast pace action, irreverent tone, particular characters in their own right makes this book a page turner... I like the short chapters that make you turn the page and be worried about what comes next...

One of the best stories I've read in a long time. This is the first novel by Don Winslow I've read. I'll be picking up another one right away.

Winslow writes some pretty good pot boilers about life in Southern California and on or below the Mexican border. He's always a good read. It's not great literature, but you are reading for entertainment and in that regard, Winslow usually delivers.

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