



Midnight in Madrid

Noel Hynd

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When a mysterious relic is stolen from a Madrid museum, people are dying to discover its secrets. Literally. U.S. Treasury agent Alexandra LaDuca returns from Conspiracy in Kiev to track down the stolen artwork, a small carving called The Pietà of Malta. It seems to be a simple assignment, but nothing about this job is simple, as the mysteries and legends surrounding the relic become increasingly complex with claims of supernatural power. As aggressive, relentless, and stubborn as ever, Alex crisscrosses Europe through a web of intrigue, danger, and betrayal, joined by a polished, mysterious new partner. With echoes of classic detective and suspense fiction from The Maltese Falcon to The Da Vinci Code, Midnight in Madrid takes the reader on a nonstop spellbinding chase through a modern world of terrorists, art thieves, and cold-blooded killers.

Midnight in Madrid Details

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Author : Noel Hynd

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From Reader Review *Midnight in Madrid* for online ebook

Rick Harrington says

Posted this on Amazon, and got an A+ from the author! Well, I was pretty complimentary, but my read was and remains sincere. I love writing which disappears, sometimes, as vehicle for a well-wrought tale. The vectors messing with our poise in 2009, er 2010, are all here. A very nice spy novel, if you ask me. It pulled me in as me, and not simply as some romantic projection.

***** (Amazon review below)

I read all over the map, and travel a bit as well. I love books, and have generally negative instincts toward new technologies which would interfere with their look and feel. But I just finished downsizing from a house to an apartment and nearly killed myself lugging all those books. So I was thrilled when I unwrapped my new Kindle in the hospital this Christmas!

I took a wing shot at the first book which showed up on the Amazon bestseller list. I pretty much expected a bestseller, which for me would be a lowered expectation. Don't get me wrong, I wanted a quick, exciting and pleasant read, and I wasn't disappointed.

The Kindle worked transparently, as I found myself reaching up to turn the page from its corner, forgetting the button. And the read itself was absolutely terrific. As it happens, I've recently traveled in Spain, and have lots of experience in China, which were the two most prominent cultural excursions (for an American) along the way in this spy adventure called *Midnight in Madrid* (about 8 PM anywhere else on the planet).

Spain was real life, as was the larger context of a world and an age in the grip of anxieties about faith. We fret the destructiveness of faith's uncivilized certainties, just as we struggle with the inevitably ironic remove among those of us who know how to read. The very earth is screaming out for earnest, as even David Foster Wallace was noting before he checked himself out for good.

We the literate - just like the spies among us - know that compromises must be made if one is to stay sane and decent. We give a postmodern 'yeah yeah' double-positive to anything claimed as abstract Truth; a stupid word if ever there was one. Especially when it gets reified. We are as likely to be terrified of the ungodly reach of the world's superpowers in our careless arrogant responses to the inevitable blowback from our own manipulations.

Spain becomes the perfect setting for a subtle clash of titans; the United States and China. The narrative has them working together, while underneath, there are massive cultural rifts. These get explored via the lense of both the characters' romantic inclinations, and - far more importantly - those of the reader. Hynd plays deftly with our practiced expectations.

In this case, the Chinese side gets its start from an impulse of forbidden Christian faith, in a man who had been abused for it. The urge is therefore necessarily distorted. The American side is barely contained by a super-structure of jaded non-chalance, casually throwing its weight around. We get re-presented in a fashion to make almost perfect use of the British foil implicit in any good spy novel. British aplomb in the face of death, and the limey coldly cheerful certainty of cultural superiority is ever present by its absence among Americans who still strut - however ironically - and thereby advertise self doubt.

We very nearly overlook the bomb under our own feet by having routinized even our aspirational quirks. As readers of novels, I mean, and as presumptive carriers of the once and always banner of freedom. We look that stupid dressed in multicultural mufti, while the Chinaman looks sharp. But this is not Bush strutting. This is those who've worked under cover, surviving the idiot winds of politics. They curse openly, drink whiskey and likely chomp cigars in ways that politicians can no longer get away with.

Hynd presents not one agency, but the reality of competing and overlapping jurisdictions both within and among national divides. Alex, the female protagonist, is presented with an impossible challenge to decide who can be trusted, based on what information will reasonably be withheld. She herself must withhold information from her own superiors, and from those she trusts with her life. Inevitably, she will wonder what she must withhold from herself, bringing the reader right to that very spot which such a master as John leCarre will nearly always do. Ableit with the frankly charming difference that the world does not end bleakly.

Along the way toward plumbing the depths of what compromises might be required to remain both human and among the living; and how deeply these might reach toward the very soul of a human who would be both decent and implicated in keeping the world on track, the actual core of Christian faith is exposed without a trace of mawkery or neat simplicity.

I understand that the imprint for this book is a Christian publishing house. I wouldn't have known except that I was clued-in by the knee-jerk assumption among folks like me that nothing good can come from those who might publish "Left Behind." But speaking as one who is too stupid to tell the difference between Saturday Night Live and televangelists - along the vector from ironic to earnest - if they're teaching me about God, they're doing so in a manner hardly offensive to an atheist smart enough neither to name Him nor be certain that trulings will always be scientific.

Linda B says

I get so excited when I find a great book by an author I have not read before! Noel Hynd's book *Midnight in Madrid*, one of *The Russian Trilogy*, was so good I didn't want the book to end. The book has political intrigue, non-stop action, historical references, and descriptive locations. It is a political/spy thriller about international crime.

The story is wonderfully descriptive and includes information about art theft and historical references of Spain. The book is so well-written that the story just takes off and does not stop the suspense and surprises until the very end.

The main character of Alex (Alexandra LaDuca) is very likeable as she struggles with the moral and ethical decisions she has to make in the course of her high-stakes job. She relies on her faith, but also struggles with doubt and questions – as do real people of faith. This book is not a Christian book that preaches anything; it is a book by a person of faith who creates characters that struggle with faith and moral issues.

The other two books in this trilogy are *Conspiracy in Kiev* and *Countdown in Cairo*. Noel Hynd has also written the novels, *The Enemy Within*, *Flowers from Berlin*, and *Ghosts*.

I have read so many good books this year, but this is certainly one of my top favorites.

Terry Cornell says

Sometimes you don't know what you have until it is gone. And then it returns...

I didn't know I missed Conspiracy in Kiev's Special Agent Alex LaDuca and her exploits until I started reading Midnight in Madrid. Once again, Noel Hynd manages to craft a fun read that's a combination action novel, mystery and travel guide... with a touch of history on the side. Mr. Hynd's precise descriptions of historical Madrid place the reader inside the intriguing plot. His nutshell presentation of Spain's recent past makes complicated national conflicts and relationships both clear and interesting.

While enjoying a well-deserved vacation in Barcelona after her previous assignment, LaDuca becomes involved in the investigation of an art theft from Madrid's national museum. She's reacquainted with characters from her adventure in Kiev, and meets more as she delves into the mystery and tries to recover the stolen item. Most of the story takes place in Madrid, but some time is spent in Geneva and various locales in Italy. Government agents, killers, terrorists and art thieves abound. The reader must decipher where their allegiances lie.

As in the other books in this trilogy published by a Christian literary house, the religious theme is a subtle thread throughout, but an important aspect of LaDuca's character. In this case, the biggest controversy is whether 'bad' people simply need to be killed as the most secure and expedient method to thwart them, or whether more morally just actions should instead be taken. Does every individual's life have value regardless what evil plots and activities they pursue? Hynd doesn't lecture or give an answer – once again, the reader is allowed to draw their own conclusion.

Hynd artfully reconnects to the first book so new readers know enough to understand this new tale without hammering Conspiracy in Kiev readers with too much repetition. LaDuca doesn't appear quite as superhuman as before, which is all for the better; I found her more believable and likeable in Spain than she was in the Ukraine. Although this book is not as shocking as the previous one, the overall pacing and plotline combine to make Midnight in Madrid a step forward and a better reading experience. A more traditional storyline, LaDuca's toned down character and her mysterious new partner all contribute to this improvement (over a first installment which it should be said, I also thoroughly enjoyed). I look forward to reading the third book in the trilogy, Countdown in Cairo, and I hope it isn't the last I read about the traveling travails of Special Agent Alex LaDuca.

Tracy says

ughhh - was more like several history and philosophy lectures lightly framed by an action-thriller story. Every main character seemed to need to share about 20 pages (or at least 20 kindle pages) worth of barely relevant socio-political history. The protagonist had to do this several times - I was very tempted to skip these pages when I got to them - I am very interested in history -but that is NOT why I am reading the book - I want a concise story with relevant information that moves the story along and not drag it down. Most of the information would have been better as footnotes. The story, itself, was pretty good - except for the ending where for some reason there was thrown in some romantic stuff that didn't really fit either character involved and didn't have enough leading up to it to warrant the apparent strength of feeling. Overall the main plot was

good and I wish that the author had dropped the history/philosophy/ethics soap boxes and stuck with the plot - then I would have greatly enjoyed it rather than dragging myself through lectures I didn't know I signed up for.

David says

“Every time I see you after dark, someone winds up dead.” So says the lead character Alexandra LaDuca to the Chinese agent Peter Chang. He answers, “Yeah. Midnight in Madrid. Not healthy. Someone always gets killed.”

Although the story is well written as a spy thriller, and a good read, I can't help expecting it to portray more of a message, since it is presented as Christian fiction. The main character does discuss her faith with Ukrainian mobster Yuri Federov: “I believe because I sense a presence out there that’s bigger than this world or any person in it,” she says. “I believe because sometimes my prayers are answered and because my faith offers meaning to my life.”

Their discussion references Pascal's wager: “Pascal theorized that if you gain, you gain all. If you lose, you lose nothing that you already had. Wager then, without hesitation that God exists and live your life accordingly. You would be irrational not to.” She says, “Man receives forgiveness through a sincere expression of repentance to God, and Jesus taught that He completes this in the act of forgiving others.” Federov responds that she must then forgive him for kidnapping her.

Despite her Christian faith, Alex is caught up in a fast and dangerous lifestyle. She seems to be seeking for ultimate truth herself. The clearest example of a Christian lifestyle may come from parents of Lee Yuan, Peter Chang's mentor. “It was said that the parents of Yuan were saying prayers to Jesus when the executioners’ swords descended upon their necks...”

This is book two of the author's Russian trilogy, so perhaps the final ending will be more satisfying. In any case, it was an interesting read.

Laura says

I've read a number of spy-suspense novels, including Le Carre, and I was interested to see how the genre evolves in our post-Cold War era. Sadly, this wasn't really the best example: the writing wasn't tight enough, with too much exposition-as-filler and too much repetition (i.e., in a four sentence paragraph about music, the word "some" was used five times). And then there's the walk-on character whose name changed from Leila to Celia and back.

The plot revolves around an art theft that possibly will finance an terrorist plot, blended with some "continuing my mentor's journey" revenge. There's quite a bit on the difficulties of solving these thefts (a little too much), on small terrorist cells operating virtually on their own, the culture of Madrid (including the late dinners and even later evenings) and antiquities that include underground tunnels possibly used during the Civil War (which side is a little unclear, but it was probably both). As for the suspense, it's there, but the general mood is lessened because of the avalanche of background filler.

Copy provided by publisher.

Dawn says

Enjoyable Read

Plot not too surprising but kept a good pace. Would have liked to see more character development. Overall, entertaining and worth the read.

Amydeanne says

It reminds me right away of the James Bond. The story line is solid, I couldn't put it down! It was face-paced and explosive!

The characters in this book are well developed and detailed a lot. I like that you could get a good sense of them through out the book by Hynd's writing.

There is a lot of history put into this book, you could possibly get stuck on so many details , but than again some people (thinking of my father in law who loves details) would really enjoy it. For myself it was somewhat of an overload, but it worked.

I love that Hynd included current politics; it definitely livens your imagination as you read through this book. As well, his descriptions of Spain makes me want to go and check it out!

This is the second book in "The Russian Trilogy" and I don't actually think you need to read the first, though I have a feeling it might help. I am curious enough I want to get the first book though!

I like that this book made the characters realistic and in the "real" world. That they were not in an imaginary Christian world. It made the story very believable. I am left wondering where the characters were going next and if Alex would meet up again with the mysterious Peter, or kidnapped by the Russians again!

If you're looking for adventure and intrigue.. a good whodunit you'll enjoy this book!

Stacy says

After recently receiving (& enjoying) a free Kindle edition of the trilogy's first book, Conspiracy in Kiev

(The Russian Trilogy, #1), I purchased this one at a local bookseller. I like the strong character of Alex LaDuca and I am fluent in Spanish & have traveled in Spain, so I was very excited to see how this story would unfold & what historical information would be included. However, this prior knowledge turned out to be a double-edged sword as I was IMMENSELY disappointed by the poor Spanish translations used (surely there was SOMEONE the author could've consulted for assistance with that--it cannot be that difficult to find a Spanish-speaker to proofread), which always casts doubt in my mind on other elements of the plot. In spite of that, I will say that the other historical facts included DO seem well-researched and accurate. However, it was very hard for me to get past the language errors to be able to enjoy the story line of this book. I will agree with other reviewers that the references to her Christian faith seemed extraneous and an unnecessary element to the story line. I am another reader who finds it hard not to finish a book, so I did it--although it took me a month & a half, which is very unusual for me when reading a thriller!! I had really been hoping to have found a dependable series/character to enjoy, but this is not for me.

Janet Sketchley says

Not sure how I feel about this one. The random reference to the song "Werewolf of London" made my day, and most of the book was a good, clean thriller. Some bits were background I didn't need, and I skipped them. Not happy with finding even a small amount of bad language in a book from a Christian publisher. But the terrorist plot was timely and well researched.

So it had a good feel to it, but I'm not hurrying out to find the next one even though I'm a bit curious to see what happens with the characters next.

Becky B says

Alex LaDuca is back, not too long after her adventures in Kiev. This time she is called away from vacation by her boss asking her to help investigate the theft of *The Pieta de Malta*, a small statue also regarded as a holy relic that normally resides in a Madrid Museum. Once again, she finds herself on lend to the FBI (and somewhat the CIA) getting into something much more complex than it at first appears. The art theft turns out to have ties to several murders in southern Europe, a Chinese intelligence operation, Alex's old "friend" Federov, and a terrorist plot. Noel Hynd likes to tell the story from multiple points of view so that you pretty much know *almost* everything going on, both with the bad guys and good guys, but the puzzle and nail-biting comes from not knowing how and if the good guys will figure it out in time.

Hynd does an excellent job of building complex characters. Very few of the characters are all bad (except the lead terrorist) or all good (some of the allies are rather disreputable characters Alex would prefer to keep at a distance of say...an ocean or two), even our protagonist Alex has her flaws. The writing and plot line are interesting, but I'd say Hynd's character building is what makes his books grip you.

As before, the content in this book would be mild for a secular spy/thriller novel, but may be considered a bit gritty for something from a Christian author & publisher. There is no swearing printed, but it is mentioned frequently that people swear. Several of the guys in the book ogle girls and are said to sleep around and hire prostitutes, but no sexual activity beyond a kiss is given any actual description. There is a lot of alcohol consumption, but taking place in Europe, that should be expected. Being a spy novel, there is obviously some violence as well, and a couple of throat slittings, stabbings and shootings are described.

Again, as in the first book, though Alex claims to be a Christian it seems to have little impact on how she lives, though in this book that does seem to start to bother her a little. She frequently is described as swearing and turns to alcohol not just as a beverage but also sometimes for comfort. She does have more qualms about taking a life in this book than in the first. I would say the one area of her life where she does seem to take a strong stand morally is in her sexuality. She is approached by several men in the story hinting or bluntly stating that they'd like to sleep with her, and she stalwartly refuses. She has an extended discussion with Federov on what it means to be a Christian which is surprisingly pretty solid theologically and seems somewhat strange to come from someone who appears to be more of a cultural or foxhole Christian (prayer is mostly mentioned only when she gets in dire circumstances). Hynd keeps hinting that Alex wants her faith to be embodied more in her lifestyle. I hope he does that more in the next book.

Claire says

I read this because it was a free Kindle download. It was an unexceptional thriller about art theft and terrorism, with a strangely Christian protagonist. It mentions her faith a few times but doesn't make much of a big deal about it, even though it looks like it was published by a Christian publisher. I would only recommend this book if you get it for free.

James E Igoe says

Factual errors, poor editing

“members of the Irish National Police had raided the Antrim county home of a former Provo and discovered an arsenal of more than 250,000 rounds of ammunition, fifty pipe”. Antrim is in Northern Ireland and the Irish “national “ police (correctly termed “Garda siochana”) have no jurisdiction....

There is no “cortical “ artery in the neck..there is the carotid artery.

Many other instances of untidy and poor editing / grammar...

Disappointing ...

Dr.Given says

The plot was a great idea. The locations were fun to read about. Unfortunately, the writing got in the way of the story. There were inconsistencies with names and events. Significant repetition of language and details within the same chapter/page. I thought many of the characters were flat and underdeveloped. The major themes were compelling, just needed more polish overall. Extended rants on religious and political history needed finesse to be more effective within the story line and the thinly veiled character views seemed less about moving the plot forward and more about the opinions of the author.

Victor Gentile says

I had the pleasure of interviewing Noel Hynd on my radio show, “Kingdom Highlights” regarding his new

book, "Midnight In Madrid" book two in The Russian Trilogy published by Zondervan.

Alexandra LaDuca is back. This time she is recovering from the events of book one in Barcelona, Spain when the call comes in that they need her. Seems someone stole a priceless art treasure, "The Pieta of Malta" in Madrid and the call has gone out to France, England, Italy and the U.S. to come assist in finding out who stole it and it's retrieval. Of course not everything is what it seems to be. Bodies are turning up floating down glaciers rivers, those that want Alex killed are themselves killed and who really is this new character that is assigned to work with Alex in the recovery of the Pieta? And how does Yuri Federov, the Russian gangster from book one, fit into all this? All these answers and more are provided along with non-stop excitement, plot twists galore and intrigue, danger and betrayal that are the trademarks of a Noel Hynd thriller.

Mr. Hynd does not disappoint us in this second outing and this time we have a an old-style private eye type mystery made famous by Dashiell Hammet and Philip Marlowe with Alex LaDuca in the role of the P.I. This is an international, political thriller with the action taking place in Madrid, Spain and Geneva, Switzerland with spies, art thieves, terrorists and cold-blooded killers.

As with the first one don't start this book late at night if you have to go to work the following day; you are not going to want to put it down. We look forward to the next one and the new trilogy after that.
