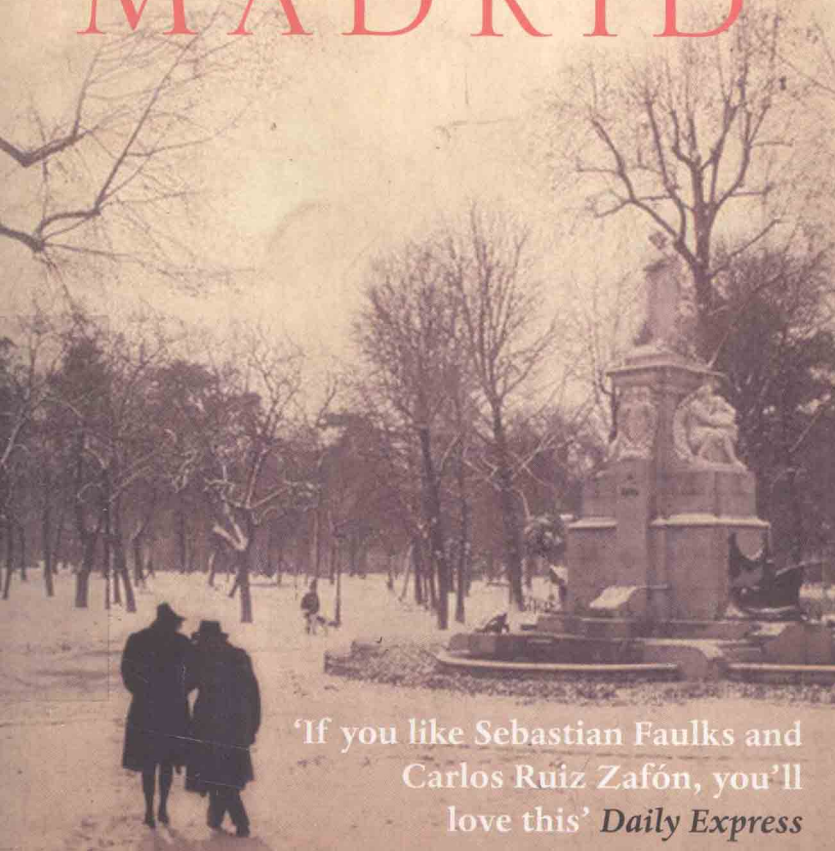


C. J. SANSOM

WINTER

IN

MADRID



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Carlos Ruiz Zafón, you'll
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PAN BOOKS



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WINTER IN MADRID

'C. J. Sansom has earned a genre-transcending reputation with his first two novels, the 16th-century crime thrillers, *Dissolution* and *Dark Fire* . . . *Winter in Madrid* is a departure . . . There are shades of Julian Mitchell's *Another Country* in the portrayal of public-school ideological rebellion, and throughout Sansom offers an intriguing and equivocal vision of a country in ideological turmoil, to which the three Rookwood men are drawn by separate but equally powerful motives . . . This is a novel about systems of authority and ideology: always, in the end, corrupting and corruptible, both beyond and beneath the scope of individual heroism' *Sunday Telegraph*

'Sansom cannot easily be pigeonholed. [*Winter in Madrid*] subtly mixes elements of different genres: part thriller, part romance, and part historical drama . . . Post-civil war Madrid is finely and minutely observed, giving the entire novel a remarkable sense of place . . . Together with the book's intricate and tightly structured plotting, Sansom spins the reader through to its bloody conclusion . . . Compelling and well-written, [this is] a well-crafted and entertaining piece of fiction' *Sunday Express*

'Sansom's action-packed thriller is a classic tale of old loyalties pitched against new ideologies. Its portrait of murderous corruption, ranging from the Monarchists and Falangists in the government to the diplomats at the British Embassy, shows Franco's Madrid to have been even murkier than Harry Lime's Vienna' *Daily Mail*

'The reality of Madrid of 1940 is recreated in authentic and believable detail. Sansom evokes the sights and sounds of a city [where] fear, hatred and desolation are palpable. There are some powerful set pieces in the novel . . . As a portrait of a traumatized city, wrapped in silence because speech was dangerous, *Winter in Madrid* is a remarkable achievement'

Times Literary Supplement

'It is a bold author who, having found acclaim with two historical novels firmly grounded in a particular period, sets his third novel in an entirely different place some 500 years later – but that is what C. J. Sansom has done, and he has pulled it off magnificently . . . *Winter in Madrid* shares with [his first two novels] the author's enviable ability to land his readers in an alien world, yet make them feel entirely at home . . . In Sansom's capable hands, story, characters and that indefinable spirit of place meld and twist into a narrative that grips the reader throughout its 500-plus pages . . . weaving together hard facts with romantic fiction – his bleak winter thriller chills to the bone'

Literary Review

'*Winter in Madrid* may surprise fans of Sansom's usual medieval crime novels. It finds him dispensing with his quill and fast-forwarding five centuries to 1940s Spain . . . If post-civil war Madrid isn't natural territory for Sansom, you wouldn't know it – the sorry state of the city is evoked in all its blood, dust and melancholy, while the story itself never becomes bogged down in polemic . . . The climax is tremendously exciting and skilfully played out, and the characters, while tending towards stereotypes, are so convincing that it's tempting to cast the actors who will play them in the inevitable big-screen adaptation'

Time Out

'A compelling tale of game-playing, memories and the impact of impossible choices. If you like Sebastian Faulks and Carlos Ruiz Zafón, you'll love this'

Daily Express

'Sansom adroitly draws the disparate strands of his ambitious saga together. His non-pareil evocations of time and place anchor his characters with satisfying precision . . . There are touches of Graham Greene; Hemingway's here too . . . But Sansom transfigures his sources into a moral universe very much his own. The sexual and moral equivocation is handled with cool assurance'

Independent

C. J. SANSOM was educated at Birmingham University, where he took a BA and then a PhD in history. After working in a variety of jobs, he retrained as a solicitor and practised in Sussex, until becoming a full-time writer. As well as *Winter in Madrid*, C. J. Sansom has written three novels in his historical crime series featuring lawyer Matthew Shardlake. He lives in Sussex.

ALSO BY C. J. SANSOM

The Shardlake series

DISSOLUTION

DARK FIRE

SOVEREIGN

Prologue

The Jarama Valley, Spain, February 1937

BERNIE HAD LAIN at the foot of the knoll for hours, half conscious.

The British Battalion had been brought up to the front two days before, rattling across the bare Castilian plain in an ancient locomotive; they had marched by night to the front line. The Battalion had a few older men, veterans of the Great War, but most of the soldiers were working-class boys without even the Officer Training Corps experience that Bernie and the smattering of other public-school men possessed. Even here in their own war the working class stood at a disadvantage.

The Republic had held a strong position, on top of a hill that sloped down steeply to the Jarama river valley, dotted with little knolls and planted with olive trees. In the far distance the grey smudge of Madrid was visible, the city that had withstood the Fascists since the generals' uprising last summer. Madrid, where Barbara was.

Franco's army had already crossed the river. There were Moroccan colonial troops down there, experts at using every fold in the ground as cover. The Battalion was ordered into position to defend the hill. Their rifles were old, there was a shortage of ammunition and many did not fire properly. They had been issued with French steel helmets from the Great War that the old soldiers said weren't bullet-proof.

Despite the Battalion's ragged fire, the Moors slipped gradually up the hill as the morning advanced, hundreds of silent deadly bundles in their grey ponchos, appearing and disappearing again among the olive trees, coming ever closer. Shelling from the Fascist positions began, the yellow earth around the Battalion positions exploding in huge fountains to the terror of the raw troops. Then in the

afternoon the order to retreat came. Everything turned to chaos. As they ran, Bernie saw the ground between the olive trees was strewn with books the soldiers had thrown from their packs to lighten them – poetry and Marxist primers and pornography from the Madrid street markets.

That night the Battalion survivors crouched exhausted in an old sunken road on the *meseta*. There was no news of how the battle had gone elsewhere along the line. Bernie slept from sheer exhaustion.

In the morning the Russian staff commander ordered the remnants of the Battalion to advance again. Bernie saw Captain Wintringham arguing with him, their heads outlined against a cold sky turning from purple-pink to blue as the sun rose. The Battalion was exhausted, outnumbered; the Moors were dug in now and had brought up machine guns. But the Russian was adamant, his face set.

The men were ordered to line up, huddling against the lip of the sunken road. The Fascists had begun firing again with the dawn and the noise was already tremendous, loud rifle cracks and the stutter of the machine guns. Standing waiting for the order to go over, Bernie was too tired to think. The phrase 'fucking done for, fucking done for' went round and round in his head, like a metronome. Many of the men were too exhausted to do anything but stare blindly ahead; others shook with fear.

Wintringham led the charge himself and went down almost at once with a bullet to the leg. Bernie winced and jerked as bullets cracked around him, watching the men he had trained with collapse with howls or sad little sighs as they were hit. A hundred yards out the desperate urge to fall and hug the ground became too strong and Bernie threw himself behind the shelter of a thick old olive tree.

He lay against the gnarled trunk for a long time, bullets whining and cracking around him, looking at the bodies of his comrades, blood turning the pale earth black as it soaked in. He twisted his body, trying to burrow as deep as he could into the ground.

Late in the morning the firing ceased, though Bernie could hear it continuing further up the line. To his right he saw a high, steep knoll covered with scrubby grass. He decided to make a dash for it. He got up and ran, crouched over almost double, and had almost reached cover when there was a crack and he felt a stinging blow in

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his right thigh. He spun over and hit the earth. He could feel blood trickling down his trousers but dared not look round. Using his elbows and his good leg he crawled frantically towards the shelter of the knoll, his old arm injury sending pain lancing into his shoulder. Another bullet made earth spit up around him but he made it to the knoll. He threw himself into the lee of the little hill and passed out.

WHEN HE CAME to it was afternoon; he was lying in a long shadow and the warmth of the day was receding. He had fallen against the incline of the hill and could see only a few feet of earth and stones ahead of him. He was conscious of a raging thirst. Everything was quiet and still; he could hear a bird singing in one of the olive trees but also a murmur of distant voices somewhere. They were talking Spanish so it must be the Fascists, unless the Spanish troops further north had made a breakthrough, which he couldn't believe after what had happened to his section. He lay still, his head cushioned in the dusty earth, conscious that his right leg was numb.

He drifted in and out of consciousness; still he could hear the murmuring voices, ahead and to the left somewhere. Some time later he woke properly, his head suddenly clear, his thirst agonizing. There was no sound of voices now, just the bird singing; surely not the same one.

Bernie had thought Spain would be hot; the memories of his visit with Harry six years ago were all of dry heat, hard as a hammer. But in February, although the days were warm enough, it grew cold at dusk, and he wasn't sure he could get through a night out here. He could feel the lice crawling in the thick down on his stomach. They had infested the base camp and Bernie hated their crawling itch. Pain was a strange thing: his leg was bearable but the urge to scratch his stomach was desperate. For all he knew, though, he could be surrounded by Fascist soldiers who had taken his still form for a corpse, and would open fire at any sign of movement.

He raised his head a little, gritting his teeth, dreading the impact of a bullet. Nothing. Above him only the bare hillside. Stiffly, he turned over. Pain shot through his leg like a knife and he had to clench his jaw shut against a scream. He pulled himself up on his elbows and looked down. Half his trouser leg was torn away and

his thigh was covered with dark, clotted blood. It wasn't bleeding now, the bullet must have missed the artery, but if he moved too much it might start again.

To the left he saw two bodies in Brigade uniforms. Both had fallen on their faces and one was too far off to see but the other was McKie, the young Scots miner. Fearfully, trying not to move his leg, he swivelled on his elbows again and looked upwards, to the top of the knoll.

Forty feet above him, projecting over the lip of the hill, was a tank. One of the German ones Hitler had given Franco. An arm protruded limply from the gun turret. The Fascists must have brought up tanks and this one had been stopped just before it lurched down the knoll. It was precariously balanced, the front protruding almost halfway over; from where he lay Bernie could see the pipes and bolts of the underside, the heavy plated tracks. It could topple over on him at any moment; he had to move.

He began crawling slowly away. Pain stabbed through his leg and after a couple of yards he had to stop, sweating and gasping. He could see McKie now. One arm had been shot off and lay a few yards away. Untidy brown hair was ruffled slightly by the breeze, in death as it had been in life, though the face beneath was already white. McKie's eyes were closed, the pleasantly ugly face looked peaceful. Poor devil, Bernie thought, and felt tears pricking the corners of his eyes.

When he had first seen dead bodies, the men brought back from the fighting in Madrid and laid out in rows in the street, Bernie had felt sick with horror. Yet when they had gone into battle yesterday his squeamishness had vanished. It had to when you were under fire, Pa had told him on one of the rare occasions he spoke about the Somme, every sense had to be tuned to survival. You didn't see, you *watched*, as an animal watches. You didn't hear, you *listened*, as an animal listens. You became as focused and heartless as an animal. But Pa had long spells of depression, evenings spent sitting in his little office behind the shop, head bowed under the weak yellow light as he fought to forget the trenches.

Bernie remembered McKie's jokes about how Scotland would be independent under socialism, laughing as he looked forward to its

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being free of the useless Sassenachs. He licked his dry lips. Would this moment, McKie's hair ruffling in the breeze, come to him in dreams if he got out of it alive, even if they succeeded and created a new, free world?

He heard a creak, a small, metallic sound. He looked up; the tank was swaying slightly, the long gun barrel outlined against the darkening sky moving slowly up and down. Surely his movements at the bottom of the knoll couldn't have been enough to shift it, but it was moving.

Bernie tried to rise but pain stabbed through his injured leg. He began crawling again, past McKie's body. His leg hurt more now and he could feel blood oozing down it. His head was swimming; he had a horror of fainting and of the tank falling down the hill and crashing down onto his prone body. He must stay conscious.

Directly ahead of him was a puddle of dirty water. Despite the danger, his thirst was so great that he buried his head in it and took a deep drink. It tasted of earth and made him want to retch. He lifted his head and jerked back in surprise as he caught the reflection of his face: every line was filled with dirt above a straggly beard and his eyes looked mad. He suddenly heard Barbara's voice in his head, remembered soft hands on his neck. 'You're so beautiful,' she had said once. 'Too beautiful for me.' What would she say now?

There was another creak, louder this time, and he looked up to see the tank inching slowly forwards. A little stream of earth and stones pattered down the side of the knoll. 'Oh Christ,' he breathed. 'Oh Christ.' He heaved himself forward.

There was a creaking noise and the tank went over. It rolled slowly down the hill with a clanking grinding noise, missing Bernie's feet by inches. At the bottom the long gun buried itself in the earth and the tank came to a halt, shuddering like a huge felled beast. The observer was thrown from his turret and landed face down, spread-eagled in the trench. His hair was whitish-blond: a German. Bernie closed his eyes, gasping with relief.

Another noise made him turn and look upwards. Five men stood in a row at the top of the knoll, drawn by the noise. Their faces were as dirty and weary as Bernie's. They were Fascists; they wore the olive-green battledress of Franco's troops. They raised their rifles,

covering him. One of the soldiers pulled a pistol from his holster. There was a click as he slipped the safety catch. He stepped forward and descended the knoll.

Bernie leaned on one hand and raised the other in weary supplication.

The Fascist came to a halt three feet away. He was a tall, thin man with a little moustache like the Generalísimo's. His face was hard and angry.

'Me entrego,' Bernie said. 'I surrender.' It was all there was left to do.

'¡Cabrón comunista!' The man had a heavy southern accent. Bernie was still trying to make out the words as the Fascist brought up his pistol and aimed at his head.

PART ONE



AUTUMN

Chapter One

London, September 1940

A BOMB HAD FALLEN in Victoria Street. It had gouged a wide crater in the road and taken down the fronts of several shops. The street was roped off; ARP men and volunteers had formed a chain and were carefully moving rubble from one of the ruined buildings. Harry realized there must be someone under there. The efforts of the rescuers, old men and boys caked with the dust that hung round them in a pall, seemed pitiful against the huge piles of brick and plaster. He put down his suitcase.

Coming into Victoria on the train, he had seen other craters and shattered buildings. He had felt oddly distanced from the destruction, as he had since the big raids began ten days before. Down in Surrey, Uncle James had almost given himself a stroke looking at the photographs in the *Telegraph*. Harry had scarcely responded as his uncle snarled red-faced over this new example of German frightfulness. His mind had retreated from the fury.

It could not retreat, though, from the crater in Westminster suddenly and immediately before him. At once he was back at Dunkirk: German dive-bombers overhead, the sandy shoreline exploding. He clenched his hands, digging the nails into his palms as he took deep breaths. His heart began pounding but he didn't start shaking; he could control his reactions now.

An ARP warden strode across to him, a hard-faced man in his fifties with a grey pencil moustache and ramrod back, his black uniform streaked with dust.

'You can't come up 'ere,' he snapped briskly. 'Road's closed. Can't you see we've 'ad a bomb?' He looked suspicious, disapproving,

wondering no doubt why an apparently fit man in his early thirties was not in uniform.

'I'm sorry,' Harry said. 'I'm just up from the country. I hadn't realized it was so bad.'

Most Cockneys confronted with Harry's public school accent would have adopted a servile tone, but not this man. 'There's no escape anywhere,' he rasped. 'Not this time. Not in the tahn, not in the country either for long, if yer ask me.' The warden looked Harry over coldly. 'You on leave?'

'Invalided out,' Harry said abruptly. 'Look, I have to get to Queen Anne's Gate. Official business.'

The warden's manner changed at once. He took Harry's arm and steered him round. 'Go up through Petty France. There was only the one bomb round here.'

'Thank you.'

'That's all right, sir.' The warden leaned in close. 'Were you at Dunkirk?'

'Yes.'

'There's blood and ruin down the Isle of Dogs. I was in the trenches last time, I knew it'd come again and this time everyone'd be in it, not just soldiering men. You'll get the chance to fight again, you wait and see. Bayonet into Jerry's guts, twist and then out again, eh?' He gave a strange smile, then stepped back and saluted, pale eyes glittering.

'Thank you.' Harry saluted and turned away, crossing into Gillingham Street. He frowned; the man's words had filled him with disgust.

AT VICTORIA it had been as busy as a normal Monday; it seemed the reports that London was carrying on as usual were true. As he walked on through the broad Georgian streets everything was quiet in the autumn sunlight. But for the white crosses of tape over the windows to protect against blast, you could have been back before the war. An occasional businessman in a bowler hat walked by, there were still nannies wheeling prams. People's expressions were normal, even cheerful. Many had left their gas masks at home, though Harry had his slung over his shoulder in its square box. He knew the defiant good humour most people had adopted hid the fear of invasion, but