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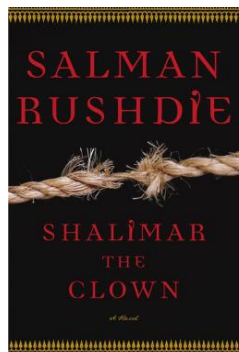
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Preview

# Shalimar the Clown : a novel (#502UYP2)

by Rushdie, Salman

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## Overview

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NOT AVAILABLE FOR SALE IN SOME COUNTRIES.;Title proper from title frame.;Mode of access: World Wide Web.;Description based on print version record. When Maximilian Ophulus is murdered by his Kashmiri Muslim driver, a mysterious figure who calls himself Shalimar the clown, authorities uncover a dangerous link between the murderer and the victim's daughter.

## Product Details

Publisher: Random House

Interest Level: AD

**Publication Date:** September 6, 2005  
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**Description:** 1 online resource (398 pages) : digital.  
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## Reviews & Awards

**Booklist**, 06/01/05

**Publishers Weekly** starred, 07/25/05

**Kirkus Reviews** starred, 06/01/05

**Wilson's Fiction**, 03/16/06

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## Full-Text Reviews

*Booklist (June 1, 2005 (Vol. 101, No. 19))*

Before the eyes of his grown daughter, a former (and famous) American ambassador to India is stabbed to death by his enigmatic chauffeur, the Shalimar of the novel's title. What contemporary novelist knows more than Rushdie about the political-religious tensions besetting the globe since the middle of the twentieth century and, specifically, how such tensions not only affect personal lives but also, in many instances, create the lives many people lead? The historically shaped lives of Maximilian Ophus, born into a wealthy Jewish family in Strasbourg, France, and later a Resistance hero and vastly popular diplomat, and Shalimar the Clown, who grew up in the devastatingly beautiful (but Hindu-Muslim disputed) Kashmir region of India, intersect, and why one is compelled to take the other's life seems to be the perfect material for Rushdie's cosmopolitan, sociopolitical consciousness. To characterize the novel as "rich" seems inadequately broad as a general description of a Rushdie book, including this one. Let it stand, however, as a cogent descriptor of Rushdie's sheer and magnificent talent. His beautifully metaphoric language and sly sense of humor keep his complex plot, with its layers of personal and cosmic meaning, tightly woven.

*Kirkus Reviews* starred (June 1, 2005)

Vintage Rushdie, in a sprawling story ripped from today's-and, undoubtedly, tomorrow's-headlines. A presumably political assassination that's in fact deeply "personal," the separate histories of the disputed territories of Strasbourg and Kashmir, and the classical Indian epic Ramayana are all ingeniously conflated and reimagined in Rushdie's dazzling ninth novel. It begins in 1993, when former U.S. Ambassador to India Maximilian Ophus is murdered and nearly beheaded outside his Los Angeles home by his Muslim driver, who, the world will soon learn, is Kashmiri native Noman Sher Noman, a former traveling player and amateur acrobat known as "Shalimar the Clown." In a masterly deployment of interconnected narratives spanning six decades, we learn of Noman's youthful marriage to beautiful dancer "Boonyi" Kaul and her calculated dalliance with visiting diplomat Ophus, who takes her (willingly) away, fathers her daughter and sorrowfully permits her disgraced return to Kashmir as Boonyi. Now grossly fat and guilt-ridden, she anticipates either her husband's forgiveness or his righteous vengeance. One parallel story is an extended flashback detailing Max's youth in war-torn Strasbourg, experiences as a Resistance hero and rise in the world of diplomacy. Other narratives recount Kashmir's ongoing victimization by Pakistan and India (notably, stiff-necked military leader Hammirdev Kachhawa and fanatical "iron mullah" Bulbul Fakh). Rushdie introduces numerous vivid characters variously related to Noman and Boonyi and describes Noman's training as a terrorist within an increasingly violent Kashmiri "liberation front." The pattern of the Ramayana-which recalls a hero's "war" waged against the "demon" who steals his beloved-is ingeniously reiterated when "Shalimar" fulfills his mission, eludes the sentence pronounced on him and confronts the woman who may or may not become his final victim. That the threat he incarnates will never go away, and we do not know our story's ending, is unforgettably dramatized, in a magical-realist masterpiece that equals, and arguably surpasses, the achievements of *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

The Swedes won't dare to offend Islam by giving Rushdie the Nobel Prize he deserves more than any other living writer. Injustice rules.

*Library Journal (June 1, 2005)*

In 1990s Los Angeles, Ambassador Maximilian Ophus is murdered in front of his illegitimate daughter, India, by his Kashmiri Muslim driver, a.k.a. Shalimar the Clown. Was it assassination or something more personal? Copyright 2005 Reed Business Information.

*Publishers Weekly (July 25, 2005)*

The focus of this novel is extremism. It tells the tale of two Kashmiri villages whose inhabitants gradually get caught up in communal violence. As we know from Yugoslavia, hatred takes on especially horrific manifestations when neighbors turn against each other. The neighbors to whom Rushdie introduces us are memorable and emblematic characters, especially his protagonists, the Hindu dancer Boonyi Kaul and her childhood sweetheart, Shalimar the clown, son of a Muslim family. Their passion becomes a marriage solemnized by both Hindu and Muslim rites, but as conflict heats up, Boonyi seduces the American ambassador. The resulting transformation of Shalimar into a terrorist is easily the most impressive achievement of the book, and here one must congratulate Rushdie for having made artistic capital out of his own suffering, for the years he spent under police protection, hunted by zealots, have been poured into the novel in ways which ring hideously true. Bit by bit, Shalimar becomes a figure of supernatural menace. The life of the ambassador, Max Ophus, is also brilliantly invented. In a series of highly effective set pieces—Nazi-occupied Strasbourg, where he failed to persuade his principled parents to save the books they published, not to mention themselves, from the flames (the family was Jewish); southern France, where his exploits on behalf of the Resistance were so colorful that I would spoil the reader's pleasure if I betrayed them; England, where a glamorous wartime romance led him into his only marriage—the author builds our sympathy for the man who (with her connivance) ruins Boonyi's life and sets in motion Shalimar's destiny. Now for the novel's defects: Rushdie's female characters are generally less plausible than the male

ones. When he is describing Kashmir's good old days of communal tolerance, he too frequently takes refuge in slapstick. His depiction of Los Angeles relies so much on references to popular culture that the place becomes a superficial parody of itself. In terms of technique, Rushdie's most irritating tic is the sermonistic parallelism or repetition, but the novel's best passages (not to mention his other great work, Shame) prove him capable of great style. Never mind these flaws. Shalimar the Clown is a powerful parable about the willing and unwilling subversion of multiculturalism. And for those readers who even in this post-September-eleventh continue to cling to American narcissism, the parable grows more urgently pointed: Ophuls and Boonyi conceive a daughter, who is taken away at birth and in due time becomes a beautiful, troubled, privileged ignoramus in Los Angeles. About Shalimar the clown, her mother's husband, she doesn't have a clue. Is that her fault? Is it our fault that we never paid much attention to the rest of the world? But one day, without any warning, two planes smashed into the Twin Towers, and now (wake up and run!) Shalimar the clown has arrived in Los Angeles. (On sale Sept. 6)

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