



## **The Unlikely Spy**

*Daniel Silva*

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*"In wartime," Winston Churchill wrote, "truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."*

For Britain's counterintelligence operations, this meant finding the unlikely agent imaginable—a history professor named Alfred Vicary, handpicked by Churchill himself to expose a highly dangerous, but unknown, traitor.

The Nazis, however, have also chosen an unlikely agent: Catherine Blake, a beautiful widow of a war hero, a hospital volunteer - and a Nazi spy under direct orders from Hitler to uncover the Allied plans for D-Day...

## **The Unlikely Spy Details**

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Author : Daniel Silva

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# From Reader Review **The Unlikely Spy** for online ebook

## **Zohar - ManOfLaBook.com says**

Disclaimer: I'm a sucker for WWII and / or spy books

Before I start - this is not a "Gabriel Allon" book as mentioned on Amazon's book title.

"The Unlikely Spy" is a fast paced page turner, set mostly in days preceding the Normandy invasion in WWII. The story's unlikely hero is a university professor named Alfred Vicray who was recruited by none other than Winston Churchill himself to work for the British MI5.

Vicary is a spy catcher - he does his job well until realizing that a small group of German sleeper agents trained by Abwehr officer Kurt Vogel are still in Britain. The threat is that the German agents could discover the secrets to the invasion and allow the Germans to setup a proper defense line (or call the invasion off) and the invasion would fail.

Chief among the German spies is Anna Katerina von Steiner, known in Britain as Dutch tourist Catherine Blake. Catherine is an attractive woman and a top notch spy who has been a sleeper agent in London for six years - now she has been activated by Vogel.

Let the mind games and puzzles begin....

The plot twists and turns very cleverly and the ending caught me by surprise. Even though this is a big book, the narrative is told masterfully, the twists keep coming and it's hard to stop reading.

The characters in the book are well drawn, they each are painted in shades of gray -the German spies have some redeeming qualities and the English MI5 agents are not depicted as saints doing G-d's work.

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## **Nick T. Borrelli says**

Flat-out THE BEST World War II spy novel that I have ever read. If you only read one WWII spy book in your life, make this one it. I read it in three days and didn't want to put it down. Simply tremendous.

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## **Marion says**

I liked many aspects of this book. I really enjoyed the descriptions of life in England during WWII - rendered with vivid detail. Learning about spy craft during that era was also very interesting. I had vaguely remembered that the Allies had tricked the Germans into thinking that the invasion was going to take place at Calais. So learning many of the details of the planning made the book particularly engaging. I was going to give the book 4 stars until things began to unravel for me in the end.

SPOILER ALERT

The whole story line, told in thrilling fashion at times, loses its impact every time Silva has a character say that the whole war can be lost if they don't catch this new ring of spies. Every reader knows the Germans lost the war. No suspense there.

The escape in the black van to the coast in blackout conditions seemed highly implausible. The involvement of the drunk father and the love struck teenager seemed a clumsy addition to the story to enable our handsome American an heroic end.

There were way too many graphic sex scenes that did not propel the story in any way. Call me a prude, but it felt quite gratuitous and unseemly.

Finally, in the twists and turns revelations at the end, we learn that all the hard work of the one character we really care about was for naught, as he was just a pawn in a much larger espionage game. A very unsatisfying conclusion.

All in all, still a well written story that was hard to put down at times.

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### **Rich Sanidad says**

When I started this book, I was hoping for a small break from some of the non-fiction I had been reading. I was looking for a thriller in the same vein as Robert Ludlum or David Baldacci. Instead, I got a history-heavy suspense novel – and I didn't mind one bit.

The author's challenge in this book was trying to maintain a level of tension to hold the reader's interest, even though the ultimate outcome of the story was well known (the Germans were unprepared for the Allied invasion at Normandy; if that's a spoiler for you, stop reading this review and pick up a history book). So, the main thrust of the book, was *how* do we get there? That will only matter to the reader if they care about the characters, and one of the strengths of the book was in how Daniel Silva built up his characters. The protagonist, Alfred Vicary, a university professor turned MI-5 agent, felt very real to me.

Sure, there were some parts of the book that were a little slow and seemed to drag, but I felt that they were more the exception than the rule. He did a lot of other things right, so it was easy to forgive him for those, especially when you consider this was his debut novel.

Every few months, Rick Riordan (author of the Percy Jackson series), recommends some books that he has enjoyed on his website. So, thank you, Mr. Riordan for steering me towards this book. If you're looking for something new to read, find out what authors are reading; they usually have good taste.

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## Lewis Weinstein says

Quite simply this is as good a spy novel as I have ever read, including Le Carre. Silva's characters and plot are complex and sometimes confusing, but that's the point of espionage and counter-espionage, and ultimately all becomes clear. In addition, the action scenes are superb, often sustained over many pages.

The story covers one major aspect of the deception surrounding which beaches the Allies would land on at D-Day in 1944. The stakes could not be higher, and even though we know how it turned out, Silva keeps the suspense at the highest level.

Trust no one. Believe no one. Nothing is as it seems.

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## Scott Rhee says

Not all spy fiction is the same. I separate spy fiction in to two camps. One is the more familiar “male fantasy” action-adventure story in which the hero is ridiculously uncomplicated, possesses almost supernatural strength and agility, and has access to the most state-of-the-art surveillance technology and weaponry. Ian Fleming’s *James Bond* and Robert Ludlum’s *Jason Bourne* are examples of this type. This camp, due to its popularity, has, over the years, almost become a parody of itself, with everything from TV’s “Alias” to “The Kingsman” movies, as well as children’s films like “Spy Kids” and “Despicable Me”, poking fun at the genre.

The other camp is, perhaps, a more mature and realistic approach to spy fiction. Generally more cerebral and less action-oriented, this camp of spy fiction looks at the minutiae of espionage, as well as the ethics and the human costs involved. John Le Carre is probably the best known writer of this type of spy fiction. His heroes are not supermen but professorial old men who spend most of their time in an office. They very rarely carry guns.

Daniel Silva’s debut novel “The Unlikely Spy” falls very much into the latter camp of spy fiction.

Set during World War II, “The Unlikely Spy” attempts to answer a question that has baffled historians and scholars for years. Prior to the invasion of Normandy, which led to the turning tide of the war for the Allied Forces, British intelligence knew that German intelligence knew that something was up. The Brits were aware that the Germans knew about massive concrete structures being placed in the waters off the French coast, an operation necessary to create a false harbor that would alleviate the planned invasion. This operation was known as Mulberry. If the Germans knew about the concrete structures, it was possible that they knew about the invasion plans, and if they knew about the invasion plans, thousands of lives were at stake.

Thankfully, U.S. intelligence intercepted messages from Japan to Germany which concluded that the Germans had no idea about the invasion. The Germans believed that the concrete structures were going to be used for a large anti-aircraft structure and not a false harbor.

Given the number of imbedded German spies in Britain and the U.S. and given the massive number of people working on the proposed invasion plans, it is a miracle that information did not manage to leak to the Germans. It was a logistical nightmare to keep the plans a secret.

Silva begs the questions: What if the Germans *did* know about the potential invasion? How would they have not known? And, if they did know, how and why did they ultimately decide to dismiss the intelligence, giving the Allies a major advantage and, most likely, costing Germany the war?

All of these questions are, of course, unanswered and unanswerable by history, owing to the classified top-secret nature of Operation Mulberry and its subsequent intelligence gathering.

Silva, of course, offers a fascinating fictional answer, one involving a history professor named Vicary--- hand-picked by Winston Churchill personally to lead a spy-catching program within British intelligence; a gorgeous German spy who has been a “sleeper” cell in England for years; an American engineer; British mobsters; and two warring German spy programs vying for Hitler’s admiration.

The plot is convoluted, but it seems plausible, given the nature of duplicity and deception of espionage work. To say more would reveal too many spoilers, and I feel that I have said too much as it is.

Silva’s brilliance is creating characters that are believable and sympathetic, even when they are doing horrible things. His characters may be spies and soldiers and assassins, but he never devolves into a dehumanizing “us vs. them” mentality, to which the James Bond/Jason Bourne camp of spy fiction frequently resorts. Silva’s characters are human and thusly flawed and fragile, caught up in the chaos of their times and forced to do things for what they believe is the right cause.

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## **Belinda says**

Spy novels are not books that I usually read, but this one is engaging and I enjoyed it. It really is a historical novel, I guess, because the facts about WWII on which the book is based are true. It certainly is more interesting learning about WWII by reading this novel than a history book! The story line was based on the preparations for D-Day and the building of an artificial harbor from concrete that was floated across the English Channel so when they landed at Normandy, they would have a harbor. The other part of the story was based on the Allies plan to give Hitler false information through German spies so that he would think that the invasion of France was going to take place in Calais. It was a brilliant ploy by the Allies. Loved learning about this history through reading this novel. Was frequently flipping over to Wikipedia to check out if what I was reading was based on fact and most of it was. Good story. Occasionally a little too much R-rated sex for me (which I didn't think was necessary for the storyline), but otherwise a good book.

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## **Anna says**

This is a great debut novel. It could have been a complete mess in the hands of a lesser talent.

The espionage story is set against the real story of the preparations for what was to be the D-Day invasion and the extreme actions on both sides to conceal and expose the plans for the maneuver that everyone knew was coming.

The characters are incredible and the suspense is taut throughout. As you're reading, you need to decide who is the most unlikely spy!

The game itself is summed up in this exchange ...

"It's just credits and debits? Is that how you look at it? Like one giant accounting sheet? I'm glad I'm out! I

don't want any part of it! Not if it means doing things like that. God, but we should have burned people like you at the stake a long time ago." ...

"You don't really feel that way, do you ... ? You liked it. You were seduced by it. You liked the manipulation and deception. ... you realize everything you ever believed in is a lie and my world, this world, is the real world."

"You're not the real world. I'm not sure what you are, but you're not real."

"You can say that now, but I know you miss it all desperately. It's rather like a mistress, the kind of work we do. Sometimes you don't like her very much. You don't like yourself when you're with her. The moments when it feels good are fleeting. But when you try to leave her, something pulls you back."

"I'm afraid the metaphor is lost on me, ..."

"There you go again, pretending to be superior, better than the rest of us. I would have thought you'd have learned your lesson by now. You need people like us. The country needs us."

--Dan Silva, "The Unlikely Spy"

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## **Jane says**

After I read *Moscow Rules*, I checked Silva out and went back to the beginning of his career to start with this one. It takes place in World War II and we'd just seen the Tom Cruise movie so this fit right in with what was on my mind. Fascinating plot, lots of violence, perfect book for my husband, who enjoyed it after I did. I liked it too. Since it takes place in England, it took me back to my stay there many years ago, and the references to Suffolk made me homesick for Great Bealings, Woodbridge, Suffolk (back when Evan was 2, 3, and 4, Bobbi). Totally off the topic: it's fun to look at the dust jacket picture of Silva then and now. He's gotten older, big surprise. Anyway, I recommend this one. It did not contain any meaningful life lessons (don't trust ANYBODY???), but it was very entertaining. I'll be reading more Silva novels.

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## **Bruno says**

Este foi o 1º primeiro livro que experimentei do autor Daniel Silva, e gostei bastante. Prendeu-me desde o principio, fiquei logo fascinado e intrigado com uma espiã alemã e também em relação aos outros espiões. Todos sabemos acerca do Dia D, o ataque dos Aliados na Normandia que contribuiu para acabar com a 2ª Guerra Mundial. Mas a questão central do livro é: como é que os Aliados enganaram os Nazi? Como os fizeram convencer que o ataque seria em Calais em vez na Normandia? Os espiões alemães estavam escondidos e infiltrados em Inglaterra e ainda havia os portos Mulberry que dariam muito nas vistas... Achei prazeroso e inteligente o esquema de espionagem para enganar os Nazi como se fosse um jogo de xadrez, sendo a melhor parte de acompanharmos os passos, a ação e os sentimentos dos espiões (embora estes sejam fictícios), e a escrita do autor é bastante acessível e fluente. Recomendo para quem gosta de espionagem e do tema de 2ª Guerra Mundial.

Informações sobre a Operação Overlord- [aqui](#)

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## Tim says

I'm gonna keep this short. I despise this long, boring snore of a story. 0 of 10 stars

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## Rob Savidge says

Excellent book. This was my first Silva novel, and he certainly didn't disappoint. This is a standalone spy novel set in WWII. He does an excellent job of setting the atmosphere, and provides a clear image of what life was like during the end of WWII in both Britain and Germany. I find that era fascinating given the emerging technology. What I never realized prior to reading this, was the importance that England's MI5 (Counterintelligence, as opposed to MI6's intelligence/espionage), and overall the importance of the spy game during WWII. What Britain lacked in military assets (tanks, planes, etc), they more than made up for in with their intelligence networks. The US network at the time was especially dwarfed due to their inexperience. This book also presents some larger questions to mull over while reading, such as the suspension of morals/ethics that took place during "the game" in effort to do whatever it takes to win, the effect that had on the large number of civilians that were brought forward to serve at the time, and makes you wonder what other deceptions and manipulations are undertaken in the "real world".

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## Kristjan says

I must admit that I really wanted to like this book. Despite its faults, I was going to give it four stars, but the ending of it left me quite unfulfilled. Here are some of the biggest problems I have with it:

1) Implausibility. (a) A van drives through a blacked-out village in a rainstorm at night. A man opens the door of his house and sees that a man is driving the van and a woman is sitting next to him. How can he see that in those conditions? (b) Small spoiler warning: A teenage girl falls in the North Sea in a rainstorm at night. She pops up once, gasps for air but "swallowed a mouthful of seawater instead." She starts sinking. A nearby boat sees her disappear for the second time and now "there was nothing, no sign of her at all." A man dives into the water, and pops up again to remove his life vest. Then he dives down and rescues the girl. How can he find her when she started sinking a while before and it is dark on surface, let alone in the depths?

2) Muddled characters. Several characters behave completely out of the character that has been painted of them by the author. Perhaps this is just me misunderstanding the descriptions given, but at the very least the author does a poor job of communicating them.

3) Lack of fulfillment. MAJOR SPOILER WARNING: In the end, you find out that the thrilling storyline you have been following is nothing but a pawn in a bigger scheme. And caring about what the main protagonist has been working so hard to achieve seems rather silly, because it's all rather meaningless.

I was planning for this to be a lead-in for me reading the Gabriel Allon series, but honestly now, I think I'll pass.

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## Merilee says

I've read and enjoyed a few of Silva's books before, but they have all starred his Mossad agent/art restorer, Gabriel Allon. This book is not part of the Allon series, but nonetheless a well-written historical thriller about all the information and disinformation leading up to the Normandy landings. We listened to it in the car on 15 disks!

The *Unlikely Spy* is a spy novel written by Daniel Silva, set during World War II, and published in 1996. While some of the exact characters and events may be fictional, the book is based on very real events- the attempt by the Allies to use British intelligence to cover up the true plans for D-Day. The deception plan was called Operation Fortitude, and Double Cross also played a role. Specifically, the book has a backdrop (a subset of Fortitude referred to as Fortitude South). (Wiki)

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## ChopinFC says

***The Unlikely Spy* is a sensational spy thriller, that had my head spinning until the very end!**

*The Unlikely Spy* is an unlikely hit, for a mostly unknown author 'Daniel Silva' back in 1994. Surprisingly, the work represents Silva's first published book, and it was a massive success with critical acclaim! It's so peculiar how an author's first work can be one of his very best! The reason why is simple: **this book freaking rocks!!**

*The Unlikely Spy* involves one of WWII's most guarded secret: the invasion of Normandy and D-Day! Much like Follett's brilliant 'The Eye of the Needle', Silva uses the central theme of D-Day's invasion as the fabric for his masterful spy story. History shows us the multiple layers of deception used by the Allies to fool the Nazi as to where the European invasion would take place. Silva uses the construction of 'floatable' harbors, as the pivotal secret the Allies must keep from our maniacal Nazi devils. **Yet nothing is as it seems!!**

*"In wartime, the truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."*  
- Winston Churchill

The realism of WWII and espionage is portrayed masterfully in *The Unlikely Spy*. The levels of deceit from both British and Germans almost resemble a game of 'cat and mouse'. Silva introduces memorable characters in both sides of the ally. In one side, there's 'Catherine Blake', a beautiful German spy who's a sleeper operative in Britain, and take a key part of the charade. The British characters are also fantastic, specially 'Alfred Vicary' a University professor who gets 'suckered' into the war machine, and ends up working for British secret agency MI5. The narrative is told in the third POV, and becomes very effective in building the suspense in each side. What's so striking is how 'life' was during the great war; nightly bomb raids, constant mandatory 'blackouts', and a true sense of paranoia in the British people, always on the lookout for spies!

The book was relatively long clocking at over 500 pages, but the exposition and cadance of the story were pitch perfect! The character development took some time, but I really felt sympathy for some of the characters. Even German spies were portrayed as 'humans', trapped in the German-Nazi war machine, and some were even coerced to spy for the villainous regime. The action and building suspense is incredible, and

in the end the culmination of all the deception is handed to the reader in a golden plater! *The Unlikely Spy* is a masterful and worth while spy thriller!

**4 1/2 Stars**

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