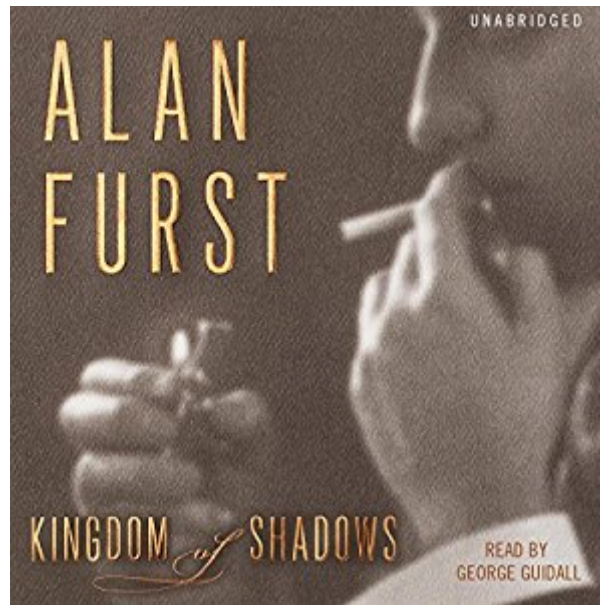


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# Kingdom Of Shadows



## Synopsis

In spymaster Alan Furst's most electrifying thriller to date, Hungarian aristocrat Nicholas Morath, a hugely charismatic hero, becomes embroiled in a daring and perilous effort to halt the Nazi war machine in Eastern Europe. Morath is now part owner of an advertising agency in Paris, while his uncle, Count Janos Polanyi, is a minor diplomat stationed in Paris. Polanyi calls on Nicholas to take part in missions against the Hungarian Fascists: carrying letters or bringing individuals back across the border in the course of his business trips. As Nicholas's dinner parties, business deals, and dalliances with his mistress start to take a back seat to the escalating crisis in Europe, his tasks become more complicated, dangerous, and bewildering to him. He knows far less than the reader, who understands that his actions will have far-reaching consequences even beyond the fate of Hungary.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 19 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio

Audible.com Release Date: January 21, 2011

Language: English

ASIN: B004KAVPUK

Best Sellers Rank: #160 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers > Espionage  
#754 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Military #969 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Historical Fiction

## Customer Reviews

Nicholas Morath, a wealthy Hungarian diplomat residing for years in France experiences the early years of WW2 as he quickly becomes involved in espionage against a rising tide of Nazi aggression directed toward his homeland. Furst makes good use of the railway system across Europe to evoke some great scenes as Morath travels to and from eastern Europe. A aspect of this novel that I liked is that Furst returns to the lesser known peoples and places of Europe in the late 30's, and does so to great effect. This book is probably the best one Furst has written since "The Polish Officer". Although this novel can easily be read as a stand-alone book, some readers will enjoy beginning their foray into Furst's world with "Night Soldiers", his original and possibly best spy novel.

This book introduces several characters who make appearances throughout Furst's other novels set in the same period of time and general geographical local. Because of this fact, I highly recommend reading this novel first, although those that follow can typically be read in any particular order (the exception being the stories involving Jean Casson - World at Night and Red Gold). What makes Furst's loosely structured series so compelling is that 1; they are very well researched and historical very accurate, especially with regard to spy craft - as I understand it through academic experience only. 2; the characters are extremely flawed, very believable and interesting to empathize with - all of the characters and their adventures provoke much thought. 3; the novels do not attempt to achieve a false sense of conclusion at their end - they always allow the reader to decide for him/herself what happens, and they rarely resolve the feeling of tension that pervades Furst's works.

Nicholas Morath is a minor Hungarian noble living a comfortable, but not quite ostentatious, life in pre WWII Paris. It seems that he has been content with running a small advertising firm and living the cafe life with a young and vivacious Argentinian mistress. But this is 1938 and dark clouds are brewing in Germany, Austria, the Sudetenland etc. Morath is called to run various errands for his tight-lipped uncle Polanyi, a true to life Hungarian count. The book chronicles these errands which become ever more dangerous. The outstanding features of this book are severalfold. The dialogues are crisp, clean and believable. The characters are quirky but nicely sketched. Furst creates a very believable atmosphere of pre-war Europe. Everyone knows that war is coming, yet people still need to live their lives. Thus there is still a cafe society and the titled ex-pats still throw lavish parties. Meanwhile, poorer immigrants running from tyranny barely scratch out a living. Furst delivers his character to many interesting locations that are not prevalent in American fiction. Morath travels through the countryside of Hungary, Roumania and Czechoslovakia meeting up with Poles, Ukrainians, Croats. One minute Morath is eating a grand banquet in an elegant eastern European chateau--the next he finds himself chained in a dank Roumanian prison. Then there are the intrigues that Morath finds himself immersed in upon the bidding of his uncle. Morath never quite knows what the endgame is. Who is pulling the strings. How do his missions fit in the overall scheme. Therefore, the reader is also left guessing. Other reviewers have sited this as a weakness--I, on the other hand, view this as the great strength of the book.

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