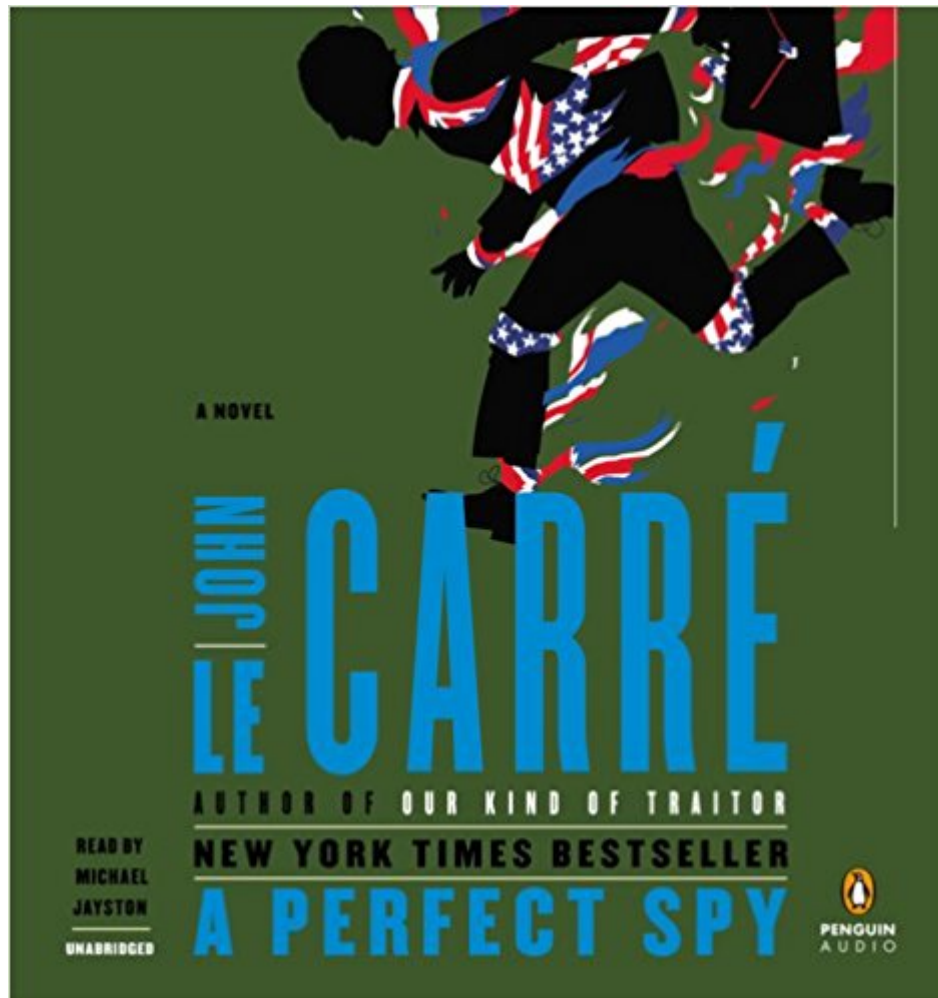




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A Perfect Spy: A Novel



Synopsis

The premier spy novelist of our time now gives us his largest and most engaging work. It is a novel that plumbs the essential nature of espionage itself as it interweaves the story of a secret international manhunt with the unfolding of a secret life—the life of a man of spectacular gifts, nursed on deceit, schooled in betrayal, incapable of love: a perfect spy. The man is Magnus Pym, a senior partner in "the Firm" of British intelligence; a man whose boundless charm, energy, and wit so dazzle that no two people have ever perceived him in the same way; a man unknown, really, and perhaps unknowable, even to those closest to him. Especially now. For Magnus Pym has disappeared. His superiors, his colleagues, his friends are baffled. Even his wife (the perfect wife of a perfect spy) is shaken. And while we follow their frenzied attempts to discover Pym's whereabouts—a search that soon galvanizes the espionage communities of both East and West as it continually opens into new labyrinths of mystery, as it unearths a clandestine chain of operations in Washington, Vienna, Prague London, Berlin—we are drawn simultaneously into a drama even more powerful: the prelude to Pym's disappearance, the story of his education as a spy. It begins with a boyhood lived on an emotional seesaw, marked alternately by extravagance and deprivation, dominated by a man both adored and adoring who educated Pym from birth in the ways of his as yet unchosen profession. The man: Pym's father, a builder of (invariably toppling) empires, a con artist on a grand scale, a charmer who inspires complete loyalty, then wantonly exploits it. And we watch as Pym learns from him to deceive reflexively, learns to master the linked arts of guile and seeming guileless, acquires a moral code that equates love with betrayal...a code that the seventeen-year-old draws upon when, as a pawn in one of his father's schemes, he finds himself cut off, alone in Switzerland ("the spiritual home of all natural spies"), where he first encounters the men who are to become his lifelong mentors, two men whose conflicting ideals and allegiances only Pym—in his perverse, omnivorous loyalty—could believe compatible. It is these two men—each in his won way tormented, betrayed, imperiled by Pym's disappearance—who are now orchestrating the pursuit, racing each other and time itself, searching the haunts of Pym's present and past life, stalking his wife, his friends, his lovers, his young son; desperate for clues. Until, as the complex strands of the story converge and the novel is propelled toward its terrifying resolution, the ultimate truth about Pym is revealed. *A Perfect Spy* is a magnificent novel whose most remarkable achievement is to immerse us at once in two parallel dramas—each totally gripping, the two together producing a force field in which suspense breeds suspense. It is a work that surpasses—in its mesmerizing hold on the reader, its richness of story and character, and its moral resonance—any novel we have yet had from

John le Carré©. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Le Carre's new novel overshadows *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* and his other bestsellers. The author's intense feelings, linguistic artistry and stinging wit draw the reader into the story of Magnus Pym, traitor. Epic in scope and length, the narrative moves backward and forward in time, recording crises-ridden events from the viewpoints of numerous characters. Primarily, the revelations are in an epistle Pym addresses to his young son Tom. The writer is holed-up in a remote country cottage where he tries to explain his crimes to the boy before pursuers find him. For years a trusted agent in British Intelligence, Pym has been giving England's and America's vital secrets to a contact in Czechoslovakia. Now Jack Brotherhood, the spy's mentor in the honorable organization, sadly agrees with colleagues that Pym is guilty. The proof is his disappearance, coincidental with data gushing from CIA computers and sent by U.S. agents to their opposite numbers in London. Determined to minimize the damage of Pym's treachery and create a coverup if possible, Brotherhood takes charge of a team searching for the betrayer. As the lives of everyone involved in this netherworld of espionage become tragically immediate to the reader, Le Carre again masterfully chronicles the dangerous game-playing world of international espionage. 350,000 first printing; BOMC main selection. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Le Carre's latest commences with the sudden disappearance from his posting and family in Vienna

of elegant British master-spy Magnus Pym. The narrative immediately splits and alternates: one voice, dubious, insistent, tells of the diligent and urgent race among ex-agent wife Mary, co-worker Jack Brotherhood, and ubiquitous Czech agent "Sergeant Pavel" to find the possible defector; the other voice (Pym's own), ruminative, wry, relates the colorful history and amoral motivations behind the successful spy. By the time the two voices converge in the present, the comprehensive character Pym as seen by others and by himself stands alone, ready to carry out his decision. Not a spy novel in the usual sense, then, but a skillfully manipulated, complex, and probing study spiced with lively anecdotes. To be savored. BOMC main selection. Rex E. Klett, Anson Cty. Lib., Wadesboro Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is not a great spy thriller, but definitely a really awesome character study of a treasonous spy (Pym here, standing in for the real Kim Philby, clearly). Many have tried to fathom Kim Philby's real-life treasonous character and failed, most decidedly those who knew him personally for 30 years in M16 while he was betraying them and Britain. I believe le Carre has succeeded brilliantly in giving a definite shape and rationale to Kim Philby's mysterious, empty character in his depiction of Magnus Pym in this novel. Interestingly, le Carre uses the model in this book of his own father--a devilishly charming itinerant con-man and convicted criminal--to draw an indelible picture of a deeply flawed father passing on his sins to his son. And although Kim Philby's father was St. John Philby--not the author's father--there are many similar traits the fictional Rick father here shares with both real-life fathers of the author and Philby, to explain perfectly what goes into the troubled making of a completely charming, totally immoral double-agent whom you can't help but love somewhat. A psychological portrait of great depth--more compelling than Dickens.

The best of John Le Carré, who belongs among the best novelists in the English language. He has numerous virtues, but his ear for dialogue is unsurpassed.

Captivating study of Pym. Convulsed forces twist an individual's sense of self, and conspire to eventual betrayal of not only those he holds close, but himself most of all.

This is John le Carré at his finest. In his forward the author discusses the colored past of his father, characterized extensively in the story. The plot alternates between episodes from the protagonist's past and contemporary situations. It is complex and brilliantly woven. One of the

complexities is the difficulty, at times, discerning who is telling the story. The narrative voice alternates along with the time placements of the plot. At times the narrator even alludes to himself as "he," deepening the conundrum. It is a wonder to see that Le Carré still has the intellectual vigor to produce a work of art of this complexity, though with his vast literary experience he certainly has the tools of the trade locked down. Hollis Danvers hbdanvers@sbccglobal.net May, 2013

This extraordinary novel is not everyone's cup of tea, but it has been my favorite novel for many years. Part of it is an investigative procedural -- a hunt for a top British spy who has disappeared. The more fascinating part is the main character's autobiography, as he explains his screwed-up childhood, with a shameless con man for a father, and how he grew up with a strong link between love and betrayal. This leads to his career as "a perfect spy." Will his British colleagues track him down? Will the Czechs? The CIA? What role did his wife play? Where is he hiding? What does he plan to do next? What kind of life does a perfect spy live? Read and find out.

transcends spy genre by leap years. dialogue above in any other writer. ever. protagonists as conflicted and moral as can be conceived. systemic treachery delineated. power mongering triangulated hunger always for his next. his novels spiritual voyages. pym's father haunts me to this very day.

The book is too long, somewhat self-indulgent, and relies on too much jargon that is too often difficult to penetrate. I can't say as I have yet read a Le Carre that I would recommend. I much prefer Robert Goddard.

I think Le Carre at his peak, even on a second read I greatly enjoyed his amazing descriptions and use of words to capture the feeling of the times, places and situations so cleverly and still efficiently. He was also able to tell a story with many strands and flashbacks but the whole thing flowed and felt natural.

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