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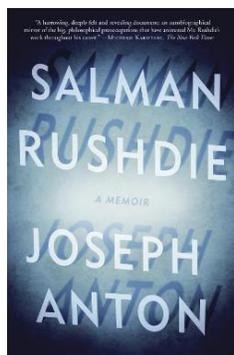
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Preview

Joseph Anton : a memoir (#0791RJX)

by Rushdie, Salman

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Paperback — Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2013

Price: \$15.35

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Rushdie, Salman.

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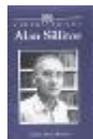
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Overview

From Follett

Author Salman Rusdie details his life after the publication of his novel, "The Satanic Verses," discussing the death threats he received and how he was forced to go underground for more than nine years, during which he used the name Joseph Anton.

From the Publisher

NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY San Francisco Chronicle * Newsweek/The Daily Beast * The Seattle Times * The Economist * Kansas City Star * BookPage

On February 14, 1989, Valentine's Day, Salman Rushdie was telephoned by a BBC journalist and told that he had been "sentenced to death" by the Ayatollah Khomeini. For the first time he heard the word fatwa. His crime? To have written a novel called The Satanic Verses, which was accused of being "against Islam, the Prophet and the Quran."

So begins the extraordinary story of how a writer was forced underground, moving from house to house, with the constant presence of an armed police protection team. He was asked to choose an alias that the police could call him by. He thought of writers he loved and combinations of their names; then it came to him: Conrad and Chekhov--Joseph Anton.

How do a writer and his family live with the threat of murder for more than nine years? How does he go on working? How does he fall in and out of love? How does despair shape his thoughts and actions, how and why does he stumble, how does he learn to fight back? In this remarkable memoir Rushdie tells that story for the first time; the story of one of the crucial battles, in our time, for freedom of speech. He talks about the sometimes grim, sometimes comic realities of living with armed policemen, and of the close bonds he formed with his protectors; of his struggle for support and understanding from governments, intelligence chiefs, publishers, journalists, and fellow writers; and of how he regained his freedom.

It is a book of exceptional frankness and honesty, compelling, provocative, moving, and of vital importance. Because what happened to Salman Rushdie was the first act of a drama that is still unfolding somewhere in the world every day.

Praise for Joseph Anton

"A harrowing, deeply felt and revealing document: an autobiographical mirror of the big, philosophical preoccupations that have animated Mr. Rushdie's work throughout his career."--Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"A splendid book, the finest . . . memoir to cross my desk in many a year."--Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*

"Thoughtful and astute . . . an important book."--USA Today

"Compelling, affecting . . . demonstrates Mr. Rushdie's ability as a stylist and storyteller. . . . [He] reacted with great bravery and even heroism."--*The Wall Street Journal*

"Gripping, moving and entertaining . . . nothing like it has ever been written."--*The Independent* (UK)

"A thriller, an epic, a political essay, a love story, an ode to liberty."--*Le Point* (France)

"Action-packed . . . in a literary class

Product Details

Publisher: [Random House Trade Paperbacks](#)

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Reviews & Awards

Booklist starred, 10/15/12

New York Times, 10/14/12

Kirkus Reviews starred, 10/15/12

Publishers Weekly Annex, 09/24/12

Full-Text Reviews

Booklist starred (October 15, 2012 (Vol. 109, No. 4))

Rushdie accomplishes many wondrous and momentous feats in this profound and galvanizing memoir. He shares the now strangely foreshadowing fact that his ardent storyteller father invented their last name, paying tribute to Ibn Rushd, a twelfth-century Spanish Arab philosopher who argued for rationalism over Islamic literalism. He explains how, decades later, when British protection officers asked him to come up with an alias, really a nom de guerre, Rushdie concocted Joseph Anton in homage to Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov. His first fictions, he observes, were the upbeat letters he sent to his parents in India, concealing his boarding-school miseries in cold and racist 1960s England. He learned to focus on his inner life, cherish kindred spirits, and navigate adversity, skills that served him well after the Ayatollah Khomeini issued his fatwa, sentencing Rushdie to death for writing *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Rushdie tells the full, astonishing, and necessary story of his 13 hellish years of threats, risk, and protective isolation in a passionately detailed, sardonically witty, and intensely dramatic third-person chronicle of a landmark battle in the war for liberty in the Muslim world. Forthright about his personal struggles and immensely grateful to all who championed his cause, Rushdie elucidates what literature does for us and why artistic and intellectual freedoms truly are matters of life and death.

Kirkus Reviews starred (October 15, 2012)

The frightening, illuminating and disturbing memoir by the author of *The Satanic Verses*, the book that provoked a death sentence from the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. Rushdie (*Luka and the Fire of Life*, 2008, etc.) chose for his cover name (and for the title) the first names of Conrad and Chekhov--appropriate, for the author seemed caught in a tangled novel filled with ominous (and some cowardly) characters driven by an inscrutable fate toward a probable sanguinary climax. The author uses third person throughout, a decision that allows him a novelist's distance but denies some of the intimacy of the first person. Perhaps he viewed himself during those 13 years (the duration of his protection by British security forces) more as a character than a free agent. He returns continually to an image from Hitchcock's *The Birds*: the black birds gradually filling up a jungle gym on a school playground (these represent the threats to personal freedom presented by fundamentalists). Rushdie also includes unmailed letters to actual people (Tony Blair) and to ideas (the millennium). The organization is unremarkable: The author begins with his learning of the fatwa, retreats to tell about his life before 1989, then marches steadily toward the present with only a few returns (a

section about his mother's love life). Bluntly, he tells about his wives, divorces, affairs, successes and failures of pen and heart and character; his various security guards; and, very affectingly, about his two sons. He tells about his travels, many awards and celebrity friends. Emerging as heroic is the United States, where Rushdie realized he could live more freely than anywhere else. Aspects of a spy novel, a writer's autobiography and a victim's affidavit pulsing with resentment and fear combine to reveal a man's dawning awareness of the primacy of freedom.

Library Journal (April 15, 2012)

Placed under a fatwa by the Ayatollah Khomeini in February 1989, distinguished author Rushdie was forced underground to save his life. He needed an alias for use by the armed police assigned to protect him and so chose Joseph Anton, which blended the first names of two writers he loved, Conrad and Chekhov. Here he recounts over nine years of moving from safe house to safe house, mastering despair, fighting back, bonding with his protectors, and enlisting the support of governments, journalists, and fellow writers worldwide. His memoir matters not simply because of startling personal detail but because his experience presaged a global battle over freedom of speech that continues today. With a six-city tour, the extensive publicity includes an NPR campaign. (c) Copyright 2012. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

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