



# To Kill the Duke

*Sam Moffie*

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## **To Kill the Duke** Sam Moffie

This novel is a carefully woven escapade that brings together the elite Russian spy squad of Mr. Zavert, Boris Gila, Alexei Aleksandra and Ivan Viznapu as they start on a dangerous mission that brings them into contact with the gangsters Mickey Cohen and Johnny Stompanato, the billionaire Howard Hughes, the producer/director Dick Powell, the actress Susan Hayward, countless others, and of course the big man himself - John Wayne. It is Moffie's most ambitious novel to date. An unusual aspect is that one of the worst films ever made "The Conqueror," and the sand it was filmed on, play prominent roles in the book. Shot near St. George, Utah, the cast and crew were unaware of the life-and-death risks involved in filming on ground laden with radioactivity from the nuclear tests downwind in Nevada. In addition, Howard Hughes had 60 tons of the uniquely colored sand send back to RKO for post-production shots, and to this day no one knows exactly what happened to it. At least 91 of the 220 cast and crew members developed cancer after filming. Forty-six died, including John Wayne, Susan Hayward, Pedro Armendariz (who shot himself soon after learning he had terminal cancer), Agnes Moorehead, John Hoyt and director Dick Powell. "The topic of why so many people died of cancer filming "The Conqueror" has always been something I wanted to tackle, because I wanted to expose the horror's of the 50's Red Scare," said Moffie. "Having the ultimate symbol of America-John Wayne- as an ironic victim of his own overzealous patriotism was the perfect way to write about it." Moffie is no stranger in poking fun at The Establishment, His last novel, The Book of Eli reimagined a Heaven that would make Rick Santorum cry. God sounds like Orson Welles and atheists like Madelyn Murray O'Hare are there, along with Groucho Marx and of course Ayn Rand and Freud!

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