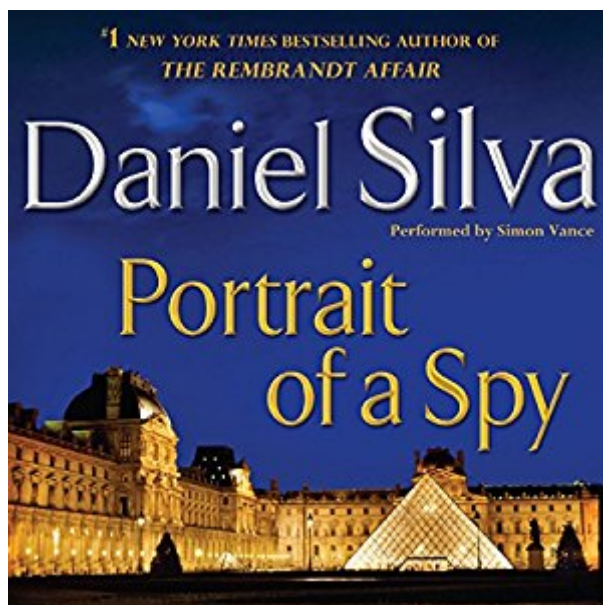


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Portrait Of A Spy: A Novel



Synopsis

Haunted by his failure to stop a suicide bomber in London, Gabriel Allon is summoned to Washington and drawn into a confrontation with the new face of global terror. At the center of the threat is an American-born cleric in Yemen who was once a paid CIA asset. Gabriel and his team devise a daring plan to destroy the network of death - from the inside - a gambit fraught with risk, both personal and professional. To succeed, Gabriel must reach into his violent past. A woman waits there, a reclusive heiress and art collector who can traverse the murky divide between Islam and the West. She is the daughter of an old enemy, and together they form an unlikely and dangerous bond. Set against the disparate worlds of art and intelligence, *Portrait of a Spy* moves swiftly from the corridors of power in Washington to the glamorous auction houses of New York and London to the unforgiving landscape of the Saudi desert. Featuring a climax that will leave listeners haunted long after the final words, this deeply entertaining story is also a breathtaking portrait of courage in the face of unspeakable evil - and Daniel Silva's most extraordinary novel to date.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Another great spy thriller from Daniel Silva. He is extra-ordinarily talented and spins a yarn that is mesmerizing. I still find it difficult to put one of his books down. There are enough twists and turns and surprises "out of the blue" to send you into another dimension. My hat is off to you! Thank you Daniel Silva for adding immeasurably to my life!

Gabriel Allon, world class art restorer/former Israeli spy (that's some slash, eh?), gets pulled back into the game when he witnesses a suicide bombing in London--one of a series of suicide attacks across Europe. He enlists one of the world's richest women to infiltrate the terrorists' financial network. It's a solid premise full of colorful characters. I bought right into it. But then, nothing actually happens. Oh sure, the story plays out. Yet, I found myself waiting, then aching, then praying for a major plot reversal--or even for a surprise to come along. I'm still waiting. The plot steamrolls its way right to the denouement. Pretty much everything I thought would happen, did happen. On top of that, the last 10% of the book is a long series of dull anticlimaxes that aren't worth the effort to read thoroughly. It's supposed to be moving, I guess. It's not.

Love Daniel Silva! Not only do I get to read a spy novel with lots of action & intrigue, I always feel like I learn something as well. Some of his earlier novels involved WWII history, the European countries complicit with the Nazis & the help the Catholic church gave to Nazi officials to leave Europe. Definitely fascinating. This one is no different. Some of the most interesting stuff comes in the explanation of Wahhab & the House of Saud. I knew that 15 of the 19 9/11 terrorists came from Saudi Arabia, but that was about it. Silva gives an overview of the religious Wahhabis & ruling Saudis & the possibility of the collusion between them. And he weaves it all into the story in a captivating way. I couldn't put the book down. With references to the situation the US finds itself in now, Silva makes it all very plausible. If only there were an actual agent out there - a real Gabriel Allon - fighting the bad guys & making the difficult choices to keep the world a safer place.

The amount of research and general knowledge was truly awe-inspiring. It is incredible that a single author knew so much about the Vatican, Roman Catholicism, Italy, Israel, biblical history, art history etc., and so skillfully conveyed all that knowledge to the reader. The story seemed to run at least 80 mph, and kept me on the edge of my seat...never knowing where the next deep dive would take our hero. I really enjoyed the character development and the story's continual twists and turns. But perhaps it was all in excess. After a while, I lost track of some characters and felt overwhelmed with the thrill of the tale. If this were made into a movie, even that might be hard to follow. If I were Silva's editor, I might have suggested simplifying and condensing the book a bit.

There's a bit of a challenge in being a Daniel Silva fan. On one hand, Silva is a sure bet for delivering well-paced, high octane thrills - modern day espionage that credibly capture the tension and terror of the explosive Middle East, while sidestepping enough of the minutia and tedium of spy

craft to keep it entertaining. On the other hand, Silva can be formulaic and derivative - a succession of novels that often feel like you're reading the same story with a different villain. "The Fallen Angel" reflects both of these: a gripping story of an apparent suicide inside the Vatican - the "fallen angel." The victim, a curator in the antiquities division, was a casual acquaintance of art restorer Gabriel Allon, is currently working on a priceless Caravaggio canvas from the Vatican's massive collection. Allon finds suicide implausible, and while murder investigations are hardly the turf of this Mossad assassin, he suspects a sinister and politically charged link between the curator's death and the Vatican's trade in ancient artifacts. Silva deftly pieces together multiple plot lines, crossing Europe and the Middle East, landing in an unexpected twist underneath Jerusalem's Temple Mount. So while there is some of that nagging "been there, read that" feeling in "Fallen Angel" - especially with a cast that includes the Vatican's Monsignor Luigi Donati from previous Silva thrillers - this one rises out of the mold, delivering a unique combination of a murder investigation and high stakes international espionage. Like Silva's best efforts, "Fallen Angel" adds historic and cultural content to the mix, and to the credibility - and fascination. Likewise, while perhaps only a trivial part of story, I found the Caravaggio references intriguing - another element of Silva novels that make them so entertaining. In short, even if you've been a bit worn out by barrowed-content overdose in Silva's recent novels, give "The Fallen Angel" another look - high entertainment mixed with a sobering view of the explosive Middle East.

An enjoyable book, but consistent with Daniel Silva's formula for the preceding five or six Gabriel Allon books. Allon meets girl. Allon recruits girl. Girl performs mission but is discovered and captured by bad guys. Allon risks himself to save girl and is seriously injured. Allon kills the bad guys and rescues girl - or doesn't (sometimes yes, sometimes she dies). There was a loose end I didn't understand. At one point Mikail and four Sayeret Matkal commandos set off on a 40-mile hike in the dessert to rescue Allon. They never get there, but it doesn't seem anything bad happened to them either. I almost think Silva forgot about them.

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