



A Spy's Life

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Robert Cope Harland ended his career as a British spy in an Austrian hospital, after being tortured and beaten by Czech security agents in the last days of the communist regime. He was young enough then to find a new life with the Red Cross and then with the UN. Twelve years later his UN plane crashes in mysterious circumstances at La Guardia airport, New York and Harland is the only survivor. Was it sabotage, and if so, was Harland the target?

It is soon clear to Harland that the answers are to be found in his past, a past which, along with its secrets and tradecraft, he has desperately tried to forget. And now the crash has thrown him back into a world of relentless intrigue and mistrust, to his youth, and a life-changing love affair . . .

A Spy's Life Details

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From Reader Review A Spy's Life for online ebook

Melanie Fraser says

Henry Porter is a new author to me but I shall definitely read his other books. This story was nail-bitingly gripping interspersed with touches of humour to relieve the tension. In one of the dangerous missions a foreign agent says to Robert Harland (a former MI5 agent); "Tell me why you English think espionage is like gardening....in intelligence work you cultivate contacts, you plant listening devices or bugs, you have moles and you weed documents"!

Right from the beginning it moved at a fast pace and from country to country in which a tangled web of events kept me on edge until the very end. This is highly recommended for those who love intrigue, mystery and crime.

Elie says

for a thriller, this wasn't very thrilling...

Kevin says

Remember how you think, "I should be an author, I can write better than this guy?" Yup.

Derek Hudson says

Although I found that many parts of this novel kept my attention and interest, I finished it feeling generally unsatisfied with the story. As well thought out as much of the storyline is there are other aspects of the story that seem too simple and unrealistic.

Garth Pettersen says

Very enjoyable. Porter writes a good thriller--fast pacing, believable characters, rising tension. I like Porter's writing; he always delivers.

Jannelies says

Dit in een sfeervol omslag gehulde boek vertelt het verhaal van Robert Cope Harland, in de wandelgang Bobby. Bobby is een nog jonge ex-spion die zich bezig houdt met advieswerk voor de Verenigde Naties. Op een dag lift hij mee in een klein vliegtuig. Hij is net terug van een opdracht en ontmoet zijn oude vriend Alan

Griswold die ook op weg is naar huis. Het vliegtuig vol diplomaten stijgt op maar verongelukt vlak voor de bestemming. Bobby is de enige overlevende. Nog maar net bijgekomen van dit ongeluk wordt hij overvallen, gearresteerd, weer losgelaten en krijgt hij een bijzondere opdracht van de Secretaris Generaal van de VN. Deze opdracht grijpt diep in op het leven van Bobby, want veel elementen schijnen te maken te hebben met dingen die gebeurd zijn in de tijd dat hij nog als spion in Bosnië werkte.

'Vroeger' waren spionage-verhalen eenvoudig: West versus Oost. West won altijd. Tegenwoordig moet je echter meer in je mars hebben om een geloofwaardig spionageverhaal neer te zetten. Wie dit boek van Henry Porter ten volle wil waarderen, zal dus grondige kennis moeten hebben van de gebeurtenissen in het vroegere Joegoslavië. De auteur heeft zijn huiswerk in elk geval gedaan en een beeld geschetst dat niet zo makkelijk te doorgroonden is. De gebeurtenissen volgen elkaar in hoog tempo op, maar er is ook tijd in het verhaal om aandacht te geven achter het ongelooflijke politieke gekonkel waar onze wereld helaas mee zit opgescheept. Dit verhaal geeft een goed beeld van de invloed van dat gekonkel op het leven van 'gewone' mensen, van zowel daders als slachtoffers. De hoofdpersoon wordt soms als het ene, soms als het andere beschouwd en waarom dat dan zo is, wordt vaardig uit de doeken gedaan.

Geen eenvoudige thriller, dit boek. De compacte schrijfstijl en het hoge tempo, alsmede het onderwerp, maken dat je er even voor moet gaan zitten. Wie dit geduld echter kan opbrengen, wordt beloond.

Mark Phillips says

Great book

Kelanth says

Una vita da spia, in originale "A Spy's Life", è un thriller di spionaggio dello scrittore e giornalista Henry Porter, del 2001, che si svolge durante il periodo della guerra fredda.

La trama di questo romanzo è la seguente: Robert Cope Harland è un ingegnere e attualmente lavora per le Nazioni Unite su un progetto idrico di monitoraggio delle proprietà delle forniture di acqua dolce in tutto il mondo. Quando manca poco tempo alla sua relazione finale al Segretario Generale delle nazioni unite sale su un aereo in direzione di New York e trova diversi ex amici e colleghi che gli fanno compagnia. Alan Griswold è un capo della CIA e lui e Harland hanno lavorato insieme nell'intelligence britannica durante gli anni ottanta; Alan dice a Bobby che ha recentemente scoperto qualcosa di grande, qualcosa di cui Bobby sarà contento. L'aereo precipita misteriosamente durante l'atterraggio a La Guardia e Bobby si ritrova nel fango. Il suo amico Alan è morto e Bobby è infine salvato e come si riprende in ospedale scopre che è l'unico superstite dello schianto. Tutti gli altri venti a bordo l'aereo delle Nazioni Unite sono stati uccisi. Un'indagine prende subito piede e ci sono due teorie di ciò che può essere accaduto: un evento atmosferico o il sabotaggio. L'FBI comincia ad indagare mentre il protagonista si riprende, ma presto scoprirà che sta per essere trascinato in un mondo che pensava di aver lasciato per sempre: quello degli intrighi internazionali.

Un thriller a sfondo intrigo internazionale molto piacevole. Molto meglio di quanto mi aspettassi, questo romanzo soddisferà senz'altro gli appassionati più esigenti del genere spionaggio. La scrittura è di prima categoria con un buon ritmo, personaggi ben realizzati e un buon sviluppo della trama. Oltre tutto la storia si suddivide in altre due sottotrame intriganti che mantengono il lettore impegnato; una storia che va avanti a

rotta di collo per tutta la durata del romanzo. Consigliato.

Speesh says

'A Spy's Life', by Henry Porter is a wonderfully well-paced spy story, that gradually reveals its many intriguing secrets. Both for story's participants and for us, the readers.

I hope it doesn't sound strange, but I thought it read like you were constantly wiping a steamed-up window, so you can what was happening more clearly.

Being a spy story set in Europe, there are of course plenty of hang-overs from the classic East vs West, Capitalism vs Communism, old-school spy games. But the whole is brought into the 20th (and 21st Century with the current war-crimes trials taking place in The Hague), by stretching out into the break-up of the old Yugoslavia, the wars in Bosnia and investigations into the Serbian, 'ethnic cleansing' massacres of Muslims.

We follow Robert Harland, an English ex-spy - luckily, not an ex-Cambridge University octogenarian ex-spy this time, but still one with plenty of 'baggage'. Harland has seemingly successfully negotiated his way through the tricky final phases of Communism and the break up of the Eastern Bloc, but, after he was rescued from a particularly un-pleasant experience at the hands of his ex-Communist adversaries, he left 'The Service' and now works in a fairly mundane job for the UN.

However, the book opens with it becoming clear that he has - almost - accidentally found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, with the wrong people. It becomes clear, that nothing is clear.

It isn't really possible to give away too many more of the plot details, without spoiling any of the many twists and turns and revelations that come throughout the story. Suffice it to say that you are going to have to pay attention as many people are not who they say they are, or were, or are who they say they are now. Also, more often than not, it seems like what they did and for whom, wasn't always done for the reasons or people Harland thought they were. As I said at the start, the story reveals itself and un-coils gradually and we only understand what is happening at the same time as Harland.

I thoroughly enjoyed this 'A Spy's Life' and read it at break-neck pace. I have ear-marked the others it seems Porter has written about Robert Harland for future download.

Becky Motew says

3.5 stars

Very surprising that the main spy, Harland, shares his clandestine life with so many people, including his sister! Milo Weaver would never do that!

Both plot lines coincidentally connect which stretches some credulity. But it's a good read, marred only by the abysmal editing job. Every page or so there is an error—not misspelled words but double words or missing words or wrong words entirely. Porter thanks his editor in the acknowledgements but he shouldn't

have.

Jill Mackin says

Another great spy novel by Mr. Porter. Post cold war thriller. MI6, CIA, STB.

Lysergius says

An elegantly plotted, fast paced excursion back into the Cold War that reaches into the present for the protagonist Robert Harlan. A credible examination of the fate of one of the many agents of the Warsaw pact security services who grasped the possibilities of capitalism before their fellows and made the most out of it while the going was easy.

A good read. Hard to put down.

Waqas Qazi says

A story with a good promise which peters out to a mundane ending. After reading lot of John Le Carre, I guess hard to find a match in the spy fiction genre.

Paula Dembeck says

This is an international spy thriller which takes place during the time of the Cold War.

Robert (Bobby) Cope Harland is an engineer currently working for the UN on a water project tracking ownership of fresh water supplies throughout the world. He is now six to seven weeks away from making his final report to the Secretary General. He boards a plane heading to New York and finds several former friends and colleagues in his company. Alan Griswold is a CIA station chief and he and Harland worked together in the British Secret Intelligence Service during the eighties. Alan tells Bobby he has recently discovered something big, something Bobby will be pleased about.

The plane mysteriously crashes while landing at La Guardia and Bobby finds himself in the mud on the banks of the East River. His friend Alan is dead and he finds his body not far off. Bobby is eventually rescued and as he recovers in hospital he learns he is the only survivor of the crash. All twenty others on board the UN plane were killed. An investigation is launched and there are two theories of what may have happened. The Transportation Safety Board blames it on physics and a complex phenomenon known as wind vortex. The FBI is not so sure and is investigating possible sabotage.

As Bobby's body heal and the investigation continues, Booby finds he is pulled into a world he has spent many years trying to forget, his past life in the Secret Service and the complex world of international spying. This is a secretive and dangerous world where everyone lies, no one is who he appears to be and it is never really clear who is on which side as both sides play on each other's turf. We are drawn into war crimes, code names, terrible torture, long lost love affairs and duplicitous spy masters.

The story has an exciting beginning, but requires the reader to pay close attention. The intricate plot has lots of twists and turns and you are never certain where things will go next. Even as the story unfolds, you are not always certain you know exactly what is going on in this complex political chess game.

This book is one of three in a series but I read it as a “stand alone” with no difficulty. It does have a very realistic and readable storyline about “locked in syndrome, which was particularly well done.

This will do nicely as a “beach or airport book”, but would suffer with too many interruptions.

Geoff Woodland says

I chose this book up from a ship’s library while on a cruise, because I had not read any of this author’s work. A Spy’s Life is his second book and I enjoyed it so much that I will try and find his debut novel.

If you are interested in the twists and turns of spying, and who to trust on either side, then this is the book for you.

The explanation of wake vortex and other high powered weapons were easy to understand, yet critical to the overall story.

The hero is not in the mold of ‘James Bond’, but more an older spy as in Lemus from The Spy Who Came In From the Cold.

The story is linked to the Bosnian conflict, so if this period, along with spies and intrigue is of interest to you then give this book a go.
