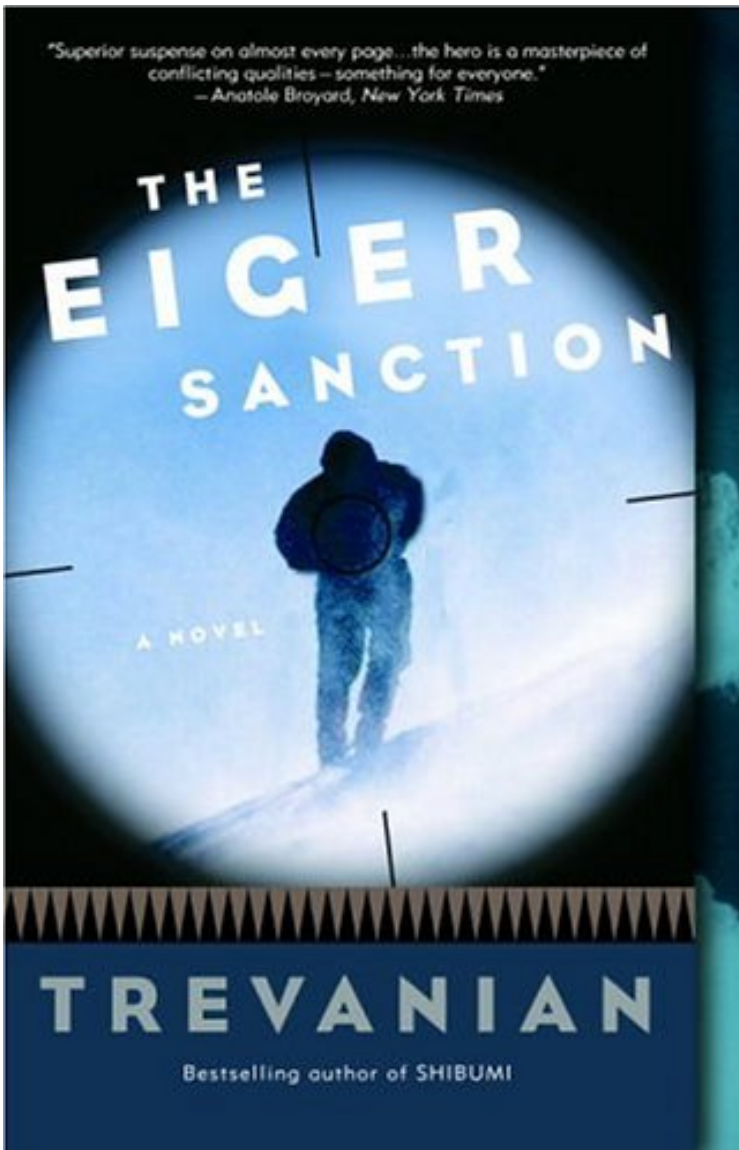


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The Eiger Sanction: A Novel



Par Trevanian
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurJonathan Hemlock lives in a renovated Gothic church on Long Island. He is an art professor, a mountain climber, and a mercenary, performing assassinations (i.e., sanctions) for money to augment his black-market art collection. Now Hemlock is being tricked into a hazardous assignment that involves an attempt to scale one of the most treacherous mountain peaks in the Swiss Alps, the Eiger.In a breathtakingly suspenseful story that is part thriller and part satire, the author traces Hemlocks spine-tingling adventures, introducing a cast of intriguing charactersvillains, traitors, beautiful womeninto the highly charged atmosphere of danger. The accumulating threads of suspicion, accusation, and evidence gradually knit themselves into a bizarre and death-defying climax in this exciting, entertaining novel that will keep

readers on the edge of their seats until the last absorbing page. From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait Montreal: MAY 16 Earlier that night, rain had fallen on Boulevard St. Laurent, and there were still triangular pools on the uneven sidewalk. The rain had passed, but it remained cool enough to justify CII operative Wormwood's light tan raincoat. His taste ran more to trench coats, but he dared not wear one, knowing his fellow agents would scoff. Wormwood compromised by turning the collar of his raincoat up and plunging his hands deep into his pockets. One of these hands was clenched around a piece of bubble gum he had received only twenty minutes before from an evil-smelling gnome on the forbidding grounds of Ste. Justine hospital. The gnome had stepped out suddenly from the bushes, giving Wormwood a dreadful start, which he had tried to convert into a gesture of Oriental defense. The image of feline alertness might have been more effective if he had not had the misfortune to back into a rosebush. Wormwood's step was crisp along the emptying street. He felt uplifted by a sense of greatness, to be sure but of adequacy. For once he had not muddled the job. His reflection rippled along a dark shop window, and he was not displeased with what he saw. The confident glance and determined stride more than compensated for the sloping shoulders and balding head. Wormwood twisted his palms outward to correct his shoulder slump because someone once told him that the best way to achieve manly posture was to walk with the palms forward. It was most uncomfortable, and it made him walk rather like a penguin, but he did it whenever he thought of it. He was painfully reminded of his recent encounter with the rosebush, but he discovered that he could relieve his discomfort by nipping the seam of his pants between thumb and forefinger and tugging it away from his buttocks. And this he did from time to time, ignoring the open curiosity of passersby. He was content. "It's got to be a matter of confidence," he told himself. "I knew I could pull this off, and I pulled it off!" He treasured a theory that one attracted bad luck by anticipating it, and the results of his last several assignments seemed to lend support to the concept. In general, theories did not hold up for Wormwood. To his problem of balding, he had applied the principle of Keep It Short and You'll Keep It Long, and he always wore a crew cut that made him appear less significant than necessary, but his hair continued to fall. For a while, he had clung to the theory that early balding indicated uncommon virility, but personal experience eventually forced him to abandon this hypothesis. "This time I'm home free, and no screw-up. Six o'clock tomorrow morning I'll be back in the States!" His fist tightened down on the bubble gum. He could not afford another failure. The men at home base were already referring to him as the "one-man Bay of Pigs." As he turned left into Lessage Lane, the street seemed empty of sound and people. He took note of this. By the time he had turned south again on St. Dominique, it was so silent that the sound of his footsteps seemed to clip back at him from the facades of unlit, dreary brick buildings. The silence did not disturb him; he whistled as a matter of choice. "This think-positive bit really scores," he thought jazzily. "Winners win, and that's a fact." Then his round boyish face contracted into concern as he wondered if it was also true that losers lose. He tried to remember his college logic course. "No," he decided at length, "that doesn't necessarily follow. Losers don't always lose. But winners always win!" He felt better for having thought it out. He was only one block from his third-rate hotel. He could see the damaged sign H TEL in vertical red neon down the street. "Almost home free." He recalled CII Training Center instructions always to approach your destination from the opposite side of the street, so he crossed over. He had never fully understood the reason for this rule, beyond simple sneakiness, but it would no more occur to him to demand an explanation than it would to disobey. St. Dominique's wrought iron streetlamps had not yet fallen prey to urban uglification in the form of lip-blackening mercury lamps, so Wormwood was able to amuse himself by watching his shadow slip out from beneath his feet and grow long before him, until the next lamp assumed domination and projected his shadow, ever shortening, behind him. He was looking over his shoulder, admiring this photic phenomenon, when he ran into the lamppost. Upon recovery, he glanced angrily up and down the street, mentally daring anyone to have seen. Someone had seen, but Wormwood did not know this, so he glared at the offending lamppost, straightened his shoulders by twisting his palms forward, and crossed to his hotel. The hall was reassuringly redolent of that medley of mildew, Lysol, and urine characteristic of run-down hotels. According to subsequent reports, Wormwood must have entered the hotel between 11:55 and 11:57. Whatever the exact time, we may be sure he checked it, delighting as always in the luminosity of his watch's dial. He had heard that the phosphorescent material used on watch dials could cause skin cancer, but he felt that he made up for the risk by not smoking. He had developed the habit of checking the time whenever he found himself in a dark place. Otherwise, what was the use of having a watch with a luminous dial? It was probably the time he spent considering this that made the difference between 11:55 and 11:57. As he climbed the dimly lit staircase with its damp, scrofulous carpet, he reminded himself that

"winners win." His spirits sank, however, when he heard the sound of coughing from the room next to his. It was a racking, gagging, disease-laden cough that went on in spasms throughout the night. He had never seen the old man next door, but he hated the cough that kept him awake. Standing outside his door, he took the bubble gum from his pocket and examined it. "Probably microfilm. And it's probably between the gum and the paper. Where the funnies usually are." His key turned the slack lock. As he closed the door behind himself, he breathed with relief. "There's no getting around it," he admitted. "Winners" But the thought choked in mid-conception. He was not alone in the room. With a reaction the Training Center would have applauded, he popped the bubble gum, wrapper and all, into his mouth and swallowed it just as the back of his skull was crushed in. The pain was very sharp indeed, but the sound was more terrible. It was akin to biting into crisp celery with your hands over your ears but more intimate. He heard the sound of the second blow quite clearly a liquid crunch-but oddly it did not hurt. Then something did hurt. He could not see, but he knew they were cutting open his throat. The image of it made him shudder, and he hoped he wouldn't be sick. Then they began on his stomach. Something cold rippled in and out of his stomach. The old man next door coughed and gagged. Wormwood's mind chased the thought that had been arrested by his first fright. "Winners win," he thought, then he died. *Revue de presse* 'Superior suspense on almost every page... the hero is a masterpiece of conflicting qualities something for everyone' NEW YORK TIMES-- 'The only writer of airport paperbacks to be compared to Zola, Ian Fleming, Poe and Chaucer' NEW YORK TIMES-- 'Trevanian can write hoops around Ian Fleming' BOSTON GLOBE-- --*