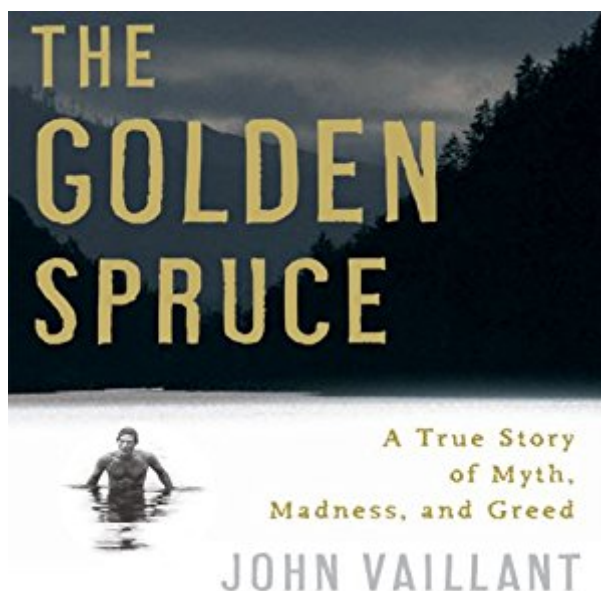


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The Golden Spruce: A True Story Of Myth, Madness, And Greed



Synopsis

A tale of obsession so fierce that a man kills the thing he loves most: The only giant golden spruce on earth. As vividly as Jon Krakauer put readers on Everest, John Vaillant takes us into the heart of North America's last great forest, where trees grow to eighteen feet in diameter, sunlight never touches the ground, and the chainsaws are always at work. When a shattered kayak and camping gear are found on an uninhabited island, they reignite a mystery surrounding a shocking act of protest. Five months earlier, logger-turned-activist Grant Hadwin had plunged naked into a river in British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands, towing a chainsaw. When his night's work was done, a unique Sitka spruce, 165 feet tall and covered with luminous golden needles, teetered on its stump. Two days later it fell. The tree, a fascinating puzzle to scientists, was sacred to the Haida, a fierce seafaring tribe based in the Queen Charlottes. Vaillant recounts the bloody history of the Haida and the early fur trade, and provides harrowing details of the logging industry, whose omnivorous violence would claim both Hadwin and the golden spruce.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The most obvious comparison to Vaillant's work is that of Jon Krakauer. Both have chronicled superhumans in the wild, putting their main characters within the scientific, environmental, and political context of the day. This is a book about so many things--the natural history of British Columbia and the offshore islands, the heritage of the Haida and other island British Columbian tribes, the lives of the courageous men who felled trees for logging companies in the 1900's, and

the life of logger-turned-activist Grant Hadwin, who felled a magnificent and one-of-a-kind tree. Vaillant weaves a compelling tale of the formation of the islands and the native tribes, who first gained wealth trading sea otter pellets with the Europeans. When that business dried up, there were tough times until the logging business picked up. One tree, the Golden Spruce of myth and legend, was spared by the logging conglomerates as a publicity stunt, until Hadwin came along. Vaillant sets up the story well, priming the reader with history and science until Hadwin comes into the picture. I only have two criticisms of the book. (1) Hadwin is kind of "snuck in" to the story. Vaillant speaks of Hadwin's uncle Angus and then brings Hadwin in without introducing him as the man the Golden Spruce story is about. Unless the reader read the inner jacket, they have no idea why they are reading about this Hadwin (or Angus) character for so long. (2) There are no pictures of the mythical Golden Spruce, other than the cover shot, which looks to be altered so that it stands out more than the other green trees. I'm not even sure if the cover shot is genuine or an artist's rendition.

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