



# The Shadows

*Donald Hamilton*

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## **The Shadows** Donald Hamilton

A brand-new edition of the classic novel.

In order to foil a mass assassination plot, Matt Helm must undertake his most dangerous mission: matrimony. An agent like Helm might be a nice man to live with for a while, but he's not the kind a woman would marry. Unless she has too. Unless it's all part of maintaining an ingenious cover. The man whose daily bread is violence takes a most unlikely bride - just to make sure death doesn't part them.

## **The Shadows Details**

Date : Published 1970 by Fawcett Gold Medal Books (first published January 1st 1964)

ISBN :

Author : Donald Hamilton

Format : paperback 142 pages

Genre : Thriller, Mystery, Spy Thriller, Espionage, Fiction, Action, Crime, Adventure, Pulp, Mystery  
Thriller

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## From Reader Review The Shadows for online ebook

### Jim says

**April 2018** I liked this better this time through. There are maybe a dozen characters all told & they're very well done. Hamilton has a way of describing them & taking apart motives that is intriguing. This was quite twisty & often brutal, but never gory. Hamilton makes it clear that bad things happen, but he doesn't give overtly gross descriptions of sex or murder. There's no real cursing & yet the scenes are more chilling for the understated way they are portrayed. Great stuff. He's a real master of his craft.

**July 2015:** This has never been one of my favorites in the series, but it came off better as an audio book. There were parts of that I'd didn't care for much before that Rudnicki brought into better focus or smoothed over with his reading.

Unfortunately, this is the last of the audio books at this time. I'm hoping they'll publish more soon & have written to the publisher to ask.

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### Jim says

Not my favorite in the series, but still a good book. Helm is married to a woman so he can protect her from assassination. As usual, he's given the barest of information & expected to fulfill his objective. The plot hinges on a misunderstanding that is very well plotted. The idea behind the story is a scary one & all too plausible. While still in the Cold War era, it strikes a special cord today.

See these pages for more of Hamilton's work, about him, & the latest releases.

<http://www.matthelmbooks.com/intro.html>

<http://www.benish-industries.com/hami...>

<http://goodreadergonebad.net/donaldha...>

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### Micheal Segroves says

Representative of its time. If you enjoy Ian Fleming, you'll love Donald Hamilton.

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### Harv Griffin says

Another vintage early Matt Helm, before the series got hopelessly bloated. With a copyright of 1964, written 50 years ago, yes, THE SHADOWS is "dated," but the early ones in the series are generally better than the later ones.

Donald Hamilton was one of the best pulp & western writers, but Matt Helm novels may require a bit of additional suspension of disbelief. The Matt Helm Maneuver, repeated in most of the novels, is delivering himself helplessly to his adversaries to learn something or otherwise advance his mission, or possibly locate

the man he has been assigned to kill.

In THE SHADOWS, Matt does this twice, once trivially, allowing an acquaintance of the woman Matt is supposed to be protecting to get the drop on him and beat him up a little to gain information and stay in character when Matt doesn't see a real threat.

Far more interesting, is the sequence where Matt goes full-tilt boogie in violently delivering himself as a helpless prisoner, nearly wrecking his mission in the process, due to some confusion between current enemies and former enemies.

The stats in the Matt Helm series so far: Number of times Matt Helm uses himself as bait, and allows himself to be captured by the opposition:

0 = DEATH OF A CITIZEN  
1 = THE WRECKING CREW  
2 = THE REMOVERS  
1 = THE SILENCERS  
1 = MURDERERS' ROW  
3 = THE AMBUSHERS  
2 = THE SHADOWS

Out of 7 Matt Helm novels, he has done this 10 times!

@hg47

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### **Cheryl says**

Ugh! Skip this one in the series. Very dated, very sexist - even for 1964. The plot wasn't that interesting, either.

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### **Dennis says**

Another great piece pulp. Matt Helm is the baddest spy going. Now if someone would just make a new Matt Helm movie, like Bond has finally been done. Raw and rough.

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

An evil and dangerous man has a plan to kill a large number of leaders and important people, a mass assassination. So Matt Helm is forced into one of the most dangerous, the most threatening, the most deadly situations he faces in the entire series of books!

He has to get married.

Yes, a real marriage, legal and everything. Of course arrangements have been made to end the marriage once the job is over...

Another good addition to the Matt Helm library. Good breakneck action with an interesting plot and our "flesh and blood" type hero. I like the Helm books. It leads to a sort of mixed set of feelings. I mean I'm sorry I waited so long to read to read them. On the other hand I'm enjoying the series now so I don't have to wish I hadn't read them and could read them for the first time.

Okay so I'm a little weird.

Recommended, enjoy.

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### **David Makepeace says**

Perhaps the best Matt Helm novel yet.

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### **Wilde Sky says**

A plot is discovered to kill a number of important American citizens and an agent is assigned to protect one of the targets.

This book felt very dated and some of the plot points, especially towards the end, were too convenient or didn't make sense.

Not a bad read but there are better spy thrillers around.

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### **Doug says**

A shocking ending

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### **Dave says**

1964 saw the release of book 7 in the Matt Helm series, a tough, battle-hardened spy assigned to a secret hit squad. In this novel, someone is shadowing American scientists and Helm is assigned to protect a female scientist. As his cover, he is to marry her. Unlike other Helm stories, however, it is not to be a phoney sham marriage, but the real thing, legal and consummated, so no one can suspect who he really is. The meat of this story is about Helm's interactions with his new wife, a rank amateur at this business, and his interactions with other amateurs that somehow get roped into it. At the forefront is Helm's suspicious nature and how he deals with each of the people he suspects could be working against him. There is a cat and mouse game with a vicious enemy and a final showdown. But, most of the book develops the relationships and suspicions rather than being an all-out action festival. This is as solid and hardboiled and cynical as a spy story can get. At his best, no one could write these stories better than Hamilton.

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## Werner says

Well, my promise to review this one "in the next couple of days" didn't materialize; things have been hectic here! But better late than never.

Like my friend Jim, I wouldn't class this one as among the author's best works (even considering the limited number of them I've read). It has much in common with the other two entries in the Helms series I've read in recent years. My theory has usually been that these can be read out of order (I've read numbers 1, 5, and this one, 7), and generally speaking I think that's true; but in the case of this one, a familiarity with the earlier books would probably enhance the reading experience. Events in the previous book influence this one, and the tale opens with Helm on his way to identify the body of a major character from earlier books (who was mentioned in *Murderers' Row*, but offstage for the action), now killed in a car crash.

Here, Helm's assignment involves a major plot, set up by Soviet spymaster Emil Taussig, to pair a considerable number of key American governmental, military and scientific personnel with a shadow (hence the title) assigned to each one, with the duty of killing him/her whenever a general signal is given. Helm's mission (whether he chooses to accept it or not :- ) , is to temporarily marry one of the shadowed marks, a lady scientist, so as to stay close to her at all times. But the objective isn't just to protect her --it's to trap her shadow, so the latter can be tortured into revealing Taussig's whereabouts, so he can be killed to avert the bloodbath. (Helm's superiors have as much boundless faith in torture as a fountainhead of reliable information as the medieval witch-hunters and inquisitors, or Stalinist interrogators, did --a chillingly prophetic touch, for a book written in 1964, considering what we know of the proclivities of some officials in the second Bush and Obama administrations.) But like all of Helm's missions, this won't be as simple as it sounds.

I've sometimes used the term "noir-influenced" to describe Hamilton's writing --though a recent e-mail exchange with a film noir fan has me wondering if I'm genuinely familiar enough, first-hand, with noir to assess its defining characteristics. But be that as it may, Helm is definitely drawn as similar to a lot of fictional gumshoes in the Hammett-Spillane tradition: cynical, amoral, abrasive, with enough of a chip on his shoulder to give it a callous. The demise of his marriage (following the series opener, *Death of a Citizen*) because of his wife's horror at learning what sort of man she'd married, has left him unable to view sex as anything but incidental physical gratification (and that's reflected in the book, though as usual the author refrains from explicit sex), and he gets opportunity here to spout his "end-justifies-the-means, anything-goes, conscience-is-a-weakness" philosophy. He doesn't always follow it, though, which makes him a more nuanced protagonist than he sounds. And this book made me realize, for the first time, through the deft small hints in the mostly stoic facade of his narrative voice, the degree of hurt and pain he actually carries and uses his abrasiveness to mask from others and himself (he not only lost his wife in the divorce, but his kids as well), and the fear of being the cause of hurt to others if he lets himself relate to them that cripples him in his human contacts. Compassion isn't an emotion he'd welcome, applied to himself --but he finally got it from me, here.

This can be a grim book; just because a character is likable and has no desire to harm anyone doesn't mean he/she won't end up brutally hurt and/or killed. There are some logical problems with plot points (though not as many as you might at first think --Hamilton does a great job of dovetailing them together after all in the big reveal). For a seasoned spy, Helm can do some really dumb things. I'm also skeptical of the degree to which professional spies can supposedly intuitively recognize each other or sense whether they're being

tailed; if it were that easy, counter-espionage wouldn't be nearly as complicated as it actually is. We also have a revolver that we've seen to be unloaded when it was pocketed, but which has managed to magically reload itself when it's taken out again. (And what kind of idiot carries an *unloaded* gun for personal protection?) More importantly, (view spoiler)

But those gripes don't detract from Hamilton's strengths: strong characterizations (good, evil, and in-between), riveting, cork-screw plotting which here keeps you guessing right up to the last minute (and includes at least one jaw-dropping surprise I did NOT see coming --though Hamilton hid the clues in plain sight!), and an ability to evoke emotions that hit you like a blow to the gut, and that deepen your capacity for human sympathy. If I see any more Helm novels I haven't read in the venues where I buy books, I'm going to grab them!

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## **Jack Webb says**

### **Wrong target**

An interesting twist on the usual conceit that a spy organization and/or one of its agents has correctly assessed a given situation. Nicely done.

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## **James says**

Secret Agent/Assassin Matt Helm is assigned to actually legally marry a mousey bespectacled government doctor/scientist in order to ferret out who her "Shadower" could be ... an enemy agent assigned to follow and watch and perhaps befriend before receiving the order to kill. There are Shadowers all over the US assigned to important government assets and Helm hopes to find just one and locate (through painful interrogation) where the 'brains' of this operation is hiding.

Love how these quick read potboilers set up the story and then twist and turn and reach a very violent conclusion mixed with the 60s sexism of the errant knight Helm. He is a brutal man, but there is heat in his heart under all the ice. This adventure has references and appearances by a couple of characters from a previous novel and those factors play an important part in fooling the reader into author Hamilton's smart winding plot.

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## **Tom Stamper says**

The 7th book in the Matt Helm series has him traveling to New Orleans and Pensacola trying to prevent an assassination attempt. Helm, of course, works as a government agent and his approach to the work is both patriotic and apolitical. Or maybe he isn't even patriotic but just good at his job. There isn't much self-reflection on the importance of his work and he waves off the praise he gets for doing it. We the readers get to enjoy his cold and calculating mechanizations while so much life hangs in the balance. Despite their age the books do not feel old fashioned. It would seem that such men are necessary and important to the security of nations and the approach and tactics to the work have probably not changed all that much. I would guess that the average agent's work is much more mundane and rudimentary compared to the action that Matt

Helm experiences, but these are really enjoyable books. It's an underrated series that should be recognized as a cold war classic. Having lived in Pensacola for 10 years it's also entertaining to have the final confrontation in the historic Fort Pickens National park.

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