



The Han Agent

Amy Rogers

ScienceThrillers Media (Sep 5, 2017)

Softcover \$9.99 (260pp)

978-1-940419-15-2

The Han Agent is a surefire genre hit, fast-paced and full of elements of mystery and adventure.

In the gripping thriller *The Han Agent* by Amy Rogers, World War II-era history, ultranationalism, and biological genocide intertwine.

Japanese-American scientist Amika Nakamura has recently been let go from her postdoctoral position at UC Berkeley, thanks to her consuming interest in virology and her desire to win a Nobel Prize. Fortunately, Amika's brother, Shuu, is able to help her land a job with a major Japanese company, Koga. But Amika doesn't know that Koga has connections to the infamous Unit 731 of the Kwantung Army. Like its dreaded precursor, Koga wants to use the latest advances in biochemical research to carry out a war in East Asia.

The Han Agent crosses genre lines. It is a political thriller that deals heavily with the contemporary issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, and is also a story that examines Japanese ultranationalist groups that gloss over war crimes committed in China. On another level, it is a science-heavy mystery that asks a very profound question: Should some scientific knowledge be off-limits?

Rogers's book, which is meant to be the first in a series, is written with a sharp pen and a clear eye toward correct science. There is a lot to learn from it as a result.

The dialogue is sometimes overly simple, with Amika frequently calling Shuu "bro." However, both Amika and Shuu are well drawn characters whose personalities change and shift as the novel progresses.

The main plot involves much duplicity, and there are multiple layers of lies throughout. It can be hard to keep up with all of the betrayals. Thankfully, the novel concludes with a payoff worthy of Ian Fleming, with a dastardly foe getting his violent comeuppance.

The Han Agent is a surefire genre hit, fast-paced and full of elements of mystery and adventure. Science fiction hounds in particular will dig the information about DNA sequencing, virus detection, and how plagues can spread.

BENJAMIN WELTON (September/October 2017)

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