



The English Girl

Daniel Silva

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Seven days

One girl

No second chances

Madeline Hart is a rising star in Britain's governing party: beautiful, intelligent, driven by an impoverished childhood to succeed. But she is also a woman with a dark secret: she is the lover of Prime Minister Jonathan Lancaster. Somehow, her kidnappers have learned of the affair, and they intend to make the British leader pay dearly for his sins. Fearful of a scandal that will destroy his career, Lancaster decides to handle the matter privately rather than involve the British police. It is a risky gambit, not only for the prime minister but also for the operative who will conduct the search.

You have seven days, or the girl dies.

Enter Gabriel Allon—master assassin, art restorer and spy—who is no stranger to dangerous assignments or political intrigue. With the clock ticking, Gabriel embarks on a desperate attempt to bring Madeline home safely. His mission takes him from the criminal underworld of Marseilles to an isolated valley in the mountains of Provence to the stately if faded corridors of power in London—and, finally, to a pulse-pounding climax in Moscow, a city of violence and spies where there is a long list of men who wish Gabriel dead.

From the novel's opening pages until the shocking ending when the true motives behind Madeline's disappearance are revealed, *The English Girl* will hold readers spellbound. It is a timely reminder that, in today's world, money often matters more than ideology. And it proves once again why Daniel Silva has been called his generation's finest writer of suspense and foreign intrigue.

The English Girl Details

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From Reader Review The English Girl for online ebook

Gunn says

Perhaps it's driven by nostalgia but I'm surprised at how well rated this book is by other reviewers. I feel a bit differently. It had to happen sometime: after 13 books with the same character, this is the FIRST in the series that seemed like a "paycheck book" to me.

The Gabriel Allon series is one of my favorites which is odd considering most of what I read is outside of this genre (I prefer scifi). Gabriel's character has aged in the previous 13 novels so you cannot expect the character to react to situations in the same fashion as when he was younger. Also, there are only so many times that a character can be brought back in "for one more job."

While I did find the character development to be interesting and the author does a pretty good job of explaining the backgrounders for other relevant characters that "pop-in" to this particular storyline, the story itself was pretty predictable -- a first IMO after reading this series.

Given how things end, I hope the author has the good sense to allow Gabriel Allon to retire soon. The overall body of work is quite good (Daniel Silva is said to have reinvented the "spy thriller" genre with this series and I wholeheartedly agree) so I hope he doesn't drag the series out in the name of paying off the author's pied-a-terre or country home (see also: the first three novels of the Dune series vs. the crap Frank Herbert's son puts out).

-g

Virginia says

Daniel Silva is a rock star. He's an intelligent writer, he has both intriguing plot development and engaging characters, his main characters grow and evolve (and age!), and he always leaves me ready for the next book.

To me, one of his core strengths is that even though his characters are set in the world of espionage, they don't succeed because of the latest gadget or technological wonder. They use their brains, experience, wiles-- and then the gadgets. They are good at what they do because of carefully honed skills, and that sets him apart from other writers who rely on superhuman heroes with rippled abs and talking watches.

I also like that his plots are well crafted, with enough detail to support the story but not so much that it appears he's trying to impress with his latest research - those paragraphs that cause me to flip to the next page. He seems to understand his readers' interest in knowing just enough but not too much.

If I were starting to read Silva for the first time, I'd go back to the beginning of Gabriel Allon's story rather than starting here. Even though there is backstory in each book, the real depth of his writing skill becomes apparent across the series.

Madeline says

Despite not really loving the previous Daniel Silva thriller I'd read (*The Heist*), I decided to give him another chance for two reasons: first, *The English Girl* seems to be one of Silva's most acclaimed thrillers, so it had the best chance of being good; and because when I was browsing audiobooks on my phone, this one popped up.

I was immediately at a disadvantage when I started this book, because *The Heist* takes place after the events of *The English Girl*. Even though there weren't any serious spoilers for *The English Girl*, there are plenty of references to the case in *The Heist*, so right from the beginning I had a vague idea of where the plot was headed. But Silva still manages to throw in some twists that I didn't see coming, so if you're reading the Gabriel Allon books out of sequence, you can still enjoy this one.

The plot here was definitely more coherent than *The Heist*, which started out as a fun art caper and then turned into a dreary political thriller two-thirds of the way in. *The English Girl*, luckily, has enough of a plot for Silva to stay focused for the book's considerable page count. The story starts when Madeline Hart, a minor-level employee in the British government, is kidnapped while on vacation in Corsica. A ransom video is delivered to the Prime Minister: "Seven days, then the girl dies." A possible justification for Madeline's kidnapping soon becomes clear: she and the Prime Minister were having an affair. Desperate to keep the kidnapping, and the reasons behind it, out of the news, the British government recruits Israeli intelligence agent Gabriel Allon to find Madeline and get her back. With the help of his Israeli team, a former British soldier turned assassin, and a Corsican mafia don, Allon has six days to find the missing English girl. And of course, finding her is only the beginning.

This was a fast-paced, well written thriller, with good characters and good twists. Overall, I liked it. I liked how Silva lets us enjoy the long, careful planning that goes into even the simplest operations, and it's a nice blend of exciting shoot-em-up action scenes and more subdued passages about the bureaucratic side of espionage. Also this book features more appearances from Allon's super cool wife, Chiara, who is probably my favorite character in the series. Because Chiara is also a spy, she and Gabriel get to talk about his work honestly, instead of doing the tiresome bit where the husband has to protect his sweet innocent wife from his dangerous work by never telling her the truth about anything. I do wish that Chiara had actually gotten to *do* something in this book - her job in *The English Girl* is mainly to act as a sounding board for Gabriel, and then cook dinner for everyone and have lots of sex with her husband. Also she really wants to have a baby, and has an eye-rolling line where she describes being on a flight with a crying baby and says that the mother was "the luckiest woman in the world." Ugh.

Another unfortunate thing I noticed in this book: Gabriel Allon is not as great as Silva thinks he is. Gabriel has a lot of conversations with the assassin Christopher Keller where Silva tries, desperately and repeatedly, to show the reader that Allon somehow has the moral high ground over Keller. Look, buddy - at the end of the day, they're both hired guns. It doesn't make much difference that one works for the Israeli government and one works for criminals. All cats are grey, etc.

(speaking of uncomfortable moments, Silva's politics are definitely showing in this book. First there are the subtle and frequent anti-Muslim lines that Silva has his characters recite, and then there's a bit at the end where Allon is trying to convince a defecting spy to come to Israel and work for him because "that's what we do in Israel. We give people a home." Cue me, yelling from the balcony: "Unless you're Palestinian!")

Also there's an oh-so-charming scene where Allon is searching a female criminal for weapons and uses the opportunity to grope her, and then makes a joke about it. Jesus, say what you will about James Bond, but at least he *knows* he's an amoral asshole. Allon's holier-than-thou attitude and characterization really started to grate on me by the end of this book.

But the most annoying aspect of the book is the title character. Madeline Hart is set up as this brilliant, ambitious, resourceful character (who is also smokin' hot, because we can't possibly be expected to care about the kidnapping of someone who is not young, thin, and beautiful), who has so much promise and potential that she's been tapped to be groomed as a future Prime Minister. And then, after that great introduction, Madeline gets kidnapped and disappears from the narrative. Characters spend a lot of time talking about Madeline; she herself has maybe two scenes where she gets actual dialogue.

(the rest of this review will discuss the ending of *The English Girl*, so click only if you're okay with major spoilers)

(view spoiler)

Cathy says

Okay, so this is another spy novel with lots of assassin killings; not my favorite things. But the difference between this one and the Mitch Rapp series is that the main Office of CIA types is not American but from Israel. I take it Silva is Jewish. And certainly, we do feel much more confidence in the Israeli intelligence group than our own CIA/FBI or even the British MI5/MI6 folks. Why? Because they do what they say they are going to do, and they act out of intense self preservation (think Holocaust), and leave the shackling Political Correctness OUT.

The other thing I like about this novel is that the true "evil-doers" in the world are unmasked and denuded, i.e. the Russians. Are they not at the heart of every evil we face today? They weaponize the Iranians, who weaponize the Syrians, who kill anyone resisting them, or if it suits the Rushkie's purposes, they supply the Al-Qaeda nut-cakes, or anyone else who seems intent on destroying their fellowmen. It feels really, really good to see someone, even if that someone is fictional, kick their bad butts! These are the true super-heroes of the day.

Also interesting, although author disclaimed, is to try and figure out who in the political scene today is being brush-stroked as a fictional character in the story. I think Putin is clearly painted. Current British Prime Minister - who knows? It is very notable that Silva has none, NO, not-a, even a hint of American intelligence involved here. (Maybe there isn't any, J/K) This could very well indicate the current feeling Israelis have against our current administration which is weak and feckless, and therefore the intelligence is weak and feckless, and continually embarrassed by leaks from traitors who go unpunished. I don't consider myself a bellicose per person, but enough is enough, already! Long live the Israelis! Go get em.

Jim A says

It's hard for me to describe my feelings about Daniel Silva's latest novel, *The English Girl*. It doesn't really fit the mold of other Gabriel Allon novels. This one starts with Allon doing a favor for Graham Seymour of British MI-5, who is doing something for the British Prime Minister. It seems the Prime Minister's mistress has been kidnapped.

The first thing Allon does is take on a partner, but not one of the members of "The Office" that he usually uses. This time it's a professional assassin who once tried to kill Allon.

Silva also writes the Allon character a little different than in previous novels. Gabriel is a little more full of himself; "I'm Gabriel Allon, I only do big".

He also gives Allon a bit of a sense of humor; "Jews don't camp, Keller. The last time the Jews went camping they spent 40 years wandering in the desert." That quote makes my list of all time favorite book lines.

Halfway through the book the real Allon comes out and he decides he needs to go back to Moscow to continue looking for the kidnappers. Those who are familiar with the series will know the danger with this decision. It also comes with a personal price. To get the sanction of the government of Israel for this mission, Gabriel has to promise Shamron that he will seriously consider becoming the head of The Office. Again, long time readers will recognize the significance of this. At this point all of Allon's merry band join him and the rest of the story plays out.

All in all it was a very enjoyable weekend for me, spent with Gabriel, Chiara and other familiar characters as well as what may turn out to be a new regular in Allon's adventures, Keller the assassin.

Mark says

An seemingly ordinary English girl gets kidnapped during her holiday in Corsica. What the general public do not know that this lovely English Rose is the secret lover of their Prime-minister of Great Britain. In order to keep this hidden a favor is asked and Gabriel Allon spy extra-ordinary gets to track down the girl and her kidnapper. During the exchange of the ransom everything goes wrong and Allon ends up empty handed. The Israeli does not handle defeat very well and start looking into the matter, who was behind the kidnapping and what was the reason for the kidnapping to begin with.

And so a great thriller starts that does not involve any middle eastern plot for a change which is a nice difference for a change. We do get some slight office politics but they have a one sided character and leave this reader with the idea that nothing will come of it anyhow.

The change from middle eastern baddies for a more geopolitical and economic plot is far more satisfying and fairly well doen. Being a faithful reader of this genre I did find myself guessing some of the plot surprises and that never sits well with me, as I like to be surprised like the next person. Which is the reason I opt for a 3 star score instead of a four star score.

As always well written and easy to read and lay away to pick up later without losing the plot.

A good series that keeps up its quality even after 13 books.

Drew says

While all the Silva books tend to blend together in my memory, he has a great formula and sticks to it. His formula as I see it follows these steps:

1. Semi-retired Israeli spy (Gabriel Allon) has sworn off spying and is engrossed in his 2nd career as art restorer.
2. Someone from Allon's past asks him a favor to solve some international crime/stop some international terrorist.
3. Allon hems and haws, but finally agrees to do the work.
4. Allon determines the source of the crime/terror and vows personally to destroy them.
5. Allon assembles a crack team to surveil, set-up and take-down criminals/terrorists.
6. Plan goes almost perfect, but there with a few hitches. Many, many, many bad guys die.
7. Wash, rinse and repeat.

The English Girl follows these steps again. For future novels, Silva has set up his character to take over as the director of the Israeli intelligence service. It should provide him fodder for many more "Gabriel Allon" novels.

Tim says

An excellent story by an excellent author with an outstanding main character in Gabriel. 10 of 10 stars

Jan Rice says

So now I've read a Silva.

I called this "genre literature." For me that means literature I typically don't read, for if *I* read it, it would be "cross-over" literature. It means looking down my nose at it. What I read is literature; what *you* read is "genre lit."

I'm teasing. And owning up--a little.

The purpose of this book is to give the reader thrills of suspense. The character development serves the plot, and sometimes the action serves to ratchet up another few seconds of suspense, whether it serves the plot or not.

That suspense is supposed to keep the reader turning the pages. I may or may not have, except that I got the book on audio from the library and listened to most of it during a car trip, with the book there, too, for clarifying a name or plot point as needed. A good friend and Silva fan had given this book to me for my *last* birthday (a year ago!). That made me want to read it--now a *fait accompli*.

And it made the miles roll by. That it did.

What's the good of genre lit? First of all, it's better to read than not to read. Suspense thrillers could be the entry drug that makes someone into a hardcore reader.

Probably you learn a little something about Russia in this book. It is a matter of some importance to the author that post-USSR Russia not be romanticized, and if anyone was doing that, the events of the last year or so would have set him or her straight and ratified the author's vision.

This LA Times article on Russia was reprinted in my paper just as I was finishing up *The English Girl*.

The author also paints the dilemmas and struggles of the country of Israel in more sympathetic colors than the left would like. In fact, they wouldn't particularly care for his picture of world politics in general; say, of Western countries being friendly with Israel.

Is Daniel Silva a "neo-con?" Only in the sense that, as one moves further toward the political left, there is no "liberal" or "center-left" position behind one, only neo-con territory, so that everything to the rightward of whatever one's own political position is, is called that.

Still, it could be more effective to ban Silva than Sodastream or hummus. Daniel Silva's books prove Israel's problem is not the result of a lack of PR.

This book suffers from being two books stuck together. One part of the plot ran out before readers could be given their money's worth of thrills, necessitating something new for the second half of the book.

To be fair, some reviewers say this isn't the best Silva and that he subsequently returned to form.

He has a verbal tic of, having come up with a witticism, repeating it multiple times. I doubt if that's limited to the present book.

For example, a bug-free room in which the spies could speak freely in the Israeli embassy in London is the "holy of holies." It hits home the *first* time.

Or another character asks the hero if he doesn't drink champagne. He says, no, it gives him a headache. The other party says, "Me, too," all the while pouring a glass.

Stop while you're ahead!

For the easily confused late-comer, shilling for former books in the guise of references to past adventures clutters up the plot line and makes it harder to remember the characters.

Why does the author have his hero ask another character, "Since when do you eat shellfish," when that character has not evidenced a shred of religious observance otherwise?

And yet those attempting to meet with a superstar oil magnate are said, with a jarring authenticity, to be waiting to "sit at his feet."

Still and all, now I've read a Silva!

Although my tone in this review has at points been dismissive, Silva's thrillers were best-sellers from the very first one, enabling him to resign from journalism and producing CNN talk-shows. When one of his new books comes out, library queues of several hundred people form. He's considered the preeminent writer of international thrillers. And for the sake of authenticity for his hero, who's an art restorer as well as a spy and assassin, he gets input from an art expert in the know.

For more information:

<http://www.bookreporter.com/authors/d...>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/enterta...>

Rebecca says

The latest Gabriel Allon book.

This is a very good book and still a wonderful series.

Be aware that you really should read this series in order as there is ongoing character development.

Linda Root says

It is hard to give less than five stars to any Gabriel Allon book. If I were rating this against any other writer, it would be a five. Unfortunately Silva himself has placed the bar so high that a five would be phenomenal. This is not the best of the Gabriel Allon books, but it does not miss the mark by much. I find myself waxing nostalgic for the melancholy art restorer persona of the early works or the damaged Gabriel hiding out in Cornwall until Chiara comes to save him from his ghosts. I miss Julien Usherwood, yet going home to Israel opens a whole new set of possibilities for a Gabriel who is no longer young or quite so intense. Since I am not longer young or intense that works fine for me and it obviously works for Silva. So what is missing in this fine new addition to the saga? For me, it is the element of suspense, because I had the basic plot mapped after about 40 pages into the story, certainly not with such certainty that I was ready to put the book aside. And in any case, I read Silva's books for the sheer joy of reading Silva. There are some characters I found tedious. I am not turned on by Corsican thugs--Napoleone Bonaparte finished that off for me when he shelled the Sphinx. Nor do I expect Gabriel to be perfect. After all, the man is an assassin. I do not blame him for sitting down with Ari Shamron and putting his own future on the table in order to get support for his plan, but I like it less when he barter with the Corsican don for the lease of his favorite henchman. On the positive side, I was ever so grateful to Silva for not subject the character Mikael (Michael) to the endless

tortures he usually endures or letting the poor guy wallow in his quasi romance with the American CIA agent. The absence of more than a token appearance by some of the characters we usually see was actually welcome. I like the fact that almost everybody gets almost all of what they want when the plot resolves and that the ending neither foretells or forecloses the next appearance of an older but every bit as interesting Gabriel Allon. I rarely shell out 11.99 for an ebook, but this is the exception, and I do not feel the least bit cheated.

Ana says

"Levaram-na no final de agosto, na ilha da Córsega. Nunca ficaria estabelecida a hora precisa - algures entre o pôr do sol e o meio -dia do dia seguinte foi o melhor que os amigos que dividiam a casa com ela conseguiram fazer."

E assim começa mais uma aventura de Gabriel Allon que o transporta para diversos países, procurando descobrir a relação entre esta jovem mulher, o primeiro-ministro inglês e uma empresa petrolífera russa gerida pelo sucessor do KGB.

Dana says

I waited til the right time and place presented itself before settling in with my yearly Daniel Silva book ... This annual treat needs to be savored, knowing I won't get another update to Gabriel Allon's story until the following summer. But once started, I can never stop ... I read this book yesterday - all 496 pages. Last year, I enjoyed Silva's *The Fallen Angel*, but was reminded with every page that it was the TWELFTH in the series and it was feeling very formulaic and predictable. I don't know if Silva felt it, too, but *The English Girl* was injected with some freshness, as well as a little more humor and witty repartee than in his other books. I was really glad that someone "new" played such a big role - I know Keller made an appearance in a previous book, but his large part in this one was a welcome addition to me. I enjoy the team Gabriel assembles in each book, but it was nice to expand on the storyline of some fresh characters. I don't mind that Silva's stories are biased towards Israel, but I was glad to take a break from that theme with *The English Girl*. Fans of Gabriel Allon should enjoy this book - and friends, if you've never read one of Daniel Silva's books, feel free to start with this one. I'm not a fan of "spy" stories - but Silva's series starring Gabriel Allon, an Israeli spy, are SO much more than books of intrigue and secrets. A lot of art history, in addition to timely plots and detailed research, I've never been bored with any of them.

Melinda Barlass says

Damn it...I finished the book. Now I must wait for the next. I always enjoy reading about places I have been. It also references my favorite book/movie...*A Room with a View*. Overall a good read with the usual twists and turns, but lacking in the typical Allon antics, spyness, and restorations. I was really hoping for more in the *English Girl*. Overall I recommend, but if you have not read the Gabriel Allon series by Silva, do not make this your first read in the series. I began my obsession with *The Defector* and hen started from the beginning.

Kristina says

Okay, this is it. I'm tired of reading bad fiction. I bought *The English Girl* at the Las Vegas airport because I wanted something fun and fast to read on the flight home. Wow, was I ever disappointed. This book runs an appalling 520 pages—about 200 pages too long and all of the pages are filled with clunky writing, uninspiring dialogue, woefully underdeveloped characters, and an incredibly convoluted holy-shit-can-this-book-just-stop-already?! plot. The further I traveled in this book, the less I liked it.

Madeline Hart, the English girl of the book's title, is vacationing on the island of Corsica. She is a minor player in the British government but has the determination and intelligence to succeed. One night she is kidnapped and a ransom demand is sent to Jonathan Lancaster, the Prime Minister of England—the man she has been sleeping with. PM Lancaster, wishing to avoid a scandal, calls in a favor that eventually leads to Gabriel Allon, the legendary Israeli super spy and Man Who Can Do No Wrong. Even his work as an assassin is bathed in the glow of righteous goodness. Allon reluctantly agrees to save this woman and his quest turns into an international thriller of bombastic and depressingly easy-to-guess proportions. Five hundred twenty pages later, you basically want them all to die, but particularly the smug self-righteous Allon.

I'm not going to put spoiler alerts in this review so if you have any desire to read this book, stop reading. I mean, I'm not going to come right out and give it all away, but I may let a few things slide in my need to complain about the awfulness that is this book. You've been warned.

There are a lot of things I didn't like about this book. Many, many things. Practically everything. What I liked (and it's seriously the ONLY thing so I may as well mention it first) is the first chapter. Silva does an excellent job of setting the scene in Corsica and describing Madeline, the English girl. The descriptions are vivid, the friends Madeline is vacationing with come alive and are interesting people and the portrait painted of Madeline really grabs my attention. I was excited to keep reading because I liked this Madeline. I wanted her to be rescued and I couldn't wait for the fun to start. Then I met Gabriel Allon, an assassin and professional prig. The book's overall self-righteous attitude about characters deemed unworthy of living (thus doomed to be killed by Allon and his helper Christopher Keller) and the general attitude that Israel is the country of Good People...and everyone else sucks, irritated the snot out of me.

What I dislike the most about this book is the macho bullshit and "Marty Stu" (thanks, Ferdy) factor of Allon's character. He is Invincible. He is Legendary. He is the Best Spy Ever. Oh, and the Best Killer of Bad People Ever. He's the Smartest, the Bravest, the Spy Who Gets Shit Done. And be warned, bad guys: if you mess with him or any of his friends or any Jewish people in general, he will fuck you up. Badly. Pair this extreme macho awesomeness with Christopher Keller, a former British citizen and Extra Special Military Forces guy. He was supposedly killed in a FUBAR friendly-fire incident and has chosen to remain dead. He now works as an assassin for hire—the Best, Most Talented assassin for hire. He even tried to kill Allon, but his code of conduct wouldn't let him complete the mission so Allon lives. These two Most Awesome Men work together to track down the bad guys who kidnapped Madeline and it's often a non-stop dick dueling match: "I'm more manly!" "No, I am!" On page 152, these two idiots argue about who gets to shoot first, each of them trying to out-dick the other. Keller reminds Allon that he achieved the highest score ever recorded during a live-fire military exercise at a famed British training camp. Allon responds, "I once shot a Palestinian terrorist between the eyes from the back of a moving motorcycle." When Keller basically says, oh, big whoop, Allon continues to brag: "The terrorist was sitting in the middle of a crowded café on the boulevard Saint-Germaine in Paris." Keller took the shot, only because he won the coin toss. The whole book is like this: Allon the Big Man on Campus. He's taking names and kicking asses. It's so bad I'm

embarrassed for the author. Allon either really is his Marty Stu or Silva created a character he could slavishly hero worship. Either way, it's crap. When an author creates a character this fucking awesome, you pretty much know he's going to succeed at everything. This takes away the tension of the novel. Allon has no interesting flaws or weaknesses. What he has instead is a sensitive soul tortured by personal misfortunes. This doesn't make me like him any better or give his stunted personality more depth.

I did not like the repeated scenes of Keller and Allon (or Allon and another agent) torturing a bad guy or Russian spy to get information. Keller and Allon very neatly divide humans into "worth living" and "not worth living" and play god by torturing and then disposing of these people as easily as you or I may toss out an apple core. I have a lot of problems with the torture scenes in the book. Intellectually, I understand that it's probably necessary to do it to get the information needed to find the girl. I mean, we can debate whether torturing a person will lead to helpful information (there is no *conclusive* evidence that it does but I have other moral and ethical reasons to not support it), but for the purposes of this crap ass novel, let's assume it's a necessary evil. It's been difficult for me to pinpoint exactly why I dislike these scenes because I watch tv shows and read books that have violent interrogation scenes. I think the disconnect for me is how Allon is portrayed as the Righteous Avenger and he kills without mercy but he's so incredibly self-righteous about Keller being an assassin for hire. Here's a description of him as the Righteous Avenger: "For the next three years, Gabriel and the other Wrath of God operatives stalked their prey across Europe and the Middle East. Armed with a .22-caliber Beretta, a soft-spoken weapon suitable for killing at close range, Gabriel personally assassinated six members of Black September. Whenever possible he shot them eleven times, one bullet for each Israeli butchered in Munich" (27). Not only did Gabriel kill these men, he shot them *eleven times* each. Dead is dead. Overkill, thy name is Gabriel Allon. The author reveals his personal feelings by choosing the word "butchered." That's in the exposition; it's not a word Allon chooses. I suspect Allon is a mouthpiece for the author's own feelings and prejudices—not that this isn't uncommon or even a bad thing, but if the other books in the series reflect the overall prejudices of this book (Israel good, all other nations bad or incompetent), then it could become distracting and annoying. Allon makes flippant lame jokes when torturing the bad guys yet when Keller says "goddamned" in a Catholic church they're using as a covert meeting place to discuss the operation (and for Keller to have a few chuckles about killing someone), Allon scolds Keller: "Remember where you are, Christopher." Really? *That's* the line we don't cross? The last thirty pages or so of this book are completely unnecessary. They also contain a scene that pissed me off the most. Allon and his lovely wife Chiara are having a pleasant holiday at Corsica now that everything has been handled successfully and according to his plans. Allon is visiting with Keller, trying to convince him to change his career path. First, he tries to make Keller feel guilty for having completed a "business trip." Allon asks him how many men he's killed and Keller (understandably irritated) shoots back: "I don't know. How many have *you* killed?" So Allon replies: "Mine are different. I'm a soldier. A secret soldier, but a soldier nonetheless" (512). He continues to tell Keller that if he joined forces with Allon, he could be a "soldier" too—as long as he becomes an Israeli citizen, learns Hebrew, and works for the Israeli spy service. Wow. I read this scene a few times, getting angrier every time until I think my eyes were on fire. What the fuck. Moral relativism, anyone? Allon also says to him: "I didn't include you on the team because I needed your help. I wanted to show you that there's more to life than killing people for money" (511). No, Allon, you did need his help. He found the house where the kidnapers were holding the girl. He guarded the ransom money while you were out running errands. Keller was actually a big help to you. In the course of this mission, he and Keller murdered at least six people. Granted, in Allon's eyes their lives were meaningless, but enlisting the help of a ruthless killer on a mission in which people were tortured and murdered without a second thought seems like a screwy way of trying to prove that there's "more to life than killing." Plus Allon states several times in the book that he sought out Keller because he *is* a ruthless killer. So Allon is going to take the moral high ground and say, well, no because he, Allon, kills only people who deserve to be killed that makes him guiltless? I don't think so. What makes a person's life negotiable? This person is an enemy of your government? Well, maybe you are an enemy of his government. Allon has as much blood on his hands

as does Keller. The difference is Keller knows it. He doesn't try to excuse it. Allon is smug and self-righteous and excuses his murderous ways by claiming he is a soldier. His world is so very comfortingly black and white. Must be nice to be so sure that you are on the side of the angels.

As for Madeline...(view spoiler)

I'd bitch in depth about all the other problems the book has, but I'd like to keep review under 2,500 words. So quickly:

1. The action is interrupted numerous times to tell very long back stories of the characters. I simply didn't care. Just get to the damn story.
2. Silva tucks lots of history lessons into the book. That's great, but if you can't do it without interrupting the flow of the story, then fucking don't do it.
3. The characters are merely cardboard cut-outs of people. They barely make an impression on you and after 400 pages you really don't give a damn about any of them.
4. Dialogue is HORRIBLE. Cringe-worthy. As is the one sex scene with Allon and Chiara. Yikes. Damn, man, read some bodice busters and take notes.
5. The characters don't have personalities, they have tics. Shamron twisting his fucking Zippo lighter: "two turns to the right, two turns to the left."
6. Silva also often repeats phrases. When he did it in the first chapter, I liked it. But then he did it so often that I became annoyed. Someone would ask Allon if he wanted champagne and he'd say no, it gives me a headache. Then at the end of the chapter, Silva would repeat the phrase: "Gabriel doesn't drink champagne. It gives him headaches." I'm guessing it's supposed to be ominous, but it's not.
7. Silva seems to think his readers are idiots because over-explains just about everything. And those last 30 pages or so are completely unnecessary. Why the hell his editor didn't slash them is beyond me. I kept thinking, Christ, when will this shitty book end? What else can he possibly say?
8. The damn goat. Shut up about the fucking goat. And the old woman fortune teller and her damn olive oil. It's for cooking, not scrying.
9. Really? Fallon killed himself? I don't think so. He would have taken his Russian bribe money and snuck out of the country. What a bunch of shit.

This book is bad. Really, really bad. Nothing's good about it, but what bothers me the most is how Silva, via his macho Marty Stu aka Gabriel Allon, metes out justice to Those Who Deserve It. Blech.
