

Spymaster, spymaster, spin me a tale

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

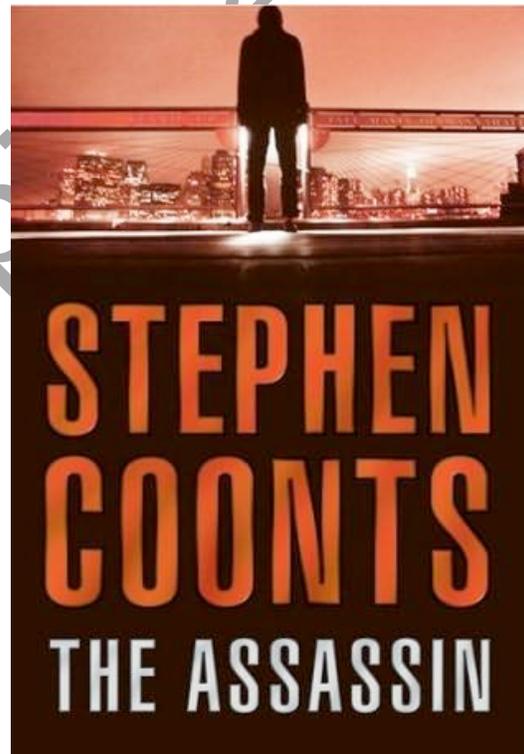
[Excerpt]

Move over, Bond: there's a new breed of spy in town, and they don't depend on good looks and gadgets to outwit their adversaries. When the former Soviet Union fell in 1989, it was widely assumed that spy fiction would fall with it. But to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of its death have been widely exaggerated. Welcome to the world of post-Cold War espionage, where the plot might turn on financial terrorism, or the internal chaos in Russia after the collapse of Communism. Add to the mix religious fanatics in the Middle East and secrets that have lay hidden since the Second World War, and you have fertile ground for a new generation of spy thrillers. The genre, it seems, is alive and well, and the diversity of first-rate writing coming out these days proves that everything old can be new again.

Stephen Cootz, *The Assassin*
(St Martin's Press, 2008)

After attempting to blow up a meeting of heads of state in Paris, Al Queda terrorist Abu Qasim has been targeted by a small group of powerful industrial and political leaders who believe they can do the job where the Western powers have failed. But there is a leak within the group, and before long it is clear that the hunters have become the hunted. When a prominent Russian is poisoned while visiting London, American trouble-

shooter Tommy Carmellini is sent to sort out the problem. Complicating matters, a seductive Frenchwoman apparently wants him dead. Is she Qasim's daughter? The most traditional thriller on the list, but well-conceived and deftly written by a master of the genre.



Although spy thrillers are often overworked, each of these tales is an exception to the general rule: informed by their authors' first-hand experiences and literary talent, they combine race-against-time and thrill-a-minute plots with nuanced characters and a strong sense of place to provide the reader with compelling reads, with thoughtful

insights on contemporary events thrown
in for good measure.

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