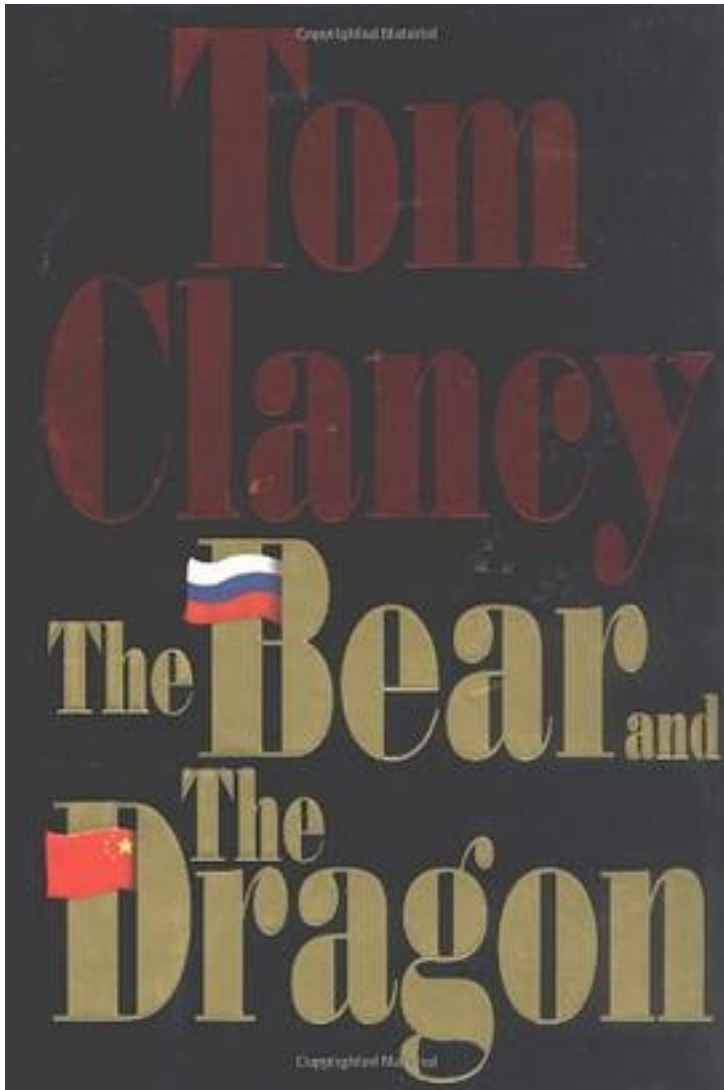


The Bear and the Dragon



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著者:Tom Clancy

出版者:Paw Prints

出版时间:2008-6-12

装帧:Library Binding

isbn:9781435299887

"Klingons" is how hero Jack Ryan describes the villainsDthe Communist Chinese PolitburoDof Clancy's mammoth new novel; other Yanks refer to Chinese soldiers as "Joe Chinaman." It's not for subtlety of characterization, then, that this behemoth proves so relentlessly engrossing. Nor is it for any modulation in the arc of its action, which moves insistently from standstill to hurtle. Nor is it for the author's (expressed) understanding of life's viscissitudes; in this Clancyverse, no white hat with a name dies, but every black hat gets whupped bad. Partly it's for the sheer bulkDif ever a book should come equipped with wheels, it's this oneDwhich plunges readers into a sea of words so vast that, after hours of paddling happily through brisk prose, the horizon remains hidden from sight. Mostly, though, it's because that sea glitters with undeniable authority. Clancy has demonstrated in earlier books (Rainbow Six, etc.) that he towers above other novelists in his ability to deliver geo-political, techo-military goods on a global scaleDand here he's at the top of that war-gaming. With aplomb, he spins numerous plot strandsDamong them: a Sino-American spy seduces his way into Politburo secrets; enormous oil and gold reserves are discovered in Siberia; the new Papal Nuncio to Beijing is murdered; the Politburo orders a hit on a top Russian officialDthat lead to a Chinese invasion of Russia and a credible war scenario that occupies the novel's last quarter and that culminates in a nuclear crescendo. Each thread carries a handbook's worth of intoxicating, expertly researchedDseemingly insideDinformation, about advanced weapons of war and espionage, about how various governments work, complemented always with ponderings about the tensions between individual honor and the demands of state. Add to that the excitement for Clancy fans of this being the first novel to feature not just Jack Ryan but also, in significant subordinate roles, Jack Clark and Ding Chavez of Rainbow Six and other tales, and you've got a juggernaut that's going to hit #1 its first week out and stay there for a good while. 2 million first printing; BOMC main selection; author tour.

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