



# Isle of Joy

*Don Winslow*

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New York: Late 1958 Walter Withers had given the best years of his life to the CIA, setting honeytraps and reeling in the victims of his plots. But Withers has returned to his hometown for an easier, safer life as a Private Investigator. Manhattan in the late Fifties is alive with new possibilities, new sounds and new faces, including young presidential hopeful Senator Joe Keneally. Withers is assigned to bodyguard Keneally's girlfriend at a society gathering: a simple enough job. But next morning, she's dead - and Withers is the prime suspect. To clear his name, Withers must take on his old masters from the CIA, as well as J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, all of them determined to set Keneally up. And Withers, expert hunter, becomes another disposable victim of the trap closing in on the Senator.

## Isle of Joy Details

Date : Published December 1st 1999 by Dutton Books (first published February 1st 1996)

ISBN : 9780525940555

Author : Don Winslow

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# From Reader Review Isle of Joy for online ebook

## Barb says

I normally really like this author. This is about 2.5 stars. The ending was pretty good.

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## Gram says

Ex CIA agent Walter Withers is now an investigator for an upmarket New York private eye firm which vets people - mostly top level businessmen - for sexual and political weakness. Then, his firm assigns him to look after young presidential hopeful Senator Joe Keneally, who Walter discovers is having an affair with a Russian spy (A thinly veiled reference to Senator John F. Kennedy's alleged dalliance with Ellen Rometsch). Set in 1958, Winslow effortlessly captures the paranoia of the FBI and CIA as they escalated the Cold War at home and abroad. Walter Withers finds himself caught up in a major blackmail attempt directed at the would-be President and has to figure out how to save himself and the woman he loves from becoming casualties in the Cold War. Winslow brilliantly portrays the atmosphere of 1950's upper-crust New York with the occasional diversion down the city's meaner streets. Almost all the characters in the book seem to come alive in a story to be savoured long after the last page.

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## Rob Kitchen says

Winslow is one of those rare writers that is relatively sparse with prose and yet fully visualises a scene in the mind of the reader. His characters are fully formed, complex, engaging, and have emotional depth. The dialogue is realistic and pitch perfect. The balance between story and back story is just right. And the historical context of McCarthy/Hoover era 1958 is well judged. The Keneallys – the womanising Joe, the protective Jimmy, and the beautiful Madeline, are well realised mimics of the Jack, Bob and Jackie Kennedy, which gives most of the story its seeming authenticity. I loved everything about this book except for the end, which spiralled to the farcical. Winslow tries to take every character in the book and weave them into a sequence which was largely unnecessary except as a narrative device and became more and more improbable. For me this was a shame, as Winslow is undoubtedly a very fine writer and the Isle of Joy was for the main a great read.

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## Gary says

Let's get it out there! I think Don Winslow is a superb writer. I've read lots of his books and loved them all. He has the ability to create believable characters, even if they are drug dealers or surfers. 'Isle of joy' captures the feel of 50's New York tremendously well and the story is excellent. He is the sort of writer that if you just come across one of his books that you haven't read, by accident, it gives you a sense of real pleasure and you carry it home desperately trying not to start it on the train or bus, so that you can settle down in comfort and just eat in to it. Highly recommended.

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## **Matt says**

This is a strong spy novel. The twists are great, and slowly revealed, and it all works out smoothly. If it weren't such a classic dime spy novel, I would consider giving it 4 stars.

Withers is a guy who leaves the CIA but gets twisted all up in it again without his knowing. Turns out he is involved in a plot to get dirt on up and coming Senator Kenneally (a non-veiled JFK, down to the accent and family history). JFK, I mean Kenneally, is sleeping with a Russian spy, and the Russian are gathering info to blackmail him, but Withers gets swept up in it, and it turns out everyone from the FBI, CIA, Senator's people, KGB, and a local NYPD detective want what Withers knows.

I don't know why Winslow released this under a pen name. It is a big step up from his Neal Carey series in terms of complexity and general smoothness of the plot, while still using a lot of things from the Carey books. And it begins to show his new style, which is the style that made me fall in love with his writing. I have never read a book that was so clearly a stepping stone for an author, both in terms of style and plot construction.

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## **Ronald Koltnow says**

Don Winslow, at his best, writes fast-paced thrillers with snappy dialogue. When he is having fun, as in *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF BOBBY Z*, he is very fun indeed. When he is writing at the top of his game, as in *THE POWER OF THE DOG*, he is one of our best novelists. *ISLE OF JOY* (originally published as *A WINTER SPY* by the pseudonymous MacDonald Lloyd) is not top-drawer Winslow. Having recently read Ellroy's *AMERICAN TABLOID*, I did not want another variation on the Kennedy theme. Having just completed a passel of Ross Thomas novels, I was not in the mood for what I thought was a tepid Cold War chase novel. Winslow does drop a number of cameos into the book -- a fictionalized Kennedy family, a sort of Kerouac, Allen Dulles -- and he evokes New York in 1958 well, from the corporate culture to the jazz clubs. Other reviewers have praised the novel, so who am I to judge?

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## **John Grazide says**

That was such a great story. Not like anything Winslow has written, but one of the better ones. It truly transports you back to New York in 1958. With detail that doesn't bog the story down but is amazingly rich.

The story is about a young-ish CIA guy, Walt Withers, who is leaving the agency. And he takes a job at an investigation company. Not doing private eye stuff mostly just background reports for the clients. One day his boss come to him with a special assignment. To watch the wife, Madeleine (think Jackie), of a popular senator, Joseph Keneally (think JFK). And Joe has a beautiful movie star blonde bombshell movie star Marta (think oh you get it) But when Marta turns up dead Walter has to prove he isn't the one who killed her.

But Walter has to avoid the local cops, Hoover's FBI, and a pair of dark plodding figures. They all want what they think Walter has. And will do anything to get it. With spies, affairs, and intrigue the late 50's come to life in this great story.

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## **Jim Golmon says**

Manhattan in the Cold War in 1958. Jazz, CIA and FBI honeytraps, rising young Irish Senator Keneally and his fixer brother. A particularly strong Winslow book.

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## **LJ says**

ISLE OF JOY – VG

Winslow, Don

Originally published as “A Winter Spy” by McDonald Lloyd, the basic plot is thinly based on the affair between John Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe. But there’s so much more to the book than that. Winslow’s writing is wonderful and depiction of New York in the 1950’s puts you right there. If you’ve not read either of the Walter Withers books, of which this is one, or the Neal Carey series, or “The Death and Life of Bobby Z”, or “California Fire and Life”, you should.

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## **Katy says**

Felt like it dragged

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## **Jak60 says**

This is a light, sophisticated novel by Winslow, half comedy half spy story. The first half is kind of a slow build up, there is a lot of context setting; in the second part then the pace picks up and climaxes in a smart finale.

Not the best book by Winslow, yet a good read.

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## **Torben says**

Zwischendurch zog es sich etwas bei mir, auch bedingt durch Winslow kreative Schreibart, die hier aber sehr viele Fragezeichen hervorruft. Erst auf den letzten Seiten fgt sich alles zusammen. Mittendrin hatte ich, gerade wenn ich das Buch mal ein paar Tage aus der Hand gelegt hatte, das Gefhl, wichtige Sachen nicht mitgekriegt oder berlesen zu haben. Fr New Yorker das Buch ihrer Stadt, sehr viel Lokalkolorit der End-1950er-Jahre. Viel Jazz, Beatpoesie, Kalter Krieg, FBI, CIA, die Kennedys. Recht altmodisch geschrieben kommt der Roman von 1996 daher im Sinne der Romane eines Le Carr oder Greene.

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## **Dan Downing says**

I have been a Don Winslow fan since the first Neal Carey book. Exactly why this book has sat on my shelf for years, even as I read other Winslow titles, I can't really say. With a new book awaiting his signature before shipping, I decided to catch up and read this.

"Isle of Joy" was published under a pseudonym between the end of the Neal Carey books and the start of Winslow's more fully realised novels, that being "The Life and Death of Bobby Z". "Isle of Joy" can proudly stand on any bookshelf, in any company.

With fully realized characters and a setting in 1958 accompanied by thinly disguised historical figures, "Isle of Joy" can most fully be enjoyed the more one knows of the history of the period. That knowledge of the past is not crucial, but certainly adds. For instance, Winslow gives us a superb account of the the Championship football game between Baltimore and New York. It is a great piece of sports writing (if slightly altered from reality). I knew nothing about football at the time the game was played but have learned enough since to recognise many names. I looked up the history of the game, to separate fact from fiction, and among other delights caught Mr. Winslow out in an error. He has the doorman of the hero's building deny having been to the game, but "I watched it on TV". As it happens, the game was nationally televised EXCEPT in the New York area, one of the many things which makes it The Greatest Game Ever Played. All things considered, "Isle of Joy" is a stylishly written, well conceived and riveting story.

Highly Recommended.

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## **Katja says**

Protagonist von "Manhattan Blues" ist der ehemalige CIA-Agent Walter Withers, der im New York der ausgehenden 50er Jahre ins Zentrum der Machtspiele von FBI, KGB, CIA und Politik gerät. Irgendwann war mir das Puzzle zu viel, sodass es einige Zeit gedauert hat, den Roman zu Ende zu lesen. Am Ende fällt es mir schwer, die Sternenvergabe auf die eine oder andere Seite fallen zu lassen, denn sprachlich-atmosphärisch überzeugt Winslows Frühwerk ebenso wie die großartig und sympathisch gezeichnete Hauptfigur (Oktober 2018).

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## **Houlahan houlahan says**

I loved this. I have read three or four other Winslow books, but this was the best.

Sharp, witty, full of New York and spy craft - it reminded me a bit of a Mailer spy novel called Harlot's Ghost, but this was better as it had a semblance of closure.

It was short, punchy, to the point, involves JFK, the Mafia, FBI, CIA and a tortured socialist songstress and her crazy in love ex spy master boyfriend.

What's not to like?

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