

Spymaster, spymaster, spin me a tale

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

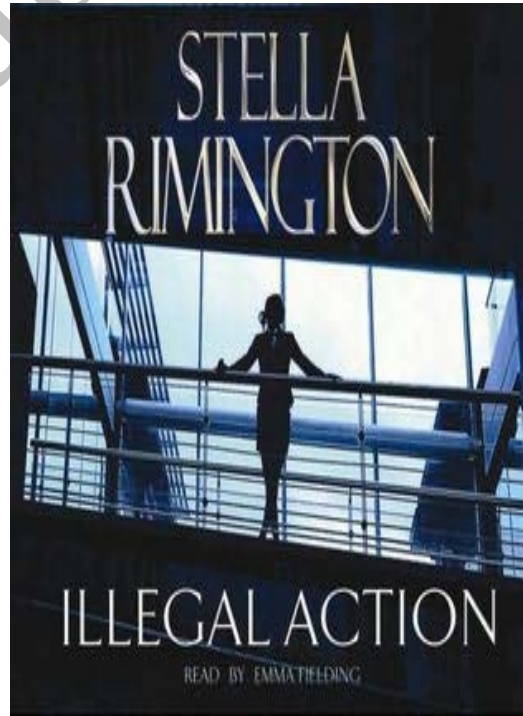
[Excerpt]

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.

**Stella Rimington, *Illegal Action*
(Hutchinson, 2007)**

In the realm of spy thrillers there are few writers with better credentials than Stella Rimington. The former (and first woman) Director-General of Britain's Security Service (better known as MI5), after her retirement in 1996 she published insightful non-fiction on national security as well as her memoirs. In 2004 she made her fiction debut with *At Risk*, and followed that up with four more spy thrillers, all featuring MI5 officer Liz Carlyle. In *Illegal Action* Liz

finds herself dealing with an upsurge in Russian espionage. The Cold War may have ended, but Russian oligarchs are out to manipulate London's financial markets for their private gain. Complicating matters, the Russian government has targeted one of its own, an influential opponent of the Moscow regime visiting London with several of his high-rolling colleagues. The Brits don't want that happening on their turf, and it's down to Liz to prevent it. The problem is, she doesn't know the identity of the target...



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.

Jim Napier can be reached at
jim.napier52@gmail.com

© Jim Napier 2010