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David Morrell

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It's Christmas Eve in Santa Fe, but among the revelers on Canyon Road, a decidedly unholy scene is taking place. A desperate man, dressed all in black, feverishly seeks refuge for himself and the squirming bundle he holds tightly against his breast. Agent Paul Kagan's bundle is a baby who has the power to change the course of global events. His pursuers are his former colleagues--members of the Russian mafia who will stop at nothing to accomplish their mission. Now Kagan is a spy on the run--he must ensure this baby's survival, even if it will cost him his own life. Just a short distance away, Kagan will find an unexpected pair of allies--a mother and her young son, who huddle together after a horrible episode of domestic violence leaves them home alone, with no means of transportation.

And so, with the exquisitely honed skills of his profession and the help and good faith of a weary woman and a disillusioned boy, Kagan must take on forces that will stop at nothing. In the course of a wild and violent night, the unlikely trio learn lessons of generosity, courage, and selflessness, discovering within themselves the luminous strength of the true Christmas spirit.

The Spy Who Came For Christmas Details

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Lane says

So, I made it about halfway through this book when it suddenly occurred to me: I've read this before.

I haven't actually, but I may as well have, because it's like every other book of Morrell's I've ever picked up, so it's pretty much this:

Basically, we start off with an able-bodied white dude who has some form of combat training and a dark past. He gets caught up in some weird shit with some other people, most of whom are suspicious of the main character's encyclopedic knowledge and skills with firearms. The main character then proceeds to do a terrible job of making them less suspicious.

The love interest is a pretty white woman with long blond hair and blue eyes, whom the lead saves from some sort of bad situation, usually from an abusive SO. She's suspicious of him too, but at some point in the book, the lead does something that makes her look at him 'as if just seeing him for the first time'.

Somebody will receive a significant injury which the lead will have to dress 'in the field'. If there is a first aid kit available, he will slather on antibiotic cream, bandage it, and seal the bandage with duct tape. It doesn't matter how well stocked the kit is - it will never have any safety pins or tape, and tying knots is for suckers so we have to use the duct tape.

If a kit isn't available, the lead will seal the wound with some duct tape.

Why duct tape, you ask?

Because a) it's manly! and b) when the plot begins to get dull, Morrell can liven things up again by addressing the possibility that the injured party will develop gangrene.

Other things that are typical of Morrell novels, of which I am nearly certain I would have encountered yet again if I kept reading are as follows:

The lead will fly a plane. A Cessna, actually, because those are the only planes that Morrell has ever heard of. He'll also use a specific kind of pocket knife that I can't remember the name of, but it's a one-handed knife and can clip onto the lead's pants.

The comic relief will be killed off much too early in the story, along with any minority characters, because otherwise you might notice that none of them have actually been developed. They'll generally have interesting backstories though, which just makes this all the more frustrating.

Eventually, everyone will die except for the main character, his love interest, and a lower level baddie. These three will have to team up to face the real bad guy, and the lesser baddie will get offed in some gruesome way before the final fight.

The final fight will occur, and there will be very little, if any, closure. The lead will say a line, and then the book will end.

Honestly, *The Shimmer* is the only one of Morrell's books that I've read that didn't follow this formula perfectly, and that's pretty much just because the love interest was a redhead and I don't recall her being saved from an abusive situation. (I wouldn't really rec that book either though, because it's basically a mystery, but you never actually get to find out what the mystery is.)

I mean, I guess the book itself isn't terrible, but if you've already read Morrell's other stuff, don't even bother.

(I'm also just really confused why a person would hire members of the Russian mob to go undercover for them in Santa Fe. I honestly think the Middle Eastern guy might have blended in better with the locals himself.)

Nancy Karwatka says

Enjoyable. This is a Christmas story but told from the perspective of a spy thriller. The author had an interesting way to describe the Three Wise Men, I may always think of them in a slightly different light now. It's a different type of Christmas tale.

Kathy says

"Listened" to this book. Very suspenseful...kept you engaged...for a suspense story that has activities of the Russian mob and mob-like treatment of people, it also had a storyline of love hope and peace....a very interesting contrast making for a very interesting book

Carey Combe says

I just couldn't decide whether I liked the book or not. In the end I came down in favour for its bizarre retelling of the Christmas story (which I think was my favourite bit) and the wife-beater who comes good (but does he....)

thebonebreaker says

If you are having a difficult time getting into the Christmas spirit this year, then consider this my gift to you. (Seriously, if I could purchase a physical copy for everyone, I totally would - it's that good!)

This book is a spy thriller/siege story, chock full of action, that jumps back and forth with an interwoven "espionage" tale of the Three Wise Men. This book will definitely put you in the Christmas spirit!

Eric Troup says

I found the first half of this book to be better than the second, which is a shame; this is one of those books

that builds momentum, so when the second half starts to drag and the climax isn't quite as intense as it might have been, the whole book suffers for it. I think the attempt to give the book a feel-good, Christmas-spirit ending got in the way of the story.

Of course, these are just my opinions. Your mileage may vary.

Diane says

It's a snowy Christmas Eve in Santa Fe, but among the revelers on Canyon Road, a decidedly unholy scene is taking place. A desperate man, dressed all in black, feverishly seeks refuge for himself and the squirming bundle he holds tightly against his breast. Agent Paul Kagan's bundle is a baby who has the power to change the course of global events. His pursuers are his former colleagues—members of the Russian mafia who will stop at nothing to accomplish their mission. Now Kagan is a spy on the run—he must ensure this baby's survival, even if it will cost him his own life.

Just a short distance away, Kagan will find an unexpected pair of allies—a mother and her young son, who huddle together after a horrible episode of domestic violence leaves them home alone, with no means of transportation.

And so, with the exquisitely honed skills of his profession and the help and good faith of a weary woman and a disillusioned boy, Kagan must take on forces that will stop at nothing. In the course of a wild and violent night, the unlikely trio learn lessons of generosity, courage, and selflessness, discovering within themselves the luminous strength of the true Christmas spirit.

Not exactly my typical holiday type of read, but still enjoyable. This book has a good amount of suspense, great cover art and was just over 200 pages. In addition, the story has a touching theme about family and redemption.

Danica Lyming says

Much better than last months book club choice. Easy read and intriguing enough.

The Inside Flap Podcast says

Atmospheric. The Three Wise Spies. Check out our full review on our podcast - <https://theinsideflap.com/2018/12/16/...>

Jill says

I really enjoyed this book. It had action and a great version of the Spies Christmas Story, a version of Christ's birth from a spy's stand point. It was a quick page turner, I really couldn't put it down. If you want a Christmas story with some action, this is the book for you!

Sharyn says

A real Christmas story, a holiday book I read for another book club. Actually a pretty horrible story of a spy that I hope is not the way spies are trained or how they live undercover. As the spy tries to save a baby, he tells a boy the story of the Magi from the point of view of the Magi being Persian spies against Herod, and it actually made sense. Being Jewish, I never paid much attention to the story, and I didn't know the family escaped to Egypt or that Herod killed a lot of babies. So spies in Santa Fe kidnapping an Arab baby. Quite a story.

Anne Vandenbrink says

As holiday celebrations take place in Santa Fe, Agent Paul Kagan is on the run with a baby the Russian mafia wants to destroy and turns to a mother and her young son for help during a violent night where they all must work together to keep the child safe from harm.

Ronna says

Definitely a different kind of a CHRISTMAS story!! Maybe that's why the strange mystery is such a fun read.

Jim says

A Christmas story which contains another wrapped up in a gritty undercover operation - very slick & well done. Morrell places it along Canyon Road in Santa Fe which is known for the Farolito or Christmas Eve Walk. Plenty of action & also a tense domestic situation full of drama. Very satisfying & I liked this version of the Nativity.

The only downside was a personal one. I kept trying to relate this to his Mortalis trilogy & wondering where it fit in. It doesn't really, so don't try. Same universe, completely different players. I should have read my review of The League of Night and Fog before reading this & then I would have known it wasn't "THE ABELARD SANCTION".

Annette says

Yet more proof that simply being a "NY Times Best Selling Author" means very little. Nothing shown that the author can't tell instead. Readers are never trusted or even given an opportunity to draw their own conclusions. The characters' personal histories are given report-style whenever it strikes the author's fancy, but I don't actually care about any of them. Oh, sure, I'd prefer the protagonist and his unwilling allies make it through the night to Christmas, but everything and everyone is so 2 dimensional that I really can't get too

excited about it. I'm about 2/3 of the way through and probably will not finish.

The sole interesting thing about the entire book is the protagonist's story suggesting that the "Three Wise Men" were, in fact, spies from Persia attempting to foment political unrest by tweaking Herod, a known paranoid, into chasing phantom "Jewish Kings" around Judea. Unexpectedly finding support for their wild tale in Bethlehem, they eventually become true believers who sheepishly help Joseph and his little family escape the storm they themselves set off, but had no more intent of finding and worshiping a real king at their journey's outset than Herod himself.

It's rubbish, of course, but it's at least reasonably unique rubbish. And now that you've seen this bit in the review, you can skip the rest of the boring, one-of-a-thousand spy story.
