



Twinkle Twinkle Little Spy

Len Deighton

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A Soviet space scientist defects to win academic freedom, but western intelligence has other plans for him, and sends an unnamed spy - perhaps the same reluctant hero of *The Ipress File* - to look after him. But what follows is a blood-streaked trail across three continents...

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Spy reveals a more mature Deighton exploring relationships between couples: professional rivals and private allies, spy and counter-spy, master and slave. Some are drawn together mutual comfort, others for exploitation. With an uncanny feeling for landscape, he begins his story in the awesome emptiness and remorseless heat of the Sahara desert. From there a trail of blood leads to Manhattan, Paris, Dublin and halfway back across Africa.

In a narrative as compelling as it is tantalizing, Deighton surpasses all his previous triumphs and holds the reader spellbound to the very last page.

This new reissue includes a foreword from the cover designer, Oscar-winning filmmaker Arnold Schwartzman, and a brand new introduction by Len Deighton, which offers a fascinating insight into the writing of the story.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Spy Details

Date : Published June 7th 2012 by Harper (first published 1976)

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Author : Len Deighton

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From Reader Review Twinkle Twinkle Little Spy for online ebook

Victor Gibson says

For newcomers to Len Deighton this book would be a pretty good start. It contains all the Deighton elements, particularly a degree of misinformation, observations of events and items without comment which would guide the alert reader (I have never been alert enough) and great interaction between the main players. "You've never been a very good loser have you?" - "Well, I haven't had as much practice as you." Not to mention a rollercoaster ride all over the western hemisphere. You've got to concentrate towards the end of course.

Rupert Fenton says

1970's Macho spy thriller. Plenty of twists and turns, exciting if sometimes the motivations for some twists are vague or unlikely. The last outing for the nameless spy that first appeared in the classic Ipress Files - this is not up to that standard but a good one.

In previous books much of the fun is derived from the wise cracking nameless Spy - this time the wordplay is doubled with the addition of a partner Major Mann.

A worthwhile flash back to the 1970's.

Larry says

Len Deighton's spy novels from the 60s and 70s (along with Adam Hall's Quiller books) energized a publishing trend that probably started with Eric Ambler. This one was a worthy addition, involving the defection of a Russian scientist, two trips to the North African desert, and a Soviet mole. It's exciting stuff full of wry humor.

John Defrog says

(NOTE: My copy is entitled *Catch A Falling Spy*, which is the US title for the same book.) Like *Spy Story*, this is another of Deighton's "nameless hero" novels that *isn't* about Harry Palmer. It may not even be the same guy in in *Spy Story*, but it arguably doesn't matter since the main focus of the book is CIA agent Major Mickey Mann, who is working with the unnamed British agent to aid in the defection of Andrei Bekuv, a Russian scientist searching the skies for alien life who may know who is leaking classified US science documents to the Kremlin. Naturally, what appears to be a simple defection operation turns out to be something far more complicated and devious as Bekuv's wife is also brought over and Mann and the narrating British agent chase clues on the leak that take them across the globe. Like *Spy Story*, it pales in comparison to the Palmer novels and the Bernard Samson series, but it's an entertaining espionage tale nonetheless.

David Manns says

Published in 1977, this is the last book where Deighton used an "unnamed spy" as his protagonist, and it's a corker. In what is essentially a buddy spy story, our hero from MI6 is paired with the brash, no-nonsense Major Mann of the CIA on the case of a Soviet defector, Professor Bekuv.

Beginning in the Sahara desert, our heroes rendezvous with the Bekuv and he's brought to America with promises of a chair at a university, in return for co-operation. But Bekuv wants his wife and son to join him. The plot gets more and more complex as the novel moves from Manhattan to Miami, Paris, Dublin, back to America, before a finale in the heat of the Sahara.

Loyalties are tested at each twist in the plot. The action scenes are handled deftly, especially a shoot out at an airport and a breakneck car chase across the desert. The real delight is the wise-cracking, prickly bromance between Mann and his British counterpart. Superb dialogue, as always. This is Deighton near his best with a globe-trotting Cold War story and although the ending feels a bit perfunctory, it's still well worth the time of any spy fiction fan.

I can't help feeling that this would have worked brilliantly as a movie back in the late 70s. Entice Caine back to play the unnamed spy one more time, pair him up with, say James Caan as Major Mann, throw in Faye Dunaway as the love interest.....could have been a hit. In fact this story, with a bit of updating, could still work today.

After this Deighton would embark on his Magnum Opus, the Bernard Samson trilogies, his last word on Cold War espionage.

Paul says

Probably the best "unnamed spy" book by Deighton. Easier to comprehend and faster paced than The Ipress File & far more interesting than his more recent attempts. I WAS losing interest, but after this I'll check out the Bernard Samson trilogies too.

Peter says

It's a minor point but I do like the fact that as a cookbook author, he also includes plenty of references to food in his books. With other spy novels I find myself wondering if they ever stop for lunch.

Not as good as some of his other titles, such as the Harry Palmer books, but still it's a pretty good example of his work. He tends to focus more on the actual work of being a spy without too much reliance on gadgets or weapons, while still including plenty of action.

Alice says

I read this when I was at school, and a lot of it must have gone over my head, because I could remember barely any of it (except for one scene on an Irish farm, in the rain, which leaped back at me with perfect

clarity as soon as I reached it). What stands out this time is what a smart writer Deighton is. His characters may not have a great deal of depth, but their descriptions are spot on. No conversation can occur without a background event that either tells us more about the characters involved or subtly imparts a clue. Standout line: airport buildings, viewed through the heat haze from a jet engine, turning to 'grey jelly'.

Paul says

This book is deliberately confusing for the majority of the first two-thirds, but at the end delivers a rewarding conclusion. In a similar way to *Le Carrie*, this book comments effectively on the way that the espionage system can wreak havoc on a personal level.

Checkman says

I'm a latecomer to Len Deighton's novels. I first read "Blitzkrieg" over thirty years ago and followed that with "Fighter" and "Battle of Britain", but for some reason I have never read one of his novels until now.

It's a well written novel. Understated and full of little clues that the reader will come back to later and go "Ah-ha" when it becomes apparent what the events were foreshadowing. The story is interesting as well in that on the surface it seems to be very simple, but there is actually a whole lot going on underneath. Sometimes those other activities are revealed and explained and others are not.

A very British ,or rather, a classic British story. Understated, some dry wit and a protagonist who is very capable, but also rather passive. This is not James Bond. Closer to John le Carré than Ian Fleming or even John Gardner.

An unintentional aspect of this novel is that it is also nostalgic. Written in the mid-seventies it is totally mired in the Cold War. Looking back from 2012 one finds oneself almost wishing things still had the "clarity" that the world seemed to possess back when it was just the Capitalist West against the Communist East. For ,while things are murky and people are ambiguous, in the story there is a sense of having a side - unlike the world of today. Of course this is more likely something I have put onto the story - having come of age during the last decade of the Cold War and being a Regan Kid.

Anyway an interesting read. Classic spy novel stuff with wit and intelligence.

Maggard says

I am a big Mick Herron fan, and someone said he was the heir apparent to Len Deighton, who I somehow have never read. So I randomly picked this one as an entrance and, wow. This took forever to get going, and then had a startling left turn that came out of nowhere and must have been shocking in the 1960s but was more of a, huh?, moment for me. I'll stick with Herron unless anyone has a better Deighton book to recommend as a starting point.

Speesh says

"There's often a world of difference between what things mean, and what they are supposed to mean."

This is only going to be a short one ("phew!"), as even though it was by the (otherwise) great Len Deighton, it really didn't connect with me in any meaningful way. I don't feel as though I've ever really got to know the two main characters. Nor any of the minor ones. I never really felt attached to them in any meaningful way.

A Soviet (we're back on the Cold War period here), is defecting (rather than defective), as - he says - he wants the freedom to search for life on other planets. The intelligence officers handling the defection, have other ideas and are looking carefully at him, wondering if he might be a plant. Or is it his wife? The main man on 'our' side is an American, with a British intelligence officer playing the stooge, his number two. Things go all kinds of wrong, of course, and the story goes racing over from the Sahara, to the US, Paris, Dublin and then ends up back in the Sahara desert. I think you're supposed to think the Englishman, is 'Harry Palmer' from 'The Ipcress File', etc. I didn't realise that until I read something about it afterwards. So that didn't make much of an impression, did it?

For all the blurb on the jacket (of the hardback, Book Club Associates version I have) about it revealing 'a more mature Deighton' and it being 'as compelling as it is tantalising' nothing you could tie it down to or point to in the text, it really wasn't either. It was a strangely slight tale that was there and then it was gone. Short, but really not so sharp. Or particularly sweet.

Paul says

If you compare spy novelists to glam bands, Len Deighton is the T Rex to Graham Greene's Roxy Music and John le Carre's David Bowie -- he may lack the elegance of the former or the artistry of the latter, but is a lot more fun than either. In this mid-70's romp, his nameless hero (most likely Harry Palmer of "The Ipcress File") assist a blowhard CIA operative in unraveling a KGB espionage ring that has sunk its claws deep into the US government, stealing scientific knowledge with the apparently unwitting complicity of a kooky Russian scientist trying to establish contact with alien civilizations. Deighton could have worked hardy to obscure a couple of obvious plot twists, and has little patience for the moral ambiguities and psychological complexity that mark Greene's and le Carre's best work, but he's a fairly talented prose stylist and his action sequences are gripping.

Caroline says

I've **never** read a bad Len Deighton.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in June 2004.

At the start of this novel, the main characters (Major Mann of the CIA and the narrator, a British agent) pick

up a Soviet defector in the middle of the Sahara Desert. This is an unusual start for a spy novel, where it would be more common for the plot to work up to the retrieval of the defector. But here the point of the novel is the investigation of some leaks of US research to the Russians, and it is this which makes Professor Bekuv valuable, as he was one of the beneficiaries before becoming disenchanted with the system and receiving a punishment appointment as a scientific advisor in Mali.

The title is an acknowledgement that this style of spy story was becoming old fashioned (even though Deighton continued writing them for another twenty years); it is the riposte given by the narrator to Major Mann's observation that in a few years the sky will be full of spy satellites, with the implication that this will render the old style of espionage obsolete. Even a quarter of a century later, though, I have never read a thriller which has a satellite as a major character; today's fictional spies may make far more use of computers and electronic surveillance, but they are still human.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy is not ashamed to be old fashioned - in fact it revels in it. It's exciting all the way, right up to the ending when the scene returns to the Sahara. Len Deighton's plots are usually quite complicated; Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy is a more straightforward thriller than most of his novels. Even so, it is excellently done, far better written than most of the genre. This is the Len Deighton to read if you are a fan of, say, Colin Forbes or Helen MacInnes, for those who think his other novels are too convoluted. To me, being someone who really enjoys working through the complexities, the novel is lacking something, entertaining though it is.
