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Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy)

By Jason Matthews



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Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) By Jason Matthews

In the tradition of John le Carré, the bestselling, impossible-to-put-down, espionage thriller that is “a primer in twenty-first century spying” (*The New York Times Book Review*), written with the insider detail that only a veteran CIA operative could know—and shortlisted for an Edgar Award.

State intelligence officer Dominika Egorova struggles to survive in the cast-iron bureaucracy of post-Soviet intelligence. Drafted against her will to become a “Sparrow,” a trained seductress in the service, Dominika is assigned to operate against Nathaniel Nash, a first-tour CIA officer who handles the CIA’s most sensitive penetration of Russian intelligence. The two young intelligence officers, trained in their respective spy schools, collide in a charged atmosphere of tradecraft, deception, and, inevitably, a forbidden spiral of carnal attraction that threatens their careers and the security of America’s most valuable mole in Moscow. Seeking revenge against her soulless masters, Dominika begins a fateful double life, recruited by the CIA to ferret out a high-level traitor in Washington; hunt down a Russian illegal buried deep in the US military and, against all odds, to return to Moscow as the new-generation penetration of Putin’s intelligence service. Dominika and Nathaniel’s impossible love affair and twisted spy game come to a deadly conclusion in the shocking climax of this electrifying, up-to-the minute spy thriller.

Taking place in today’s Russia, still ruled with an iron fist by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, *Red Sparrow* displays author Jason Matthews’s insider knowledge of espionage, counter-espionage, surveillance tradecraft, recruiting spies, interrogation, and intelligence gathering. As *The Washington Post* hails, this is a “sublime and sophisticated debut...a first-rate novel as noteworthy for its superior style as for its gripping depiction of a secretive world.”



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Doug Stanton on *Red Sparrow* by Jason Matthews



Doug Stanton is a teacher, lecturer, and author of the New York Times bestsellers *In Harm's Way* and *Horse Soldiers*. His writing has appeared in *Esquire*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *TIME*, the *Washington Post*, *Men's Journal*, *Outside*, *The Daily Beast/Newsweek*. Stanton has appeared multiple times on the *Today Show*, *CNN*, *Imus In The Morning*, *Discovery*, *A&E*, *Fox News*, *NPR*, *MSNBC's Morning Joe*, and *NBC Nightly News*. *Horse Soldiers* is in development as a movie by Jerry Bruckheimer Films. Stanton reads and lectures nationally to business, civic groups, libraries, writing & book clubs, and universities, including the United States Air Force Academy, University of Michigan, and The Union League Club. Stanton attended Interlochen Arts Academy, Hampshire College, and received an MFA from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he graduated with coursework in both fiction and poetry workshops. He founded the National Writers Series, a book festival; and the Front Street Writers Studio, a free writing workshop for public high school students.

The spy-thriller is back in full force thanks to newcomer and CIA insider Jason Matthews.

Set in unnervingly accurate present-day Russia, where Putin's influence is omnipresent, *Red Sparrow* follows two intelligence officers who are targeted against each other: Nate Nash, a young, ambitious, sometimes naive CIA officer, and Dominika Egorova, a willful, beautiful Russian ballerina turned spy due to unfortunate circumstances. When we first meet Nate he is beginning the most important job of his fledgling career—handling MARBLE, a high-ranking Russian intelligence officer who is giving information to the Americans, largely considered to be the CIA's most valuable asset—while Dominika's first foray in the field is off to a more tenuous start. After being injured and thus forced to leave her beloved ballet, her uncle, a high ranking state intelligence official lures her in, eventually forcing her to attend "Sparrow School" to train as an espionage courtesan. After successfully finishing her training, Dominika is sent to Helsinki where the young Nate has taken up residence after a near disaster in Moscow. The Russians had discovered that he was gaining inside information, tipping them off to the existence of a high-level mole. Dominika is charged with the task of discovering the mole's identity by getting close to Nash—a delectable honey trap for the brash American. What begins as a relatively simple assignment leads to a development of fatal double lives,

dangerous spy games, and treacherous secrets. As the two face-off, tentatively making moves, Dominika begins to learn the true nature of those who control her, and suddenly Nate and the people he works for begin to look more and more attractive. Disappointed and humiliated by her handlers, and with nowhere to turn, Dominika is recruited by Nate (or is she?). Against the rules, the two fall in and out of bed in various cities, and come close to falling dangerously in love. They struggle mightily to trust each other, and to trust themselves.

I read till 11 and woke up at 5 a.m. three days in a row to finish this book as fast as I possibly could. If it doesn't supplant *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* as the next mammoth read, and if it doesn't take its place alongside le Carre's *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*, the love of literature and jaw-dropping thrills really is dead. When I finished the book the day was just dawning, as it always is in this novel, only in the novel the fated characters, filled with melancholy, romance, venom, and belly-aching humor (this book can be laugh out loud funny), are usually eating well and wondering when it'll be lights out for them. Jason Matthews has "reported" this book for 30 years, working it all out in the "real world," and one wonders who he is, mostly: the young, "naive" Nate Nash; the knock-out, petulant heroine Dominika, whom Quentin Tarantino and Doctor Zhivago both might've loved; or the Gus Grissom-like Gable, a CIA chief who dispenses life-lessons to the young Nate—a muscled hen clucking and stirring a bubbling sauce over a stove. There is not a false note in the amazing ventriloquisms that are the conjurer's art we call literature. There are sentences as exciting to read as Eliot's "The Wasteland" (cf. the description of a moist, pale toadie scuttling along a hall; downright spooky, an image I cannot get rid of); or the majestic, floor-board creaking opening of Cormac McCarthy's *All The Pretty Horses*. The granular sweep of the authorial vision is a telescope still warm from Tolstoy's hands. There's a scene in here better by ten than Bogart looking down at Ingrid. I learned as much about the former Soviets and the new Russians, and our U.S. of A., as I have ever gleaned from the hardest working journalists writing today. Halfway through, I was afraid Vladimir Putin would find out I was reading *Red Sparrow* and have me arrested. With its ripped-from-the-headlines appeal, real life spy craft details, and thrilling international action that takes us to Helsinki, Moscow, Athens, Rome, and Washington, D.C., I have to say that I have not read a more exciting, gripping novel in a long time. And the best part is this: the ending of this novel makes it clear that this isn't the last we'll be hearing from Jason Matthews.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Many spy novelists, including Ian Fleming and John le Carré, actually worked as intelligence agents. Add to that list Jason Matthews, whose 33 years as a CIA field operative enriches his first novel with startling verisimilitude, from griping about meddling, deskbound bureaucrats at Langley to the flat statement that Russia's SVR, successor to the KGB, sees the Cold War as alive and well, and that in Putin's Russia, "nothing has changed since Stalin." Perhaps this is novelistic license, but it feels genuine. That sense of authenticity, along with vividly drawn characters, much detail about tradecraft, and an appropriately convoluted plot that centers on moles in both the SVR and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence make this a compelling and propulsive tale of spy-versus-spy. Matthews' characters are variously fascinating, eccentric, and truly odious, including a beautiful Russian woman with the gift of synesthesia, forced into "sparrow school" to learn espionage through seduction; a brilliant and flamboyantly odd head of CIA counterintelligence; a "poisonous" dwarf whose reveries always return to torture and murder during Russia's Afghanistan debacle; and many more. Locales including Moscow, Helsinki, Rome, and Athens seem knowingly evoked, and each brief chapter concludes with a recipe for some food a character has just eaten. *Red Sparrow* is greater than the sum of its fine parts. Espionage aficionados will love this one. --Thomas Gaughan

Review

"Jason Matthews, who became an authority on the Kremlin during his 33 years as a CIA operations officer,

has written an espionage novel, *Red Sparrow*, in which Putin makes a cameo -- read it and you too may conclude that no one on the planet knows the Russian president better. You too may also conclude that *Red Sparrow* is the best espionage novel you've ever read." (Keith Thomson *Huffington Post*)

"Veteran CIA operative-turned-novelist Matthews keeps the trouble popping in *Red Sparrow*, but relentless drama is just one of the high points of this **sublime and sophisticated debut... *Red Sparrow* isn't just a fast-paced thriller — it's a first-rate novel as noteworthy for its superior style as for its gripping depiction of a secretive world.** While many former CIA agents and MI6 operatives have turned to writing fiction in retirement, Matthews joins a select few who seem as strong at their second careers as at their first." (Art Taylor *The Washington Post*)

"A primer in 21st-century spying. Matthews' former foes in Moscow will be choking on their blinis when they read how much has been revealed about their tradecraft...**terrifically good.**" (*The New York Times Book Review*)

"A smart, intriguing tale rooted in his own experience...**Fans of the genre's masters including John Le Carre and Ian Fleming will happily embrace Matthews' central spy.**" (*USA Today*)

"This debut novel from a 33-year CIA veteran delivers **action as pulse-pounding as it is authentic.**" (*New York Post*)

"Matthews' **exceptional first novel will please fans of classic spy fiction...**The author's 33-year career in the CIA allows him to showcase all the tradecraft and authenticity that readers in this genre demand...[a] complex, high-stakes plot." (*Publishers Weekly*, *starred review*)

"The author, a veteran CIA field agent, liberally salts his thriller with realistic tradecraft, horrific villainy, and stunning plot twists as the opponents vie for control...**An intense descent into a vortex of carnal passion, career brutality, and smart tradecraft, this thriller evokes the great Cold War era of espionage...**Readers of bloodthirsty spy and suspense will welcome this debut from a writer who supersedes his spies." (*Library Journal*, *starred review*)

"Many spy novelists, including Ian Fleming and John le Carré, actually worked as intelligence agents. Add to that list Jason Matthews, whose 33 years as a CIA field operative enriches his first novel with **startling verisimilitude...**That sense of authenticity, along with vividly drawn characters, much detail about tradecraft, and an appropriately convoluted plot make this **a compelling and propulsive tale of spy-versus-spy...*Red Sparrow* is greater than the sum of its fine parts. Espionage aficionados will love this one.**" (*Booklist*, *starred review*)

"Matthews' first novel, a globe-trotting spy thriller, **features enough action to satisfy even the most demanding of adrenaline junkies...**The author's CIA background and the smart dialogue make this an entertaining tale for spy-novel enthusiasts." (*Kirkus*)

"Not since the good old days of the Cold War has a classic spy thriller like *Red Sparrow* come along. Jason Matthews is not making it up; he has lived this life and this story, and it shows on every page. **High-level espionage, pulse-pounding danger, sex, double agents and double crosses. What more can any reader want?**" (Nelson DeMille)

"A great and dangerous spy-game is being played today between Russian intelligence and the CIA. Very few people know about it, including many of our politicians in Washington. But Jason Matthews does, and his

thrilling *Red Sparrow* takes us deep inside this treacherous world. **He's an insider's insider.** He knows the secrets. **And he is also a masterful story-teller. I loved this book and could not put it down. Neither will you.**" (Vince Flynn)

"I read till eleven and woke up at five a.m. to finish this book. If it doesn't supplant *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* as the next mammoth read, and if it doesn't take its place alongside le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the love of literature and jaw-dropping thrills really is dead. I learned more about the former Soviets and the new Russians, and about our US of A, than I ever gleaned from the hardest-working journalists today. Halfway through, I was afraid Vladimir Putin would find out I was reading *Red Sparrow* and have me arrested. **I have not read a more exciting, gripping novel in a long time.**" (Doug Stanton *author of Horse Soldiers*)

"All the tradecraft and cat-and-mouse tension of a classic spy thriller— **a terrific read.**" (Joseph Kanon *author of Istanbul*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jose Brummitt:

This *Red Sparrow: A Novel* (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) is great guide for you because the content that is full of information for you who have always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. That book reveal it facts accurately using great organize word or we can declare no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but tricky core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having *Red Sparrow: A Novel* (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) in your hand like finding the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no guide that offer you world in ten or fifteen second right but this publication already do that. So , this is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt that will?

William Devine:

This *Red Sparrow: A Novel* (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) is new way for you who has curiosity to look for some information since it relief your hunger of knowledge. Getting deeper you onto it getting knowledge more you know or you who still having little digest in reading this *Red Sparrow: A Novel* (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) can be the light food for yourself because the information inside that book is easy to get simply by anyone. These books build itself in the form which can be reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book form. People who think that in book form make them feel sleepy even dizzy this reserve is the answer. So there is no in reading a e-book especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for an individual. So , don't miss the idea! Just read this e-book style for your better life and knowledge.

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Scott Schiller:

As a student exactly feel bored in order to reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library or to make summary for some publication, they are complained. Just tiny students that has reading's spirit or real their leisure activity. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to presently there but nothing reading significantly. Any students feel that studying is not important, boring and can't see colorful pictures on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for you personally. As we know that on this period of time, many ways to get whatever we wish. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. So , this Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy) can make you experience more interested to read.

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