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Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy Book 1) (English Edition)



Par Jason Matthews
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Par Jason Matthews : Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy Book 1) (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Red Sparrow: A Novel (The Red Sparrow Trilogy Book 1) (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSoon to be a major motion picture starring Jennifer Lawrence and Joel Edgerton! In the tradition of John le Carr, the bestselling, impossible-to-put-down, espionage thriller that is a primer in twenty-first century spying (The New York Times Book), written with the insider detail that only a veteran CIA operative could knowand 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' 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.

Extrait Red Sparrow 1 Twelve hours into his SDR Nathaniel Nash was numb from the waist down. His feet and legs were wooden on the cobblestones of the Moscow side street. It had long since gotten dark as Nate ran the surveillance detection route designed to tickle the belly hairs of surveillance, to stretch them, to get them excited enough to show themselves. There was nothing, not a hint of units swirling, leapfrogging, banging around corners on the streets behind him, no reaction to his moves. Was he black? Or was he being had by a massive team? In the nature of *The Game*, not seeing coverage felt worse than confirming you were covered in ticks. Early September, but it had snowed between the first and third hours of his SDR, which had helped cover his car escape. Late that morning, Nate bailed out of a moving Lada Combi driven by Leavitt from the Station, who, as he calculated the gap, wordlessly held up three fingers as they turned a corner onto an industrial side street, then tapped Nate's arm. FSB trailing surveillance, the Federal Security Service, didn't catch the escape in the three-second interval and blew past Nate hiding behind a snowbank, Leavitt leading them away. Nate left his active cover cell phone from the Embassy economic section with Leavitt in the car; the FSB were welcome to track the phone between Moscow's cell towers for the next three hours. Nate had banged his knee on the pavement when he rolled, and it had stiffened up in the first hours, but now it was as numb as the rest of him. As night fell, he had walked, slid, climbed, and scrambled over half of Moscow without detecting surveillance. It felt like he was in the clear. Nate was one of a small group of CIA internal ops officers trained to operate under surveillance on the opposition's home ground. When he was on the street working against them, there was no doubt, no introspection. The familiar fear of failing, of not excelling, disappeared. Tonight he was running hot and cool, working well. Ignore the cold that wraps around your chest, pushing tight. Stay in the sensory bubble, let it expand under the stress. His vision was acute. Focus on the middle distance, look for repeat pedestrians and vehicles. Mark colors and shapes. Hats, coats, vehicles. Without thinking much about it, he registered the sounds of the darkening city around him. The zing of the electric buses running on the overhead wires, the hiss of car tires on wet pavement, the crackling of coal dust underfoot. He smelled the bitterness of diesel fumes and burning coal in the air and, from some unseen exhaust vent, the loamy aroma of beet soup cooking. He was a tuning fork resonating in the frosty air, keyed and primed, but strangely calm. After twelve hours he was as sure as he could be: He was black. Time check: 2217. Twenty-seven-year-old Nate Nash was two minutes away from meeting the legend, the jewel in the tiara, the most valuable asset in the CIA's stable. Only three hundred meters from the quiet street where he would meet MARBLE: sophisticated, urbane, in his sixties, major general in the SVR, which was the successor to the KGB's First Chief Directorate, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, the Kremlin's overseas spies. MARBLE had been in harness for fourteen years, a remarkable run considering that Cold War Russian sources survived an average of eighteen months. The grainy photos of history's lost agents clicked behind Nate's eyes as he scanned the street: Penkovsky, Motorin, Tolkachev, Polyakov, all the others, all gone. Not this one, not on my watch. He would not fail. MARBLE was now chief of the Americas Department in the SVR, a position of colossal access, but he was old-school KGB, had earned his spurs (and general's star) during an overseas career spectacular not only for its operational triumphs, but also because MARBLE had survived the purges and reforms and internal power struggles. He did not delude himself as to the nature of the system he was serving, and he had grown to loathe the charade, but he was a professional and loyal. When he was forty, already a colonel and serving in New York, the Center refused permission to take his wife to an American oncologist, a mindless display of Soviet intransigence, and she died instead on a gurney in a Moscow hospital corridor. It took MARBLE another eight years to decide, to prepare a secure approach to the

Americans, to volunteer. As he became a foreign spy agent, in intelligence lexicon MARBLE quietly and with courtly grace had spoken softly to his CIA case officers his handlers apologizing self-deprecatingly for the meager information he reported. Langley was stunned. Here was incalculably valuable intelligence on KGB and SVR operations, penetrations of foreign governments, and, occasionally, when he could, the crown jewels: the names of Americans spying for Russia. He was an uncommon, inestimable asset. 2218. Nate rounded the corner and started down the narrow street, apartment buildings on either side, the uneven sidewalk lined with trees now bare and blown with snow. At the far end of the street, silhouetted in the light from the intersection beyond, a familiar shape turned the corner and began walking toward him. The old man was a pro: He had nailed the four-minute window. Nate's fatigue fell away and he could feel himself rev up. As MARBLE approached, Nate automatically scanned the empty street for anomalies. No cars. Look up. No windows open, apartments dark. Look back. Cross streets quiet. Scan the shadows. No street sweeper, no lolling bum. A mistake, despite all the hours of his SDR, of provocative maneuvers, of waiting and watching in the snow and cold, a single mistake would have one inescapable result: the death of MARBLE. Not, to Nate, so much the loss of a source of intelligence or the beginning of a diplomatic flap, but the death of this man. Nate would not fail. MARBLE walked unhurriedly forward. They had met twice before. MARBLE had been assigned a succession of CIA handlers had educated every one. Some of them had been accomplished. In a few MARBLE had suspected galloping stupidity. And one or two had displayed a terrifying languor, a potentially fatal disinterest in being professional. Nate was different, interesting. There was something, an edge, a focus, an aggression in pursuit of doing the thing correctly. A little raw a little compulsive, MARBLE thought but not many had the fire, and MARBLE approved. MARBLE's eyes narrowed with pleasure at seeing the young American. Nate was average height and thin-framed, with straight black hair over a straight nose and brown eyes that kept moving, glancing over the older man's shoulder as he approached, watchful rather than jittery. Good evening, Nathaniel, said MARBLE. Slight British accent from the assignment in London, leavened by his time in New York. A whim to use English, to be closer to his case officer, despite Nate's nearly fluent Russian. MARBLE was short and stocky, with deep brown eyes separated by a fleshy nose. He had bushy white eyebrows, which matched his full head of wavy white hair, giving him the appearance of an elegant boulevardier. They were supposed to use aliases, but that was ridiculous. MARBLE had access to the SVR foreign diplomatic mug book and knew Nate's name perfectly well. Its good to see you. Are you well? MARBLE looked carefully at Nate's face. Are you tired? How many hours did you spend tonight? MARBLE's questions were perfectly polite, but he still wanted to know. He never took anything for granted. Dobryj vecher, dyadya, said Nate. He had begun using the familiar uncle, part tradecraft to show respect, part a display of real affection. He checked his watch. Its been twelve hours. The street feels loose. A patois they both understood, and Nate knew MARBLE was checking to hear how thorough his SDR had been. MARBLE did not comment. The two began walking together in the shadows cast by the trees along the sidewalk. The air was frosty, still, there was no wind. They had approximately seven minutes for the meeting. Nate let MARBLE do most of the talking, and he listened carefully. The older man spoke quickly but without haste, a mix of gossip and politics in MARBLE's service, who was up, who was down. A summary of a new operation, a successful SVR recruitment in a foreign country. Details would be on the discs. This was as much a conversation between two human beings as a debriefing. The sounds of their voices, the eye contact, MARBLE's low chuckle. That was the point. As they walked they both resisted a natural impulse to link arms, like father and son. They both knew there could be no contact, a bitter necessity, for fear of contamination with metka, spy dust. MARBLE himself had reported on the secret program to pollinate suspect CIA officers in the US Embassy in Moscow. Yellow, yeasty, powdery, the chemical compound nitrophenylpentadienal, NPPD. Pockmarked Russian techs squeezed the rubber bulbs and it was spritzed on clothing, floor mats, steering wheels. NPPD was designed to spread like sticky pollen from a daffodil, from a handshake to a sheet of paper to a coat lapel. It would invisibly mark anything an American CIA officer touched. Therefore, if you were a Russian official under suspicion and your hands or clothes or desk blotter fluoresced with NPPD, you were cooked. MARBLE had traumatized Langley by subsequently reporting that different batches of metka were tagged with distinct marking compounds that could identify the specific American host. As they walked and spoke, Nate reached into his pocket, pulled out a sealed plastic bag. Replacement batteries for MARBLE's covert communications equipment: three steel-gray cigarette packs, inordinately heavy. They used covcom to transmit fast-breaking news and to keep contact warm during the gaps between personal meetings. But these brief encounters, mortally risky, were infinitely more productive. It was during these that MARBLE passed volumes of intelligence on discs or

drives, and equipment and rubles were replenished. And there was the human contact, the opportunity to exchange a few words, time to renew the almost religious partnership. Nate carefully opened the plastic bag and held it out to MARBLE, who reached in and extracted the prewrapped brick of batteries, which had been packed in a sterile lab in Virginia. MARBLE then dropped two discs into the bag. I estimate there are about five linear meters of files on those discs, he said. With my compliments. Nate noted that the old spook still thought in terms of linear feet of file folders even as he was stealing digital secrets. Thank you. Did you include the summary? The intel hacks had begged Nate to remind MARBLE to include a summary of the take, to prioritize translation and processing of his raw reports. Yes, this time I remembered. I have also included a new office directory in the second disc. A few changes of personnel, nothing too startling. And a schedule of my foreign travel plans for the next year. I am looking for operational reasons to travel, I included the details, he said, nodding at the disc in the bag. I look forward to seeing you outside Moscow, said Nate, at your leisure. Time was ticking and the two had already reached the end of the street, had turned and were walking slowly back to the other end. MARBLE grew pensive. You know, I have been thinking about my career, about my relationship with my American friends, about life ahead of me, he said. I probably have several more years before retiring. Politics, old age, the unthinkable mistake. Perhaps three or four, perhaps two years. I sometimes think it would be pleasant to retire in New York City. What do you think of that, Nathaniel? Nate paused and half turned toward him. What was this? His street hum faded. Was his agent in trouble? MARBLE raised his hand as if to squeeze Nates arm, but stopped it in midair. No alarm, please, Im just thinking out loud. Nate looked sideways at MARBLE: The old man was confident, calm. It was natural for an agent to think about retiring, to dream about the end to the danger and the double life, to stop listening for the knock on the door. The Life eventually causes great fatigue, and that leads to mistakes. Was there fatigue in MARBLEs voice? Nate would have to report the nuances of this conversation carefully in his ops cable tomorrow. Inexorably, problems in a case always rebounded to the handling officer, problems he didnt need. Is there anything wrong, a security problem? said Nate. You know your bank account is waiting for you. You can retire anywhere you want. We support you in every way. No, Im fine. We have more work to do. Then we can rest, said MARBLE. It is an honor working with you, said Nate, and he meant it. Your contribution is impossible to measure. The older man looked down at the sidewalk as they walked along the darkened street. Their meeting was stretching now to six minutes. It was time to go. Is there anything you need? asked Nate. He closed his eyes and concentrated. Batteries passed, discs received, summary included, foreign travel schedule. The only thing remaining was to schedule the next personal meeting three months from now. Shall we meet again in three months? asked Nate. It will be dead winter by then, December. The new site, EAGLE, near the river? Yes, of course, said MARBLE. Orel. I will confirm in a message the week before. They were approaching the end of the street again, moving slowly toward the brighter lights of the intersection. A neon sign marked a Metro station entrance across the street. Nate suddenly felt a wash of alarm running up his back. A battered Lada sedan cruised slowly through the intersection, two men in the front seat. Nate and MARBLE flattened themselves against the wall of a building, completely in shadow. MARBLE had seen the car too, the old man was every bit the street pro as his young handler. Another car, a newer Opel, crossed in the opposite direction. Two men inside were looking the other way. Glancing behind him, Nate saw a third car slowly turning into the street. It was running only with its parking lights. Its a sweep search, hissed MARBLE. You didnt park a vehicle nearby, did you? Nate shook his head no. No, no, fuck no. His heart was pounding. This was going to be a close thing. He looked at MARBLE for a beat, then the two of them moved as one. Forgetting spy dust, forgetting everything else, Nate helped MARBLE take off his dark overcoat, turning it inside out as he pulled it off his arms, transformed into a light-colored coat of a different cut, stained and frayed at the sleeves and hem. Nate helped MARBLE shrug it on. Reaching into an inside coat pocket, Nate unfolded a moth-eaten fur hata part of his own disguise and jammed it on MARBLEs bare head. MARBLE took heavy-rimmed eyeglasses, one stem wrapped with white tape, out of his front pocket and put them on. Nate reached into another pocket and removed a short staff that he shook lightly downward. An elastic cord inside the staff snapped the three lengths together to create a cane that he thrust into MARBLEs hand. The middle-aged Muscovite was gone, replaced in eight seconds by a creaky old pensioner wearing a cheap cloth coat and hobbling along with a cane. Nate pushed him gently in the direction of the intersection and the Metro station. This action defied the catechism, it was dangerous to use the Metro, to trap oneself underground, but if MARBLE could get away from the area, the risk was worth it. His disguise would have to be enough against the multiple surveillance cameras on the platforms. Ill get them away from here, said Nate, as MARBLE bent over and began

shuffling to cross the intersection. The old spook looked at him once, grave but cool, and winked. This guy is a legend, thought Nate. But now his only priority was to distract the surveillance cars and get them to start vectoring on him, away from MARBLE. He must not be detained, however. MARBLEs discs in his pocket would kill the old man as surely as if surveillance arrested him. Not on his watch. The icy burn started in his head and throat. The collar of his coat was up, and his guts were set, and he quickly crossed in front of the surveillance car slowly cruising up the street toward him half a block away. This would be the FSB, the thugs working internal espionage inside the Russian Federation. Their turf. The 1200cc Lada engine screamed and they caught him in the reflected light of the high beams off the glistening street, and he ran to the next block, ducked into a basement stairwell that reeked of urine and vodka, and behind him came the sound of wailing tires, so, Wait, wait, now move again, sprinting through alleyways, ghosting across pedestrian overpasses, pounding down stairs to the river. Use barriers, cross railroad tracks, change vector and direction once out of physical sight, make them guess wrong, squeeze past their picket line. Time check: nearly two hours. He was shaking with fatigue and he ran, then walked, then crouched behind parked cars, hearing engine noises all around him as they converged, then spread out, then converged again, trying to get close enough to see his face, close enough to tackle him facedown in the street, to jam their hands into his pockets. He could hear the squelch breaks, hear them yelling into their radios, they were getting desperate. His first surveillance instructor had told him, You will feel the street, Mr. Nash, it doesnt matter whether its Wisconsin Avenue or Tverskaya, you will feel it, and Nate was fucking feeling it, but there were a lot of them, even if they did not know exactly where he was. Car tires squealed on the wet cobblestones as they sped back and forth, and the good news was that they didnt have enough of him yet to deploy feet, and the bad news was that time was on their side. Thank God they were beating up on him, which meant they had not focused on MARBLE. Nate said a prayer, that the old man had been missed as he limped into the Metro, and that this surveillance had not been on him from the beginning, because that would mean that a second team was now following MARBLE. They werent getting his agent, his agent, and they werent getting the package of MARBLEs discs, volatile as nitro in his pocket. The squealing tires died away and the streets were quiet. Time check: Two-plus hours, leg- and spine-weary, with vision gray around the edges, and he went down a narrow alleyway, hugging the wall in the shadows, hoping they were gone, imagining the dented cars all back in the garage, ticking hot metal and dripping mud, while the team leader screamed at them in the ready room. Nate hadnt seen a car in several minutes, and he thought he had slipped outside their search perimeter. It had started snowing again. Up ahead a vehicle screeched to a stop, then reversed and turned into the alley, its headlights catching the snow. Nate turned toward the wall, trying to reduce his outline and the contrasts, but he knew they must have seen him, and as the lights swept over Nate the car accelerated toward him, edging over to his side of the alley. Nate watched in fascinated disbelief as the car kept coming, its passenger-side door inches away from the wall and the two intent faces straining forward, wipers going full tilt. These FSB animals, didnt they see him? Then he realized they saw him perfectly well, they were trying for a wall smear. It is an unwritten rule that surveillance teams following a foreign diplomat never, ever offer violence to a target, the instructors had said, and really, seriously, what the fuck were these guys doing? He looked back and saw the entrance to the alley was too far away. Feel the street, Mr. Nash, and the second-best option was feeling the cast-iron drainpipe running down the building a foot away from him with the rusty metal straps bolted to the brickwork, and as the car bore down, he leapt up and grabbed the drainpipe, using the metal fasteners to clamber higher, and the car slammed into the wall, splintering the drainpipe, the cars roof just below Nates lifted-up legs. With a heavy grinding sound, the car scraped along the wall and came to a stop. They had stalled the engine, and his grip was gone, and Nate fell onto the roof of the car and then to the pavement. The drivers door was opening, a big man in a fur hat was getting out, but they never, ever offer violence to a target and Nate shouldered the door back onto the head and neck of the thug, heard a scream, saw a face contorted with pain. Nate slammed the door on his head two more times, very quickly, and the man fell back into the car. The passenger door was pinned shut by the wall and Nate could see the other goon trying to climb over the front seat to get at the rear door, so it was time to run again and Nate sprinted down the alley into the shadows and around the corner. Three doors down was a grimy soup kitchen, open at this late hour, its lights spilling onto the snowy sidewalk. Nate could hear the car in the alleyway backing up, engine whining. He ducked into the tiny, empty restaurant and closed the door. A single room, nothing more than a service counter at one end with several well-worn wooden tables and benches, stained wallpaper, and grimy lace curtains over the window. An old woman with two can-opener teeth sat behind the counter listening to a scratchy radio and reading a paper. Two battered aluminum

pots of soup simmered on electric rings behind her. The aroma of cooked onions filled the room. Fighting to keep his hands from shaking, Nate walked up to the counter, and in Russian ordered a bowl of beet soup to the woman's blank stare. He sat with his back to the curtained window and listened. A car roared by, then another, then nothing. On the radio a comedian was telling a joke: Khrushchev visited a pig farm and was photographed there. In the village newspaper office there was a heated discussion about the photo caption.

Comrade Khrushchev among Pigs? Comrade Khrushchev and Pigs? Pigs around Comrade Khrushchev? None will do. The editor finally makes a decision: Third from left Comrade Khrushchev. The old lady behind the counter cackled. He had not eaten or drunk anything in more than twelve hours, and he began wolfing down the thick soup with a shaking spoon. The old woman stared at him, got up, and walked around the counter to the front door. Nate watched her out of the corner of his eye. She opened the door and he felt the blast of cold outside air. The old woman looked out at the street, up and down the block, then slammed the door shut. She returned to her stool behind the counter and picked up her paper. When Nate finished his soup and bread, he walked up to the counter and counted out a few kopeks. The crone gathered the coins and swept them into a drawer. She slammed the drawer and looked at Nate. All clear, she said. Go with God. Nate avoided looking at her and left. In another hour, drenched with sweat and trembling with fatigue, Nate stumbled past the militiaman's booth at the front entrance to the Embassy housing compound. MARBLE's discs were finally safe. It was not the approved way to end an operational night, but he had missed by hours the pickup in the Station car. His entry was noted, and within a half hour the FSB, and instantly after that the SVR, knew that it was young Mr. Nash of the Embassy's Economic Section who had been out of pocket for most of the evening. And they thought they knew why.

OLD LADY'S BEET SOUP Melt butter in a large pot; add a chopped onion and sauté until translucent; stir in three grated beets and one chopped tomato. Pour in beef stock, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper. Broth should be tart and sweet. Bring to a boil, then simmer for an hour. Serve hot with a dollop of sour cream and chopped dill.

Revue de presse "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) 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*) "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*) "Fans of the genre's masters including John Le Carré and Ian Fleming will happily embrace Matthews' central spy." (USA Today) 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) 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) "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) 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*)