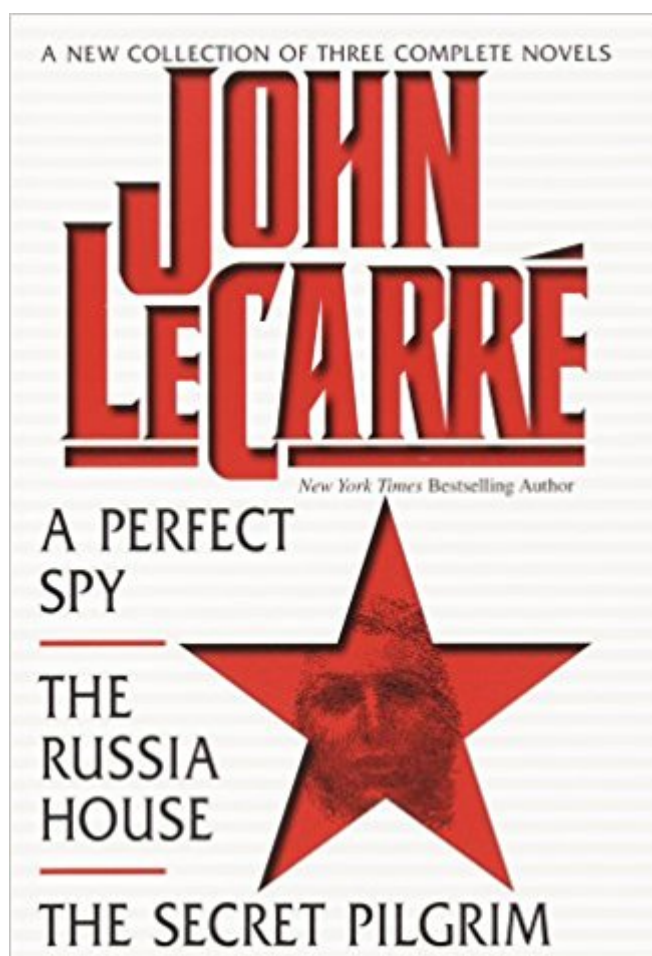


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John LeCarre A New Collection Of Three Complete Novels A Perfect Spy The Russia House And The Secret Pilgrim



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Customer Reviews

This three-in-one set of le Carré's thrillers about late cold war spycraft has wit, atmosphere, and intelligence to die for. In le Carré's most autobiographical novel, *A Perfect Spy*, Rick Pym, a con artist Dickens might have invented (except that he's based on le Carré's dad) raises his son, Magnus, to be the perfect gentleman for the spook trade. Magnus writes to explain himself to his son, Tom; le Carré wrote the book to explain his own scalawag dad to himself, and burst into tears when he finished the novel. In *The Russia House*, set in 1987, a Soviet dissident physicist drops a secret manuscript to Barley Blair, a boozy loser of a British book publisher, to alert the West that the evil empire is about to collapse of its own absurd weight. Can Western spies trust the dissident? Just how safe is the "safe house" where Barley parleys with his sexy Russian contact, Katya? Where should Barley's loyalty lie, with love or country? *The Secret Pilgrim* is almost a short-story collection. (That's why it was broken into three separate audio versions: *The Fledgling Spy*, *The Spy Who Came of Age*, and *The Spy in His Prime*.) Ned, a British spook who Barley troubled in *The Russia House*, invites le Carré's legendary spy George Smiley to lecture his new class of recruits. Smiley's remarks alternate with Ned's reminiscences of his own covert adventures, from the sublimely ridiculous to the scathingly scary. The new kids have no idea what tortuous moral torments await them, but le Carré gives us an idea.

The first two stories were a little too heavy with the typical British rambling wordiness. Also, they seem to dwell on the problems that the British have with homosexuality in their secret services much to the detriment to our "secret services". The last novel, *The Secret Pilgrim*, is really great and

of the quality that has made John LeCarre so well liked all over the world.

Quality varies. Perfect spy - seems to be based on his own father. Didn't get motivation of first 2 "heroes". Best is last book - with Smiley. Authors getting anti American.

Print faded so much I couldn't read it.

Very good item.

boring

I really like this writer but was unable to read this book. The stories are so convoluted, that by the time I go back to reading it I cannot remember who's who

"A New Collection," brings together three novels of Brit John LeCarre's prolific middle period, "A Perfect Spy," "The Russia House," and "The Secret Pilgrim." LeCarre, whose masterworks include "The Spy Who Came In From The Cold," "Smiley's People," and "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy," was, of course, an actual British spy, for five years, under his birth name, David Cornwell. According to internet biographers, he was, in fact, embedded in Soviet territory when he was blown by Kim Philby, most famous post-war British secret service traitor. When LeCarre published "A Secret Spy" in 1986, much-honored American novelist Philip Roth declared it "the best English novel since the war." It is LeCarre's most personal, autobiographical novel, detailing, as it does, how a con man father much like LeCarre's own, (Richard Thomas Archibald Cornwell), creates a perfect spy and counterspy in his son. Interestingly enough, the book also mentions Philby, and his partners in traitor-hood, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, by name. But I didn't find the novel interesting as a whole. It's more than 500 pages long, and, from the beginning, the story runs along two tracks: one, the childhood-youth of Magnus Pym, that made him what he was, and two, the defensive activities of the secret service once he's blown. Not until page 300, much longer than many non-devoted readers will persist, does it get to the interesting section, his actual life as a spy/counterspy. "The Russia House," in contrast, stands on its own as a thriller. It's set in 1987, the third year of Russia's attempt to open up --"Glasnost"--and details the efforts of a brilliant Soviet scientist to get information about the weakness of Russia's offensive armaments to the West. To do this, he uses Katya, beautiful Russian editor, and Barley Scott Blair, classy drunken British publisher, providing us

with a moving, mature love story as well. The spy story's well-backgrounded, and engrossing: it opens with one of the author's writing trademarks, a good set piece, a Russian trade fair, gives us generous helpings of another of the writer's trademarks, the midnight meetings of the spy managers, the "Whitehall Mandarins;" has a resonant, complex plot, and his usual good dialogue/descriptive writing. It even gives us a happy Hollywood ending: not quite as happy as the actual Hollywood movie based upon it, starring Sean Connery and Michelle Pfeiffer, but Barley does get the girl, her children and uncle, sooner or later. The third book, "The Secret Pilgrim" is really a loosely jointed compilation of short stories, the memoirs of Ned, who was Barley Blair's controller, as he faces retirement. We learn a bit more about the Russia House story, and about the intense days in "the circus," as LeCarre calls his fictional spy service, as it cleans house of its traitorous counterspies. Some of the short stories are more interesting than others. But, as all are narrated in flashback, and none achieve lift-off due to the book's episodic nature, the book may be a bit bloodless for some. Once again, it's probably best for devoted readers.

`Spying is waiting'. So believable. Unlike the breakneck speed of events of popular espionage fiction, John Le Carre takes us into the REAL world of spying where you do your bit and wait for the reactions. Things don't happen at the speed at which we wish them to. His characters don't speak from high moral grounds, so typical to Tom Clancy's characters. Nor they are reluctant heroes of Robert Ludlum. They are real people, afraid, greedy, selfish, people who you can relate with, people who don't have the power to eliminate the evils of the world single-handedly. These are the people who know that the evils are here to stay, and in some sense they are also part of it. Elimination of evil will mean self-destruction. They just play the part in the manner they are told to and wait to get out of the evil-machine of espionage. `Spying IS waiting'****Precaution: Stay away from the movie if you haven't read the novel.

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