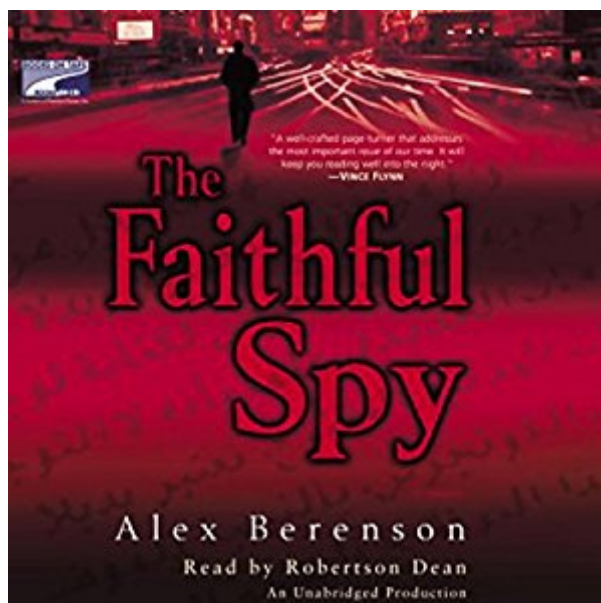


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The Faithful Spy



Synopsis

CIA agent John Wells has been undercover so long that his bosses are no longer sure he's still loyal - or even still alive. For years, Wells has been building his cover in the mountains of Afghanistan, his existence known only to a few senior CIA officials. But now he's coming home - and no one, including his CIA minder Jennifer Exley, knows what to expect. He is a man alone, used by two adversaries and trusted by neither. And as terrorists prepare to unleash the most devastating attack in history, Wells knows he is the only man who can stop them. With or without the government's approval... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Just a few days ago, an opinion piece in the New York Times caught my eye - it was entitled "My Character to Kill", and written by Alex Berenson. The short piece talks about how Berenson (a bit tongue in cheek) has struggled with the problem of how he should bring his series of spy novels to a close (he is now up to the eighth installment, with the ninth to be published in 2015). Berenson's story about his character John Wells, the CIA operative who is introduced in this novel - The Faithful Spy - as well as the background to Berenson himself (former reporter for the NY Times, graduate of Yale with degrees in History and Economics), convinced me to give this novel a try. And - I almost forgot - The Faithful Spy won the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America for Best First Novel. Good reviews on , too. I'm glad that I did. Great action. Intelligent and believable writing - Wells is assigned to work undercover in Afghanistan, and become a member of al Qaeda. He

begins with al Qaeda before 9/11, and after spending several years in Afghanistan he becomes trusted enough to be sent back to the U.S. on an assignment (the nature of which is not disclosed to him) for al Qaeda. After so much time embedded with al Qaeda, he has become a Muslim, and when he arrives in the U.S. and makes contact again with his handlers at the CIA, they don't know whether to trust him, or not. He breaks free of his CIA handlers in order to allow himself the ability to find out what the mission from al Qaeda is, and hopefully stop it. The attraction between Wells, and his handler at Langley (CIA headquarters), Jennifer Exley, adds tension and an element of sexual drama to the story. It's all done extremely well, with the action moving back and forth between the U.S., Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and building to a very exciting, unexpected and dramatic conclusion. Eight novels to date in the John Wells saga, and I'll be reading them all. They are (links are to the Kindle editions):

1. *The Faithful Spy* - (the novel on this page) published April, 2006, received the Edgar Award
2. *The Ghost War* - February, 2008
3. *The Silent Man* - February, 2009
4. *The Midnight House* - February 2010
5. *The Secret Soldier* - February, 2011
6. *The Shadow Patrol* - February, 2012
7. *The Night Ranger* - February, 2013
8. *The Counterfeit Agent* - February, 2014

9. (#9 in the series to be published in 2015) Additionally, Berenson has two other kindle products available on :-

- The Kidnapping* Free Short Story Preview: A short story preview for Alex Berenson's new novel *The Night Ranger*, featuring John Wells-
- Lost in Kandahar* (Kindle Single)

The Faithful Spy is the first in Alex Berenson's long running series on John Wells, CIA deep cover agent, Muslim convert and the only American agent to ever successfully penetrate the Taliban. As the first in the series, this novel is a classic "spy who came in from the cold" story, a genre perfected by John Le Carre. But then the plot moves on to a conspiracy to conduct nuclear-bio-terror in the US, a conspiracy that traps John Wells between the Islamists whose trust he has spent years trying to earn and his own government which no longer trusts him. Berenson is a gifted writer and this is a high concept thriller that keeps a reader on the edge of their seat... but... the problem is the two protagonists. Neither John Wells nor his CIA handler, Jennifer Exley, come across as likeable, sympathetic or interesting. Exley is a CIA analyst. Berenson must have dropped the ball on his research because analysts by trade handle neither agents nor firearms very well. Anyway, She's also a head case, a neurotic in love with Wells. For some reason she decides to tell Wells the story of how she lost her virginity. It's an awkward moment for both the reader and for Wells because you both now know Exley is a certifiable dingbat. Yet by the end of the novel she is capping bad guys with a handgun like a Delta Force commando. Having worked with female intelligence officers in a

previous career I can tell you they deserve better representation than this. Wells is just an unpleasant jerk. I've sympathized with the cynical, burned-out agents of Conrad, Le Carre, Forsyth, Higgins, Greene, Da Silva, Thor, Clancy, Flynn and Hunt but Berenson missed the mark here. That Wells is a genuine Muslim convert only makes matters worse. Muslim converts are the most radical Anti-Americans of them all. I may have made a mistake in starting the series with The Midnight House, Berenson's best of the series and one that is incredible for its authenticity (Berenson writes best when he focuses on military storytelling). But I didn't like Wells in that one either.

This is my new venture with a new (for me) author. I am a hardcore fan of the Jack Reacher series, so other authors have a lot to live up to, in my opinion. John Wells has infiltrated the Taliban. He was unable to prevent 9-11, but not without trying. He has met the devil, bin Laden, but never with the opportunity to kill him. He has fit in so well with the terrorists in Afghanistan and has earned their trust, to a point. Enough that they send him back to the US with orders to wait for further instructions. Once back, he meets with his handlers and they are suspicious that he may have gone rogue. He does have a difficult time readjusting to American life, the differences in culture are stark. He waits for further instructions to carry out terrifying assaults against the American nation. What is being planned? He is not informed until it is almost too late to stop. Nuclear? Bioterrorism?

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