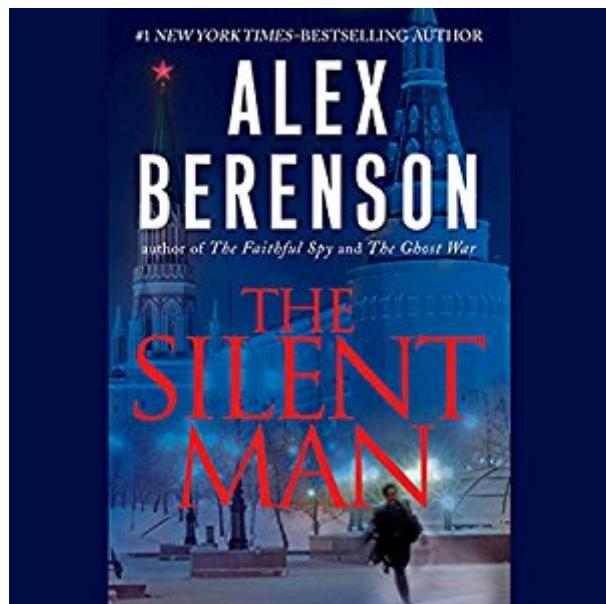


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The Silent Man



Synopsis

From the #1 New York Times– bestselling author comes another remarkable novel of espionage today— and right around the corner. Alex Berenson’s *The Faithful Spy* was declared “one of the best spy stories ever told” (*The Wall Street Journal*), and *The Ghost War* “mesmerizing . . . an extraordinary achievement. Wells is a complex blend of smarts, scars, cynicism and wile. And the book’s imaginings seem not so much ‘ripped from the headlines’ as eerily destined to be set in type for tomorrow’s” (*The News & Observer*). Berenson’s third novel, however, is his most masterful yet. It isn’t easy to steal warheads from the heart of Russia’s nuclear complex in Mayak. It requires a great deal of money, coordination, ingenuity, and sleight-of-hand, and just a touch of luck. But if you’re determined enough, anything is possible. It’s been a rough few years for CIA agent John Wells. The undercover work in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the attack on the United States, the Chinese plot that could have led to war. Wells is exhausted, and his nights filled with disturbing dreams. But he knows he has no time for that. He has made many enemies, and the world won’t stay quiet for long. Nevertheless, Wells is not prepared for what is about to happen. He and his colleague—and fiancÃ©—Jennifer Exley are driving into work when traffic comes to a standstill, due to accidents on both bridges into Washington. A pretty big coincidence, he thinks, beginning to get a bad feeling—a feeling that only gets worse when he spots the red motorcycle zooming up between cars toward him. Before the day is over, several people will be dead or severely injured, Exley among them, and Wells will be a man possessed. The attackers are Russian, and it is to Russia that Wells must follow the trail. He finds what he’s looking for—but also a great deal more. A plan of almost unimaginable consequences is in motion, and Wells has no idea if he has discovered it in time. The last few years have been rough indeed, but the next few weeks will be much, much worse. Real-world threats, authentic details, a scenario as dramatic as it is chillingly plausible, Alex Berenson’s new novel is another “timely reminder of the extremely precarious way we live now” (*The Washington Post*).
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Customer Reviews

Alex Berenson has created the John Wells character who is not dissimilar from the Mitch Rapp creation by Vince Flynn. However, on the Wells character, Berenson has not fully developed a personality that engages the reader. The storyline is good enough, but the modern thriller formula is in full swing: pages 1-50 are the introduction and reference the past stories, 50-150 introduce the bad guys occasionally getting back to the good guys, mixed in is an event that is the catalyst to the story. Then half way through the book begin getting into the good stuff. I found myself skipping quickly through the write ups of why each Muslim decided to hate Americans. The first 200 pages could have been reduced to 25 and moved right into the meat of the story. Let's face it, it isn't the writing style that makes us want to read these types of stories, it's the story telling. However, this thriller never really engages the reader in the meat and potatoes of the story either. It is contrived and stretched into something that doesn't feel real or exciting. I found myself hurrying through the book just to get to the end and to see what happened. There wasn't anything along the way that I found interesting or compelling. The characters were cardboard and standard issue. Some of the dialogue between Exley and Wells was forced. There are many serial character storylines out there. This is just another that could be plugged and played with the others. Nothing special here, but if you are so inclined, it is a quick beach read.

Over the last several months, I have read the three John Wells novels that Alex Berenson has written. In Wells, Alex has created a character that is sure to be in the list of great recurring spy characters. In The Silent Man, John Wells is pitted against terrorists who have acquired two bombs from Russia and are planning to set a bomb off on US soil. Wells, a CIA operative who we meet in the first Alex Berenson novel as having infiltrated Al Qaeda, becomes involved when chasing down a nemesis from the second book. Wells is in a race against time as nuclear destruction is about to

be inflicted on the US. The CIA often does not know what to do with Wells, who "goes off the ranch" from time to time. The writing of Berenson is taut and this book and the other Wells books are page turners. Highly recommended reading.

In Alex Berenson's "The Silent Man," fanatical jihadists are planning to unleash a deadly weapon on American soil. Fortunately, the CIA has John Wells, who speaks fluent Arabic, is an expert in hand-to-hand combat and weaponry, and is unafraid to risk his life. His recklessness does not sit well with his bosses or with his girlfriend and colleague, Jennifer Exley. Nevertheless, John believes that the hidebound bureaucracy in Langley is too slow to respond when the fate of the free world is at stake. Therefore, he ignores his superiors' tongue-lashings and Jennifer's pleas. "The Silent Man" is a conventional spy thriller with a large number of villains and very few heroes. The one-dimensional characters include a fabulously wealthy Russian arms dealer who enjoys rich food, a life of ease, and the attentions of a gorgeous supermodel; several young Arabs whose personal losses have made them bitter and eager for revenge; and various civil servants in the intelligence community who order Wells to obey the chain of command instead of going it alone. This is all familiar territory that has been covered many times before. To his credit, Berenson has done his homework. He gives detailed background information about Russian nukes and vividly describes both the endemic corruption in Russia and the huge financial chasm between the oligarchs and the country's ordinary citizens. In addition, the author brings home the frightening vulnerability of the Western powers to acts of terror. There is enough action to satisfy adrenaline junkies, with chase scenes, gunplay, grisly violence, and a frantic race against time. However, the dialogue is trite and the story is so predictable that it becomes tedious well before its foregone conclusion. "The Silent Man" breaks little new ground in a well-worn genre.

I felt *The Faithful Spy* was an "okay" read. *The Ghost War* had me hooked so bad that I finished it in about three days and had me very interested in reading more in the John Wells series. *The Silent Man* felt like a step back. While it maintains the fast pace of *The Ghost War*, the first half of the book is like a red herring. I finished *The Ghost War* expecting *The Silent Man* to be, more or less, Wells vs Kowalski. The story takes a different, somewhat unexpected turn from that idea and it was a bit disappointing. Maybe I feel that way because I had an expectation of where the story would lead, but I certainly didn't anticipate, or favor, how the Kowalski arc played out. Once resolved, the story focused on the main plot and never stopped running. Wells and Exley's relationship gets a little more fleshed out than in the previous novels and seems more real and has some depth. *The Silent*

Man's ending was very reminiscent of the last episode on 24 season 6, with a level of uncertainty for what the future holds. Berenson, who has a knack for interrupting dialog with explanations of abbreviated words, who a person is or to explain what something is, seems to have lessened how often these interruptions occurred, which I was thankful for. However, Berenson goes into far too many details in some areas of the book. All this information about a bomb, or the science behind a nuclear bomb, really does not matter. I'm reading the book to be entertained with the story, not the intricate details of bomb making. While not as enjoyable as The Ghost War was for me, The Silent Man is still interesting enough to read and continue the John Wells series, and I consider it a better read than The Faithful Spy.

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