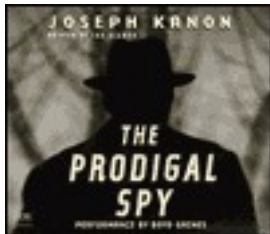

Joseph Kanon

The Prodigal Spy



Title: The Prodigal Spy

Author: Joseph Kanon

Format: Audio CD

Language: English

Pages: 0

Publisher: , 0

ISBN: 0553456369

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 6.4 MB

Download: allowed

Description

Washington, 1950. The trouble with history, Nick Kotlar's father tells him, is that you have to live through it before you know how it'll come out. And for Walter Kotlar, a high-level State Department official, the stakes couldn't be higher: an ambitious congressman has accused him of treason. As Nick watches helplessly, his family's privileged world is turned upside down in a frenzy of klieg lights and banging gavels. Then one snowy night the chief witness against his father plunges to her death and his father flees, leaving only an endless mystery and the stain of his defection. It would be better, Nick is told, to think of him as dead. But 20 years later Walter Kotlar is still alive, and he enlists Molly, a young journalist, to bring Nick a disturbing message. He badly wants to see his son; after two decades of silence and isolation, he is desperate to end his own Cold War. Resentful but intrigued, Nick agrees to accompany Molly to Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia for the painful reunion. Once in Prague, Nick finds a clandestine world where nothing is what it seems - not the beautiful city, shadowy with menace; not the woman with whom he falls in love; and most of all not the man he thinks he no longer knows, yet still knows better than anyone. For Walter Kotlar has an impossible request: he wants to come home and he wants Nick to help. He also has a valuable secret about what really happened the night he walked out of Nick's life - and about the deadly conspiracy that still threatens them.

Insightful reviews

Cecilia: After reading *Los Alamos*, I couldn't wait for Kanon's next book. Considering that I love this one more than *Alamos*, I would say the wait was worth it. Kanon does a fantastic job here, as he did in *Alamos* of setting his stage...the 1950s, Washington D.C., the governmental bodies, etc. Once we get to know his main character, Nick, we already feel like we know how and where and when Nick lives. Using real Cold War threats, Kanon is able to make this could-be-normal thriller a classic!

Ed: I had not heard of Joseph Kanon before reading this book. This is surprising as I generally enjoy reading spy stories.

While not up to the level of Alan Furst or John LeCarre, nevertheless, this is a suspenseful story. It takes place in two time frames: during the "Red Scare" of the late 1940s and early 50s and, later, during the Vietnam War and the Nixon Administration of the early 1970s. The plot unfolds in two major cities Washington, DC and Prague, Czechoslovakia.

The protagonist, Nick Kotlar is caught up, as a ten year old, in Congressional hearings in which his father, Walter, is accused of being a Russian spy. Later, as an adult, he is invited by his father to visit him in Prague where he has retired after many years living in Moscow. The plot develops from there.

The plot is very complicated. So complicated that the ending, in which all its elements are tied together, is a weakness of the story. There are just too many coincidences required to bring the story to a conclusion. That's why I didn't rate the book higher.

The characterizations are strong and enhance the story considerably. Nick's father, his stepfather Larry, his mother, his girl friend, Molly and all the other supporting characters are all well drawn and realistic.

I enjoyed the book and will be reading more of Kanon's writings in the future.

Karen: I enjoy all of Joseph Kanon's books. Again it takes places during the Cold War, and add another dimension to what we thought was happening in those days. Kept you wondering up to the end.

Nina: a desirable novel that explores the private aftermath of the 1950 period Communist witch hunts. the nature improvement is so whole that the reader nearly thinks it's a memoir instead of fiction. the tale is informed from the perspective of the son of an accused Communist secret agent who defected to Russia prior to his trial was once concluded. The grownup son's exploration of what rather occurred to his father occurs in 1969, with the unpopular Vietnam struggle as background. superbly written!

John: an excellent read. Kanon involves the post-war commie witch hunts from a unique perspective than in Stardust, after which the aftermath twenty years later. It has a few pleasurable twists on the end. It also, however, keeps his trait of getting protagonists who will not hearken to brilliant advice, even after it really is silly to not do so. during this case, no longer hearing Zimmerman.

Alexandria Orlando: simply could not Finish I like to read, and that i virtually by no means now not end a book. and that i attempted so demanding to complete this book, i actually did. yet this can be only one publication that I completely couldn't finish. The Prodigal undercover agent had actual capability at first. the 1st component of the book, which describes the time during which Walter Kotlar was once on trial for suspected of being a Communist, pulled me in immediately. i could not wait to learn extra concerning the younger boy who was once now a tender man, and the secret that surrounded him and his family. and that is the place the entire difficulty started. The publication instantly dropped off and Nick, who as a tender boy was once tremendous clever and had loads promise to be attention-grabbing and switch this tale right into a real secret as a tender man, grew to become out to be a whole fool and was once simply so BORING. as well as this, i've got no inspiration why Kanon (the author) felt the necessity to comprise the unusual love tale among Nick and Molly. It was once so ordinary and in truth part the time I simply desired to yell at them to both sleep jointly or do not and to forestall performing like careworn teenagers. And after forcing myself to web page two hundred i made a decision that sufficient used to be sufficient and flipped to the previous few pages and skim the finishing which I had already guessed (it's that predictable). i am sorry to assert that i would not suggest this booklet at all, until you take pleasure in grown adults performing like kids and a first-rate personality who's a whole idiot.

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