

# [PDF] Red Sparrow: A Novel

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**Books Details:**

Title: Red Sparrow: A Novel

Author: Jason Matthews

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## Description:

**Doug Stanton on *Red Sparrow* by Jason Matthews**

**Doug Stanton is a teacher, lecturer, and author of the New York Times bestsellers *In Harm's Way* and *Horse Soldiers*. His writing has appeared in Esquire, The New York Times, The New York Times Book Review, TIME, the Washington Post, Men's Journal, Outside, The Daily Beast/Newsweek. Stanton has appeared multiple times on the Today Show, CNN, Imus In The Morning, Discovery, A&E, Fox News, NPR, MSNBC's Morning Joe, and NBC Nightly News. *Horse Soldiers* is in development as a movie by Jerry Bruckheimer Films. Stanton reads and lectures nationally to business, civic groups, libraries, writing & book clubs, and universities, including the United States Air Force Academy, University of Michigan, and The Union League Club. Stanton attended Interlochen Arts Academy, Hampshire College, and received an MFA from the Writers' Workshop at the University of**

**Iowa, where he graduated with coursework in both fiction and poetry workshops. He founded the National Writers Series, a book festival; and the Front Street Writers Studio, a free writing workshop for public high school students.**

The spy-thriller is back in full force thanks to newcomer and CIA insider Jason Matthews.

Set in unnervingly accurate present-day Russia, where Putin's influence is omnipresent, *Red Sparrow* follows two intelligence officers who are targeted against each other: Nate Nash, a young, ambitious, sometimes naive CIA officer, and Dominika Egorova, a willful, beautiful Russian ballerina turned spy due to unfortunate circumstances. When we first meet Nate he is beginning the most important job of his fledgling career—handling MARBLE, a high-ranking Russian intelligence officer who is giving information to the Americans, largely considered to be the CIA's most valuable asset—while Dominika's first foray in the field is off to a more tenuous start. After being injured and thus forced to leave her beloved ballet, her uncle, a high ranking state intelligence official lures her in, eventually forcing her to attend "Sparrow School" to train as an espionage courtesan. After successfully finishing her training, Dominika is sent to Helsinki where the young Nate has taken up residence after a near disaster in Moscow. The Russians had discovered that he was gaining inside information, tipping them off to the existence of a high-level mole. Dominika is charged with the task of discovering the mole's identity by getting close to Nash—a delectable honey trap for the brash American. What begins as a relatively simple assignment leads to a development of fatal double lives, dangerous spy games, and treacherous secrets. As the two face-off, tentatively making moves, Dominika begins to learn the true nature of those who control her, and suddenly Nate and the people he works for begin to look more and more attractive. Disappointed and humiliated by her handlers, and with nowhere to turn, Dominika is recruited by Nate (or is she?). Against the rules, the two fall in and out of bed in various cities, and come close to falling dangerously in love. They struggle mightily to trust each other, and to trust themselves.

I read till 11 and woke up at 5 a.m. three days in a row to finish this book as fast as I possibly could. 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 Carre's *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*, the love of literature and jaw-dropping thrills really is dead. When I finished the book the day was just dawning, as it always is in this novel, only in the novel the fated characters, filled with melancholy, romance, venom, and belly-aching humor (this book can be laugh out loud funny), are usually eating well and wondering when it'll be lights out for them. Jason Matthews has "reported" this book for 30 years, working it all out in the "real world," and one wonders who he is, mostly: the young, "naive" Nate Nash; the knock-out, petulant heroine Dominika, whom Quentin Tarantino and Doctor Zhivago both might've loved; or the Gus Grissom-like Gable, a CIA chief who dispenses life-lessons to the young Nate—a muscled hen clucking and stirring a bubbling sauce over a stove. There is not a false note in the amazing ventriloquisms that are the conjurer's art we call literature. There are sentences as exciting to read as Eliot's "The Wasteland" (cf. the description of a moist, pale toadie scuttling along a hall; downright spooky, an image I cannot get rid of); or the majestic, floor-board creaking opening of Cormac McCarthy's *All The Pretty Horses*. The granular sweep of the authorial vision is a telescope still warm from Tolstoy's hands. There's a scene in here better by ten than Bogart looking down at Ingrid. I learned as much about the former Soviets and the new Russians, and our U.S. of A., as I have ever gleaned from the hardest working journalists writing today. Halfway through, I was afraid Vladimir Putin would find out I was reading *Red Sparrow* and have me arrested. With its ripped-from-the-headlines appeal, real life spy craft details, and thrilling international action that takes us to Helsinki, Moscow, Athens, Rome, and Washington, D.C., I have to say that I have not read a more exciting, gripping novel in a long time. And the best part is this: the ending of this novel makes it clear that this isn't the last we'll be hearing from Jason Matthews.

--This text refers to the edition.

**From \*Starred Review\*** 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, from griping about meddling, deskbound bureaucrats at Langley to the flat statement that Russia's SVR, successor to the KGB, sees the Cold War as alive and well, and that in Putin's Russia, "nothing has changed since Stalin." Perhaps this is novelistic license, but it feels genuine. That sense of authenticity, along with vividly drawn characters, much detail about tradecraft, and an appropriately convoluted plot that centers on moles in both the SVR and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence make this a compelling and propulsive tale of spy-versus-spy. Matthews' characters are variously fascinating, eccentric, and truly odious, including a beautiful Russian woman with the gift of synesthesia, forced into "sparrow school" to learn espionage through seduction; a brilliant and flamboyantly odd head of CIA counterintelligence; a "poisonous" dwarf whose reveries always return to torture and murder during Russia's Afghanistan debacle; and many more. Locales including Moscow, Helsinki, Rome, and Athens seem knowingly evoked, and each brief chapter concludes with a recipe for some food a character has just eaten. Red Sparrow is greater than the sum of its fine parts. Espionage aficionados will love this one. --Thomas Gaughan --This text refers to the edition.

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