

OMAR



CRAIG O.
THOMPSON

WHAT READERS SAY ABOUT OMAR (Comments on File):

"...Within pages, I was hooked and anxious to see where the whole adventure would go...I didn't spend much time eating or sleeping for a couple of days. (Thompson is) faithful to the genre in which (he) wrote while asking the reader to give more serious thought to the ideas brought up...a smashing success."

— Earl B. (NH)

"...guaranteed to hold your interest...WARNING!! You'll want more..."

— Roxanne T. (AZ)

"*Omar* is a well-written, well-researched, captivating novel. Craig O. Thompson has mixed politics, advanced technology, diabolically realistic characters into the greatest treasure hunt of all time. Intriguing, ingeniously crafted, excellent plotting all add up to a first-rate story."

— Janet P. (CA)

"...It has to be made into a movie...I'm telling everyone I know about (*Omar*)."

— Chris L. (VT)

"Finished *Omar*...good company during (an) ice storm...I usually find that my reaction to a book I like is a feeling of wanting more, when I reach the last page...and that I want to revisit its characters...I had that reaction to *Omar*!"

— Michael R. (ME)

"...I have just one word for the book. WOW!!! ...I ordinarily read other types of genre, but I couldn't wait to come home from work to dive in."

— Evalyn C. (MO)

"...It is a thriller! What vivid descriptions (he) weaves. I would certainly place (Craig O. Thompson) right up there with Jack Higgins, Stephen Coonts, and Clive Cussler.

— Alan L. (IN)

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— Earl B. (NH)

"I truly enjoyed *Omar*. Will probably read it again, soon..."

— Laela H. (CA)

"...It has to be made into a movie...I'm telling everyone I know about (*Omar*)."

— Chris L. (VT)

FROM TEST-MARKET BOOKSIGNINGS...

"This is one author you should have on your must-have list (His protagonist) makes Indiana Jones look staid and a little boring by comparison...the right ingredients for a great read. ...many (customers) return on follow-up visits to get signed books for friends and relatives..."

— David J. Hermanson, Books Manager
Hastings Entertainment Superstore (AZ)

"During three separate appearances, Mr. Thompson sold more books at each signing than any previously scheduled author. Would invite back again and again."

— Lee Loftus, Manager
T. Charleston & Sons, Book Purveyors (MO)

TEST-MARKET READER REVIEWS (continued)

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"...I have just one word for the book. WOW!!! I can see this on the big screen! I ordinarily read other types of genre, but I couldn't wait to come home from work to dive into (OMAR)."

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— Alan L. (IN)

cont'd

MORE TEST-MARKET COMMENTS ABOUT *OMAR*...

"In Print: Summer Reads" (Recommendation to Subscribers)
— *Scottsdale Magazine*

"...a literary treasure...with high regard reserved for only those few writers who show brilliance...this work is clearly of that caliber."

— Dr. John Maestas, Consultant, Published Author
and Producer of 8 PBS Documentaries

"I am impressed by (Thompson's) strength of his storytelling, command of dialogue, and ability to evoke a scene...(with) text brought to a high finish...to a degree that one does not often see these days."

— Joseph Foote, Journalist, Writer, Literary Consultant
and Editor to the White House and Congress

"...Omar draws the reader into the story right from the opening paragraphs...(with) the usual twists, turns, and surprises that readers look for, know are coming, and--in the case of good writers--somehow are caught off guard. (Thompson writes) in the tradition of Robert Ludlum, Clive Cussler, (and) Tom Clancy..."

— Rev. Paul Wharton, Historical Expert

"Omar is an exciting, thought-provoking novel...(an) outstanding page-turner (that) puts the reader in the story from page one...(with) the depth of Tom Clancy (and) story-telling ability of Wilbur Smith. *Omar* needs to be in your collection...can't wait for the sequel."

— George Jones, Writer

**CRAIG O.
THOMPSON**

OMAR

A NOVEL

StrataGem Press
Indianapolis

This book is a work of fiction. With the exception of events, names and companies factually and traditionally associated with the tragedy of the *Titanic* and those who are associated with the *Titanic*'s discovery in the mid-80's, all of the names, characters, incidents, dialogue and plot events in *Omar* are fictitious. Any other resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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Printed on acid-free paper. Cover design by Harriet McInnis.

Publishers Cataloging-In-Publication Data

(Prepared by Indianapolis / Marion County Public Library and IUPUI Library)

Thompson, Craig O.

Omar: a novel / Craig O. Thompson. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN: (Electronic) 0-9675207-2-X

(Softcover) 0-9675207-1-1 (Hardcover) 0-9675207-0-3

1. Oceanographers—Fiction. 2. Shipwrecks—Fiction. 3. Titanic (Steamship)—Fiction.
4. Terrorism—Fiction. 5. Suspense fiction. 6. Treasure-trove—Fiction. I. Title.
PS3570.H59687 O432 2001 813-dc21 00-191553
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 CIP

Brightwater Publishing Company / StrataGem Press
P.O. Box 503, Greenwood, IN 46142-0503 USA

www.brightwaterpublishing.com

Or Contact:

Email: BrightPub@aol.com / FAX: 1-317-883-3603

Published in the United States of America by StrataGem Press,
an Imprint of Brightwater Publishing Company, Indianapolis, IN USA

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PLEASE NOTE:

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For those who love life
And do not mistreat it.
For those who are endeared to their children
And will protect them at all cost.
For those Christians, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, and Hindus
Who know we must love one another regardless of our
Religious beliefs.
And for those who know that violence is wrong.

The opposite of love is not hate...it is fear.
Dr. Gerold G. Jampolsky

PART I

PART I NORTHERN IRELAND—MAY, 1995
00:20 Greenwich Mean Time

IAN Harrison and Karen Addams headed back to their village from the Friday night dance at the Presbyterian Church in Belfast. They attended the social every weekend. Ian was accustomed to driving the dark narrow road across the gentle landscape of drumlins and hills, interrupted only by the marshy hollows.

The car windows were partially fogged and, with the defroster only working at half, Ian had split the driver's side slightly to allow more circulation. A cold breeze slipped through, watering his brown-flecked greenish eyes. Karen had snuggled her head against his wide shoulder—her lithe limbs curled across the front seat—and satiny red hair draped gently down his chest.

They enjoyed shocking their families and friends at church socials and other gatherings. Harrison was Catholic and Addams was a Protestant. Close friends thought them an attractive pair. And they were deeply in love.

Though objections were anticipated, Ian had already purchased a ring that Karen wore only when they were alone. They intended to announce wedding plans within the month, as soon as Ian's father was pronounced recovered from his bout with pneumonia.

For now, Karen would just flash her modest gold band in front of Ian's face—Ian swatting back at her hand as though it were an obnoxious fly—Karen laughing and giggling with each little tease.

It was Harrison who first saw the faint glow of lights as they came upon old Albert Bagley's farmhouse. Ian slowed his Ford and

gazed out across his fiancée's side of the car. The darkened fields rolled up the hill toward a silhouette of the once abandoned house, at the top of the drumlin.

"Look there, Karen, they must've sold old Bagley's property, eh? There's a glow of lights coming out the backside of the house."

Her sea green eyes searched her mind, as she sat up. "Haven't heard of any sale. Not since the old man died two years ago."

"Maybe they closed out the estate, huh?"

"I doubt it. Mum usually knows of all the goings on with the properties out here. And in the village. She hasn't mentioned anything."

Having passed the entrance, Ian turned the car around on the small Banbridge District road and entered the dirt drive leading to the farmhouse.

"Could be vagrants then," he said, his russet-colored hair tussled by a breeze through the window.

Ian's often adventurous fiancée suddenly was fearful. Her rosy cheeks blanched in the dim light from the dashboard.

"Where are you going. Are you crazy?"

"We'll scare them out when they hear the car. If they don't belong, they'll leave."

"No," Karen insisted, with an intensity that caught Ian by surprise. She grabbed the steering wheel and forced the car to the side of the road. It hit a rut and came to rest at an angle between the drive and an overgrown plot of gravel-filled farmland.

"Damn it Karen. What the devil's gotten into you?"

"I'm sorry, Ian. But it could be anyone up there."

"Yes, Karen, machree. It might be a new family, just moved in. Maybe someone who's fixing up the old farmhouse. It could use it you know." Ian's lean, ruddy face glowed with exasperation.

"I'm frightened out here in the middle of nowhere. Take me home." Her plea was more a demand than a request.

Annoyed at what Karen had done, Ian still gave in to her pleading. "All right. But you didn't have to pull us off . . ."

He put the car in reverse and stomped on the gas. A scraping

sound came from the front-end, and the rear wheels dug into soft mud from the previous night's storm runoff.

The headlights had gone out. Ian pulled and pushed on the switch, but both lamps were dead.

"Now look what's happened." He brushed aside his bushy hair and got out to survey the damage.

It was obvious even with the moonless night. His shoes stuck in the mud near the rear wheels. When he surveyed the front-end, he barely saw the Ford's bumper resting on an outcropping of solid glacial drift-covered granite. The front wheels sat two inches off the ground. He put his fingers to a headlamp and almost cut himself on broken glass.

"Look, you stay here. I'll borrow their phone to get a tow. Maybe they've got a tether to pull us out."

"Please Ian, don't go up there. Let's leave the car and follow the main road to the village. We'll return in daylight to pick it up."

"Nonsense," Ian yelled, from twenty yards up the road.

The young man approached the house, cautiously, as he first headed for the darkened front door, then decided, instead, to go toward the direction of the light. It seemed to come from Bagley's kitchen, around back.

Ian had been in the house several years before. The last time was when old Bagley's wife had died. The neighbors had chipped in to hold a small wake for her. Everyone in the village had come out. The Bagleys had farmed their mostly infertile, but fortunately patched, limestone-bearing acreage for over sixty years. Their two boys had moved on to America, and Mrs. Bagley eventually died of a broken heart. "Empty-nest syndrome," someone had said.

Everyone in the village watched Mr. Bagley attempt to keep his farm going. But it was too much for his old bones and, as Ian's father had said, Bagley "upped and died" on the day of his wedding anniversary. That was two years ago and the house had since been closed up tight.

"Hello," Ian called out at the back door. "We're having car

trouble. May we use your telephone?"

He was answered with silence. "Hello? Anyone about?"

The small clapboard farmhouse had deteriorated considerably in the two years since it was last a residence. The back door screen hung precariously from its hinges at a forty-five degree angle.

Ian stood on the top step looking in, with broken glass under foot. The back door window appeared to have been recently knocked out. A cold breeze, crossing the hillside, whistled through the door and Ian felt a chill bite the back of his neck.

"Hello? Anyone here?" He waited, "Hello."

Ian turned the door handle. It was unlocked.

He entered the brightly lit kitchen, stepped on more glass, and noticed an almost empty whiskey bottle sitting open on the counter. But no glasses were present.

Must've been a drifter, he thought. "Looks like he left quickly."

Ian noticed an odor that comes from a house sitting closed too long. And there was a peculiar acrid smell that grew stronger as he moved to an open door across the room.

"Anyone here?" he asked weakly, becoming more nervous about the position in which he had placed himself. He reached through another door, into a darkened room, and felt along the cold wall for a light switch. The smell was now overpowering.

Something's burning, he reasoned. And then it hit him. *Gunpowder! The scent is fresh gunpowder.*

He clicked the switch and, when a bare overhead bulb sprang to life, he was startled to see a man lying chest-down on the floor, bleeding profusely from the back of his head.

"Mother-of-God." Ian recognized the face of the dead man. For years, he had seen this sturdy, cleft-chined face on the front pages of newspapers, on television, and on wanted posters throughout Ulster—Sean Paisley, one of the more notorious of the Ulster Freedom Fighter splinter groups. Hero to some; assassin to others. Maker of bombs, killer of children. Even in peaceful times, he could not show his face in public.

He noticed a crumpled, blood-soaked map sticking out under

the body. Possibly a map of England, but Harrison avoided it.

Ian stood over Paisley for what seemed an eternity, trying to think what to do. Then he heard a gurgling sound.

A chill raced through his bones.

Startled, he turned and focused his eyes across the front room. Another man looked like he had been violently thrown against a timeworn couch. The man's eyes were wide open as he gasped for air. His once-chiseled face was now grotesque, as blood trickled out the corner of his pallid mouth. A massive chest wound had stained his shirt bright red. He lay perfectly still—his arms and legs outstretched—as though caught by surprise.

"John Springer!" Ian proclaimed. Elusive member of the Irish Republican Army. Also wanted for murder, mayhem and numerous bombings, depending on whose side one was on. Another man for whom peace had little meaning.

Here were two arch enemies in the same room, lying in their own pools of blood—a dead unionist and a dying nationalist. Neither had a gun in his hand, though Harrison saw a Smith and Wesson.³⁸ still tucked into Springer's boot. Someone had set them up.

Was this a meeting of splinter groups the British and Irish Parliaments complained about? he wondered.

The gurgling sound continued from the IRA leader. Ian watched his eyes shift and blink ever so slowly, as the man gasped for air and attempted to talk.

Springer struggled to move an arm. He would not give in until he got something across to this young man.

"Mr. Springer," Ian found it odd hearing himself speak so formally to the terrorist. "Don't move. I'll get help."

The terrorist gasped loudly and managed to moan, as if to say, "No! Don't go."

Ian moved closer to the wild-eyed man as he curiously watched him rub blood from his own chest wound onto his index finger.

Disoriented and confused, but with every ounce of energy Springer could generate, he motioned for Harrison to come closer.

As he did so, Springer grabbed Ian's hand and held it to his chest in a griplock only a wrestler could manage.

Forcing Harrison's arm over, and holding it down with his own elbow, the terrorist inscribed letters, in blood, on the palm of Ian's hand. Frightened, Ian realized he could now pull away, but was curious about the message.

Struggling to maintain consciousness, the IRA terrorist dragged his blood-coated index finger across Ian's palm, as a pencil, to write the letter "A." He was losing consciousness as he next wrote the letter "L." Then, before he finished the third letter—a straight line down—his breathing slowed, his eyelids closed and he expelled a last defiant breath. John Springer's arm dropped limp to his side, and his body slid to the floor.

Ian raised his hand to see a roughly scratched series of three letters, "AL" and an upright line that might have been the beginning of another "L" or "B" or . . .

Suddenly, Ian remembered Karen and raced for the front door. It was nailed shut to prevent intruders. He turned to go back through the kitchen and stopped dead in his tracks.

Karen was cold, sitting alone in the car. She wanted to turn on the heater, but feared someone might hear the engine. Despite her concern, she was relieved to hear footsteps on the roadway. With a fogged windshield, she struggled to see the silhouette of a man walking toward the car. Karen rolled down her window.

"Was there a phone Ian? Did you call for a tow?" her voice filled with anxiety.

There was no answer from the figure now standing near the hood of the car.

"Ian? Is that you?"

Karen Addams was terrified. With no moon to light the night, she barely saw the figure out in front.

"Ian say something, please."

Then, she realized the shadowy person was larger than her fiancé, and fear oozed through her mind.