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A Most Wanted Man



Synopsis

Le Carre's fiercely compelling and relevant novel about spies in "The War on Terror" is acclaimed by Alan Furst in the cover review of The New York Times Book Review as "one of the best novels he's ever written" and is soon to be a major film. A half-starved young Russian man is smuggled into Hamburg in the dead of night with an improbable amount of cash secreted in a purse around his neck. He is a devout Muslim. Or is he? He says his name is Issa. Annabel, an idealistic young German civil rights lawyer, is determined to save Issa from deportation, even if the price is her career and her safety. Searching for clues to his mysterious past, she confronts the incongruous sixty-year-old scion of a failing British bank and a triangle of impossible loves is born. Meanwhile, scenting a sure kill in the "War on Terror," the rival spies of three nations converge upon the innocents. Thrilling, compassionate, peopled with characters the listener never wants to let go, *A Most Wanted Man* is a work of deep humanity with uncommon relevance to our times.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio; Unabridged edition (July 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 144236954X

ISBN-13: 978-1442369542

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1 x 5.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (455 customer reviews)

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Authors, A-Z > (L) > Le Carre, John #5249 in Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers

#8348 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Unabridged

Customer Reviews

Years ago, I was awestruck by the power of Le Carre's books, from "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold" to "The Little Drummer Girl." Later, I found myself caught up in the problems of "The Night Manager." I loved the moral complexities, the character depth, and the astute dialogue. Since then, few of his novels have held me in quite the same way. They often seem vague, floundering, with no real direction. "A Most Wanted Man" has glimpses of that old Le Carre, though never as focused or riveting as in those earlier years. This time around, we are drawn into the mystery of a young man from Chechnya who's shown up in Germany. He bears marks of imprisonment and mental

instability, and yet he seems to have valuable connections in the German banking industry. He receives pity and mercy from a banker and a female lawyer, while being hunted by shadowy figures from past and present. Along the way, Le Carre makes some biting commentary on the state of affairs in the modern Western world. As expected, we are given in-depth looks at character and setting here, as well as the emotional and political structures that rise and fall around our desire for democracy. It's an interesting story, if not a bit windy in places. It was more cohesive than some of his recent efforts, but still lacked that beating heart that seemed to pulse in his earlier books--even faintly. I kept waiting for that resuscitation to happen here, but it never quite did so. After a few books of his that have showed this same lifelessness, I wondered why. I went to Mr. Le Carre's website the other day and found this quote from him: "nothing that I write is authentic...Artists, in my experience, have very little centre. They fake. They are not the real thing." I strongly disagree with this statement.

George Orwell. With the possible exception of one young German lawyer there are no revolutionary acts in John Le Carre's "A Most Wanted Man". Rather, we have high-level functionaries from German, British, and US intelligence agencies for whom deceit is the norm and truth plays, at best, a secondary role in acting in what is or may be in each country's national interest. In tone and substance this is not much different from Le Carre's Cold War fiction. The trick is to see whether the same cynical realism plays as well in today's 'war on terror'. Le Carre's transition from the Cold War to the brave new world post-9/11 is excellent. The result is a book that is dark, cynical, and almost as rewarding as the best of Le Carre's earlier fiction. The most wanted man in question is Issa. Issa is the product of the rape of a Chechnyan woman by a Red Army Colonel stationed in Chechnya. Raised by his father in Russia, Issa flees to the west after his father dies. Issa finds his way to Hamburg and despite his famished look it appears that Issa has connection to money and influence. He is also, apparently, a Muslim and because of his Chechnyan heritage he is identified by Russian intelligence agencies as a suspected terrorist. German, US, and British intelligence agencies based in Hamburg quickly identify him as a person of interest. The other main protagonists are Annabel Richter and Tommy Brue. Richter is a newly qualified attorney who has foregone work in private practice to work for a German civil rights organization created to assist immigrants and refugees in normalizing their status in Germany. Brue is a private banker whose bank is the depository of the significant funds Issa may lay claim to. Le Carre does a wonderful job portraying Issa, Richter, and Brue.

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