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An unfinished duel, a midnight murder, and the treachery of a beautiful prostitute lead to the imprisonment of Sharpe. Caught in a web of political intrigue for which his military experience has left him fatally unprepared, Sharpe becomes a fugitive--a man hunted by both ally and enemy alike.

Sharpe's Honor Details

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Robert says

A more personal story than many of the other entries - more character driven and with only a single small battle scene, and no real appearances by the usual greenjacketed supporting cast - yet still infused with the occasionally surprising turn of phrase or small, intensely human scene that marks the best entries of the series.

Brent Ecenbarger says

Coming off my favorite installment to date in the excellent *Sharpe's Enemy*, any book that followed was bound to feel like a let down. That was certainly the case with *Sharpe's Honor*, the sixteenth chronological book in the Richard Sharpe series, but overall this was still a book I enjoyed. I think the worst aspects of this book came from a new theory I have that Bernard Cornwell comes up with clever words to attach to Sharpe's name for book titles, and then writes the book trying to shoehorn as many allusions to that word as possible throughout the book.

Taking place in the closing months of the Spanish conflict between Britain and France during the Napoleonic Wars, Major Richard Sharpe is the target of a plot by the French intelligence officer Pierre Ducos. The Whore of Gold, Richard's object of lust from prior books, Helene is the mechanism for the plot who sets everything in motion by sending a letter to her husband accusing Sharpe of making a drunken attempt at raping her. Helene's husband then challenges Richard Sharpe's, ahem, honor by challenging Sharpe to a duel. When Helene's husband ends up dying, Sharpe ends up exiled on a secret mission that involves deadly Spanish partisans, breaking into a nunnery, prison escapes and wagons full of riches beyond imagination.

With any book series that are this lengthy, I appreciate when there is a deviation from one book to another that is memorable or changes the series. While *Sharpe's Honor* lacks the major character deaths or military promotions of other books, it does affect the overall series in three manners. ****Slight Spoilers Follow**** First, Patrick Harper ends up married and has a baby on the way. Unlike Sharpe's earlier marriage, it seems at least possible that these characters will travel with the army beyond this book. Second, Sharpe loses his longest tenured possession, one that connects him to the most powerful man in his world, but gets it replaced with something much more extravagant. ****End of Spoilers**** Finally and most importantly, this book ends the Spanish conflict and it looks like French soil is on the horizon. The Sharpe books thus far have spent extensive time in India, before hopping around to places like Denmark and Portugal, but it feels like we've been in Spain the longest and the change of scenery should help add some excitement in the next chapter.

The best scene in this book is probably Sharpe's excursion into a Spanish nunnery. While the prison scene featured some of the most violent and destructive descriptions to be found in a Sharpe book, the mysterious solution provided for Sharpe felt far too convenient in the timing of and execution of it all to really register as believable. The nunnery relied instead on a quick decision by Sharpe to shift the blame away from himself that was both very funny and very clever. Since Sharpe is basically a superhero at this point, anything that shifts the story away from him outfighting his opponent stands out by comparison.

Besides the less than thrilling prison escape (which again, was preceded by an amazingly brutal action sequence), this book also loses some points by relying on three villains that all pale when compared to either

of the two villains from the previous book. Pierre Ducos seems to be Sharpe's long term villain at this point, which is unfortunate as the best Sharpe villains have been those that try to best him at his own game on the battlefield. Ducos is closer to Father Hacha (the Inquisitor) and El Matarife (the sadist Spanish partisan), the villains that Sharpe must overcome in this book, as all three have no real loyalty or qualms about killing innocents to stop Sharpe. While I'm still loving this series, and even enjoyed *Sharpe's Honor*, I've got it ranked as the 9th best in the first 17, which puts it in the bottom half in terms of quality.

Kenneth says

Sharpe is accused of murder but manages to clear his name in the end.

Rob Trans says

if, per chance, you follow my reviews, a rating of 3 for a Sharpe novel is the equivalent of a 4 for a typical novel. I expect more from certain proficient authors, and Cornwell is one of these.

"Sharpe's Honour" is another good addition to the series, but the author once again explores Sharpe's sensitive side. Sharpe spends a lot of time ruminating about honour and feeling guilty about his infidelity to his wife and daughter. He is once again impoverished because he sent all of his money to support his daughter. It is fairly obvious he'd rather live the life of a rifle officer and the challenges and pleasures that that brings to him. He ruminates about whether his personal honor is worth more than serving/protecting his country, carrying out his assigned mission which was given by a friendly superior officer with Wellington's concurrence, lessening the chances his men and other British troops will be killed in battle, and aiding a paramour who is in dire straits.

Unbeknownst to him, Sharpe is caught up in an espionage plot to trick the Spanish nobles into supporting the French puppet regime and sever ties with the British and Wellington. Sharpe is accused of murder, tried, convicted, and cashiered. He must uncover the plot to prove his innocence. He travels incognito, rescues an old paramour, solves the plot, and returns to the army in time for the big battle. All ends well. The normal cast of characters is included to a lesser degree.

Still a great series of quick reads with an historical foundation. Still worth reading. I have now completed 17 of the 21 novels and all three short stories.

Maria says

Here Cornwell departs from his usual plot of "Sharpe encounters a problem and solves by going into battle" and makes the story less straight forward.

This is a twofold benefit: Sharpe's own story becomes more interested, unexpected and allows some significant insights into his thoughts on one hand, and allows some fascinating action to take place in Sharpe's absence.

Mike Gunderloy says

Richard Sharpe gets falsely accused of murder, hung, beat up, tortured, captured by the French...and still comes back to lead his regiment, win a battle, gain riches, and save the girl. The great thing is that despite the pardonable fictional excess of putting one character (a lovable rogue at that) in the middle of everything, the basic historical thread here is true, including the low-ranking soldiers making off with the King of Spain's diamonds and gold.

Andrew says

Sensational. Sharpe is at his best when he's battling a memorable foe, and aside from Obadiah Hakeswill (who, Cornwell unfortunately killed off in the last installment of the series, Sharpe's Enemy), the French spy Pierre Ducos is about the best adversary the rifleman could have. In Sharpe's Honour, Ducos is at the centre of a plot to push the British army out of France before said army can dispatch the French from Spain.

Picking up soon after events in 'Sharpe's Enemy', a brooding, unhappy, frustrated Sharpe finds himself in all sorts of trouble and must get out of it before the Battle of Vitoria. Classic Sharpe!

Angela says

Rifles, War with Napoleon, crazy inept officers, amazingly adept soldiers, Richard Sharpe who continues to up and down from Officer to plain soldier and back again. THE regency version of Secret forces

Marcus says

Not much to add to what I have already written about Sharpe-series. It's like pop corn - once you start, you can't stop, but it will never really fill your belly. But as long as you take those books for what they are - a guilty pleasure and a quick, fun read - a book about Richard Sharpe is always an enjoyable experience.

Kathy Davie says

Sixteenth in the Richard Sharpe historical military fiction series revolving around Major Richard Sharpe and the Peninsular War against Napoleon.

My Take

It starts brutally, slips into cleverness, and then wallows in the greed of a priest with dreams of becoming a cardinal. Being a priest is no guarantee of being a Christian as Hacha proves.

The story starts with a battle and ends with another. One in which the men can become rich beyond their wildest dreams while other men's dreams are destroyed. One in which Richard proves again that he's a fool

for a woman. In between is invasion, escape, fighting, trickery, and too many prison cells.

I do love Cornwell's characters. Richard certainly has a sliding scale of honor, but it's there where and when it counts. I do enjoy the respect with which Richard is held by [almost] everyone from generals on down to privates. I also enjoy how uncomfortable it makes him! I don't think Richard will ever be able to understand the esteem his fellow soldiers have for him. Sure, Cornwell has taken liberties with his characters and the battles, but he has preserved the feel for the time period and being on a battlefield. I sure can empathize with the cold, hard ground at night and the way Cornwell describes the cold, the heat, and the dust makes me grateful for today's conveniences!

It's the most comfortable way I can imagine for experiencing battle and laying siege. It's terrifying enough just reading Cornwell's words and makes me very grateful to soldiers everywhere.

The Story

The story begins with our introduction to *El Matarife*, priming us for the terror of the knife fight at the end of a chain and continues with the very worried Trumper-Jones wondering if Sharpe really means to surrender.

It's the Treaty of Valençay, named for the chateau where the Spanish king is held prisoner. A clever move to force the British out of Spain. One of Ducos' plans and he's working a series of scams one of which is the destruction of Major Sharpe with *La Puta Dorada*'s help.

Forcing Sharpe into a corner where he must defend his honor or lose it.

The Characters

Major Richard Sharpe commands a half-battalion of the South Essex Light Company and is viewed by other men as "a soldier's soldier, a man whose approval was eagerly sought by other men, whose name was used as a touchstone of professional competence". Even by the French! Teresa has been dead for a few months now and his daughter, Antonia, is growing up motherless with her aunt and uncle. Although, he has given all his money to her.

His men include **Sergeant Patrick Harper**, a huge Irishman from Donegal and still living in sin with **Isabella** (see *Sharpe's Company*); **Captain Peter d'Alembord**, an accomplished duellist; **Sergeant Huckfield**; **Captain William Frederickson**, a.k.a., Sweet William, is half-German, half-English, a fearsome soldier with an eye for beauty, and has the charge of Sharpe's few Riflemen; **Collip** is the quartermaster who really needs to think before he leaps; **Paddock** is Sharpe's Battalion clerk; **Regimental Sergeant Major MacLaird**; and, **Lieutenant Harry Price** is still alive. **Lieutenant-Colonel Leroy** has been promoted and is now in command of the South Essex. **Major Joseph Forrest** has been sent to Lisbon to help organize stores.

Major Michael Hogan is Sharpe's friend and the general's chief of intelligence. The Marquess of **Wellington**, Grandee of Spain, Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain and Duque da Victoria in Portugal is in command of all the armies. Between them, they rescue Sharpe and send him into danger to prove his innocence. **Major Vaughn** is the prosecutor in his trial with **General Sir Edward Pakenham** presiding. **Angel** is Hogan's spy and he's lending him to Sharpe for this mission. Poor **Lieutenant Michael Trumper-Jones**...he gets introduced to a Sharpe he had never expected would surrender!

Helene Leroux, a.k.a., *La Puta Dorada*, is the Marquesa de Casares el Grande y Melida Sadaba and a spy for Napoleon (see *Sharpe's Sword*). Luis, the **Marqués**, is a Grandee of Spain, its new hero, a general, and

Helene's husband newly returned from Brazil, and currently at Wellington's side. And easily led by the Church. **Major Miguel Mendora** is the marqués' errand boy delivering the challenge. **Ferdinand VII** is the imprisoned Spanish king whom Napoleon will return to Spain. On certain conditions. **General Raoul Verigny** is her current protector, persuaded to help Helene escape Spain with a fortune now that Spain knows her for what she is. **Major Montbrun** is a French officer and wants to make a deal with Sharpe that will benefit his master, King Joseph of Spain. **Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan** is in command of the French army at Burgos.

Major Pierre Ducos is Napoleon's primary intelligence officer. Egotistical and confident in his immense superiority. Only Napoleon has his respect; all others are well beneath his regard or consideration. And he loathes Sharpe with a passion.

El Matarife, a.k.a., The Slaughterman, a.k.a., Juan Hacha, is Father Hacha's brother and a partisan leader. He's not averse to enriching himself at the expense of his country or countrymen. **Pedro Pelera** is another partisan, but not a friend of *El Matarife*. **Father Tomas Hacha** is an Inquisitor for the Catholic Church in Spain, but more interested in his rise to power and restoring his family's fortunes.

The Cover

The cover is one of the charcoal sketches with Sharpe rising up from the bottom and visible from the shoulders on up. He's holding his sword straight up at the level of his chin.

The title truly is about *Sharpe's Honor* and the lengths he will go to retain it.

J. says

Another “Sharpe is a spy” tale that works quite well as a direct sequel to Sharpe’s Enemy, though it lacks that volume’s overall punch and sense of tension. Well written, as are all of the entries, and breezy in its construction.

Somnath Sengupta says

This book is named incorrectly. It should have been named “Sharpe's Deus Ex Machina” as the plot is filled with implausible twists which conveniently help the hero reach a climactic scene, much more than usual dosage of Sharpe plots. Mind you, it starts off really well as Sharpe finds himself hauled for something he didn't do and is unable to save himself. His escape is where the series of Deus Ex Machina begins and continues till the end. Most of the plot seems hastily cobbled together just to place Sharpe at the pivotal battle in the end. The climax itself is far too cinematic and over the top. Only redeeming part of this book is Cornwell's vivid description of tactical layout of the Battle of Vitoria. There are humorous sections in the story, especially enjoyed Sharpe romping through a nunnery and his conversation with French generals.

Spoilers ahead.

Here are three things that I could not understand one bit.

First, Sharpe's escape from hanging. He is a famous and popular soldier, who is set to be hanged in front of scores of British soldiers as well as British, Spanish high ranking officials yet NONE of them notice that the man being hanged is not Sharpe at all! I cross checked to see if the man who was hanged had his face covered or not. He didn't and was marched down in broad daylight. How silly was this twist!!!

Second, a random French soldier randomly rides into the fort of Burgos then randomly decides to stub his burning cigar in front of stacked ammunition while randomly doing it in Sharpe's eyeline. How convenient! I thought it was Sharpe's spanish assistant Angel who did it. It later turned out he wasn't even near the scene.

Lastly, Sharpe who is always shown as an awkward rider has suddenly capable enough to guide his horse through a rough terrain in face of pitched battle.

Brian V says

At the Battle of Vitoria (21 June 1813) a British, Portuguese and Spanish army under General the Marquess of Wellington broke the French army under Joseph Bonaparte and Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan near Vitoria in Spain, eventually leading to victory in the Peninsular War. British outflank French, attack over and ridge that thought to be un-passable and smash French army which fled in complete disarray and abandon plunder from Spain that causes British soldiers to plunder the plunder.

An unfinished duel, a midnight murder, and the treachery of a beautiful prostitute lead to the imprisonment of Sharpe. Caught in a web of political intrigue for which his military experience has left him fatally unprepared, Sharpe becomes a fugitive--a man hunted by both ally and enemy alike.

Robert Krenzel says

I am a fan of the Sharpe series, but this one seemed a bit forced to me. Even given Richard Sharpe's knack for being at the wrong place at the wrong time, the sequence of events that lead to his multiple apparent deaths are a bit far-fetched.

I also do not recall Cornwell using so many point of view shifts within single scenes. He does it about as well as can be done, but it is still somewhat distracting.

All that said, this is still a fun, quick read, with an extra helping of action. During the battle scenes you will hear the roll of the drums and smell and taste the gun smoke in the air, and if you are reading a Sharpe novel, that's probably what you're after!

Gerald Matzke says

This episode in the Sharpe series is a bit different than the others. It seems that it was written to be a an old time serial with several cliffhangers that would keep the movie goer coming back to see what was going to

happen. Deceptions and last minute rescues make up much of the book. As usual, there is a woman involved who tests Sharpe's honour, hence the title. It was still an exciting story that was hard to put down.
