



Foreign Agent

Brad Thor

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From #1 New York Times bestselling author Brad Thor comes *Foreign Agent*—a thriller as current as tomorrow's headlines.

In a safe house near the Syrian border, a clandestine American operations team readies to launch a dramatic mission months in the making. Their target: the director of Social Media for ISIS, Abu Muslim al-Naser.

Multiple analysts, as well as a senior Congresswoman, are in the country to monitor the raid, but before the team can launch, the safe house is attacked.

What unfolds in the bloody aftermath is a political and public relations nightmare. As horrific videos of the Americans are published on the Internet, the blame-storming back in Washington goes into full swing, focusing on how the intel for the raid was developed and how it might have leaked.

As the search for answers mounts, half spy, half covert counterterrorism operative, Scot Harvath quickly finds himself at the center of the storm. Working for a private intelligence agency contracted by both the CIA and the DoD, it was Harvath who pinpointed al-Naser. But how could ISIS have known the Americans were coming, much less where they would be staying? There has to be more to it; something everyone—especially the politicians—is missing.

With the weight of the attack on his shoulders and several powerful members of Congress calling for his head, Harvath is forced to launch his own operation to unravel what went wrong and exact revenge.

But as he nears the truth and the deadly puzzle pieces begin to fall into place, Harvath will uncover another actor—a rogue player hell-bent on forcing America's hand and drawing it into a plot more dangerous than anyone in Washington could have imagined.

Foreign Agent Details

Date : Published June 14th 2016 by Atria/Emily Bestler Books

ISBN :

Author : Brad Thor

Format : Kindle Edition 353 pages

Genre : Thriller, Fiction

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From Reader Review Foreign Agent for online ebook

Monnie says

"If there was an Academy Award for evil, ISIS would have taken home an Oscar."

Yep, you can tell from that quote it's another tale of espionage, terrorism and spies from the king of the genre, much of it set in countries where the only green is the caps of U.S. soldiers. Yep, readers will have to withstand the author's strong political viewpoints as always. But since I've gone on record as not being fond of his settings or his viewpoints (I don't like being "preached" at in books, even when I'm in agreement), why do I bother reading his books?

Because, doggone it, they're *good*. This one's no exception; I had trouble putting it down and polished it off in near record time. The "hero," Scot Harvath, used to be a Navy SEAL and works for an exclusive private intelligence company that's often called in by the CIA and the U.S. President; if clandestine operations go south, no one will ever learn of any "connection" to the U.S. government.

And this time, the President is on the warpath. An American team grabbing a little much-needed R&R in what should have been a safe area near Syria is ambushed, and all investigative fingers point to one particular informant. Then comes another big-time ambush, followed by still another attack much closer to home. Harvath, who's just starting to think about settling in to a relatively normal life, gets the call to head out and get to the bottom of things. Protecting his country trumps all else, so he heads out (if a bit reluctantly). The journey takes him across several borders, putting his life in danger and his considerable skills to the test.

Along the way he meets up with a few interesting characters, both male and female, who just may make appearances in future books. His teammates, such as interrogator extraordinaire Valla (trust me, you don't want to be on the receiving end of his expertise). Once the world is safe for democracy, at least for the moment, the ending hints at a scenario that could change the course of Harvath's life as readers know it.

Now, all the loose ends have been tied up and I've closed my Kindle on this book. Well, all except for one burning question: Who the hell drinks a double Maker's Mark on the rocks through a *straw*?

Matt says

Thor continues his meteoric rise in the genre with another novel pulled directly from potential headlines. After a brutal bombing that killed a group of American operatives seeking to destroy a pillar of the ISIS organisation, all heads shift back to Washington, demanding answers. How could an operation so important and long in the making be infiltrated and ruined, its key members obliterated? The assassination of a high-ranking Cabinet official is the second attack by ISIS, which increases the ire of all, made worse when it is flaunted all over the Internet. Worried that things will continue to spiral out of control, Scot Harvath is summoned by the White House to complete a reconnaissance mission and complete the kill order, no matter the cost. As he trolls through the ashes of the attacks, he finds himself in Europe, gathering essential intelligence and making new contacts. Meanwhile, the narrative focusses attention on Sacha Baseyev, whose youth was filled with hatred of all things Muslim after an attack on his village. Russian Special Operations

have honed this hatred and sent him out to infiltrate ISIS at the highest level. However, in order to fit in, he might have to commit a few atrocities along the way. When Harvath learns that Baseyev is at the centre of the attacks on the Americans, he will stop at nothing to bring him down, as well as the cell of ISIS fighters around him. What begins as intel gathering soon turns into the most covert of missions in the deserts of Syria. No mission has been as dangerous, as covert, or as important as the one Harvath has undertaken. And, with plausible deniability the name of the game, there are no safety nets to protect him. With all this taking place, a keen senator lurks in the shadows, seeking not only to take down the POTUS, but also to uncover just what sort of illegal black ops are going ahead without congressional approval. Thor offers wonderful insights and pushes the envelope as far as he can to rile up the reader, at a time when ISIS teeters on the brink. Highly enjoyable for those with an open mind and a strong heart!

I have always enjoyed a good Brad Thor novel, as he mixes espionage and action with terror and bloodshed. While I have lamented many authors for writing about ISIS to the point of flogging a dead horse, Thor's character, Scot Harvath, is not only able to spin his adventures so as not to make it a cookie-cutter narrative, but to instil some unique angles. While some may call it preaching (to the choir), I find his political spins not only poignant, but necessary to see the larger picture. It is the curious reader who will rush out to read this and see for themselves, but I can see much being made of these suggestions and look to the next five years, as political holdings in the region are sure to shift. Thor has always worked with a collection of well-developed characters and advances the Scot Harvath backstory seamlessly throughout his writing. The dedicated series reader will notice that while Harvath retains his job, he is always advancing in his personal life, as glacial as that might be. With plots pulled from the headlines, Thor is able to add his own flavour to events, but also to push away from the constant US v. ISIS that floods the airwaves and lesser novels in the genre. I can never be sure where Thor will take the reader, nor how close to peril Harvath will find himself. This might be part of the draw, and surely keeps me keen to queue up for the next instalment.

Kudos, Mr. Thor for this. You are aptly named, for you are a god of your genre and all-powerful when it comes to storytelling. Hammer out another novel for your adoring fans, will ya?!

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheponderings.wordpress.com/>

David Eppenstein says

I have read all of Thor's books and consider myself a fan but a fan with limits. This review will, therefore, probably be more of a subjective personal POV piece than an objective critique of the book or its writing so that should be understood by anyone reading this. I enjoy reading thrillers and Thor's were among the best but they have been diminishing in interest and Thor's lapses into personal political opinions were offensive but he seems to have pulled back from that. It goes without saying that Thor knows how to write and how to hold a reader's attention but this series seems to have run its course and either needs to end or seriously amped-up. Compared to Thor's earlier work in this series this book is simply okay, nothing special but, nevertheless, entertaining. While I enjoy thrillers solely for their entrainment value I do like to learn something from these books even though they may not be great literature. Other thriller writers I follow offer insights into science, history, foreign geography and culture, and so on. Thor's books do offer some exposure to cultures and geography but he seems more interested in describing the toys of war, the weaponry and gadgets of the modern military. When such hardware is used as in a James Bond fiction or film these things are amusing and entertaining because they are fictional and fantasies. In Thor's books the gadgets and hardware are real and exist and are anything but amusing. Such things may appeal to a segment of his fans

but I am not one of those fans. Arab terrorists are the cliché bad guys of the contemporary thriller writer and Thor has used this cliché to more than an extreme. He has imagination and I really wish he'd use it to find another form of villain. How many ways are there to kill an Arab terrorist after all? I think Thor has used them all. If a writer is going to continue to travel down the Arab terrorist route then will one of them at least allow for the creation of an Arab hero? Don't you think there would be plenty of motivation for a Muslim to go after the people that have hijacked his religion and duped impressionable young people into becoming the cannon fodder of corrupt grab for power? This book seems to have a germ of that type of character in two brothers befriended by Thor's hero but will they become heroes in their own right in their own story? Like I said this review is more about my personal tastes. The book isn't bad but it isn't up to what I think this author can do and that is what disappoints me.

David says

He's conservative, a flag-waver and a patriot. Brad Thor/Scott Harvath. I look forward to the release of each New Thor book. He often goes over the top, but the adventure and thrills always are crowd pleasers.

This was one of his best, tied into today's (unfortunate) world situation.

Guess I have to wait another year until we get Scott Harvard #16!

The Real Book Spy says

*** Read this review and more on www.TheRealBookSpy.com

With *Foreign Agent*, Brad Thor proves once again to be the master of one-night reads and the undisputed King of faction—a mesmerizing blend of fact and fiction.

Honestly, his books should just come with a label that reads “no bookmark required,” because they’re impossible to put down.

For a guy with more than eleven million books in print around the world, and who is an annual staple on *The New York Times* bestsellers list, Thor is still growing and improving as an author. How that’s even possible is beyond me, but it’s true.

Last year’s book, *Code of Conduct*, featured an incredible story that was certifiably un-put-downable.

So, how does *Foreign Agent* top that?

Simple, Harvath is back to doing the very thing that made him famous and one of the thriller genre’s most beloved leading men—hunting down terrorists and putting a serious hurtin’ on them in the name of his country.

THE STORY

For those wondering whether or not the events from *Code of Conduct* will impact the world that Harvath lives in moving forward, it absolutely does. Without spoiling last year’s book, its ending is addressed early

and often, and there's serious fallout from what happened. In fact, it impacts Harvath directly.

Returning alongside Harvath is his girlfriend, Lara. The two first met in *Hidden Order*, and their relationship was then referenced in *Act of War*, though Lara wasn't actually part of the story. She returned once again in *Code of Conduct*, and their relationship progressed to the point of Scot admitting he loved her. Now, things are moving in the wrong direction for the couple.

The aftermath of *Code of Conduct* has left Lara with the an attractive job offer in her hometown of Boston. Harvath, of course, is based in Washington, D.C. and long-distance relationships aren't meant to last forever. The two know a decision must ultimately be made, but at the moment, Harvath has more pressing issues to deal with—like the death of thirteen Americans.

When a CIA safe house in Iraq is raided and the entire team killed by ISIS forces, people in Washington want answers. Harvath carries a sense of guilt because it was his informant that led the SAD team to Iraq in the first place in pursuit of a high-ranking member of the Islamic State. Now they're all dead, and Scot is pissed off.

Harvath goes to find his informant, only to learn that the man is missing. While investigating his disappearance, Harvath connects the man to some serious players inside Russia. Later, while following up a lead, he bumps into a blast from the past, and even teams up with someone readers will immediately recognize from Thor's third novel, *State of the Union*.

In fact, fans of *State of the Union* will be pleasantly surprised with how much Brad Thor incorporated from that novel into *Foreign Agent*. At one point Harvath sees a barb-wired-wrapped stein (longtime fans of the series will remember it well) and I literally got chills. Personally, I think *State of the Union* is one of the best political thrillers ever written, so revisiting it twelve years later was tons of fun.

Harvath continues to climb the ladder of people as he pursues a Russian operative named Sacha Baseyev. Baseyev carries an unhealthy amount of hate stemming from a traumatic event that took place during his childhood, and will stop at nothing to complete his mission.

The problem is that Harvath doesn't know what Baseyev's end game is. The longer it takes Scot to find out and stop him, the more innocent people die. ISIS even manages to assassinate a high-profile American, which is a big score for the terror group.

With Russia and ISIS involved in the killing of Americans, and a planned attack still in the works, Scot Harvath finds himself in an impossible situation. What the bad guys never seem to learn, though, is that the last thing you should ever do to an apex predator (like Harvath) is back him into a corner.

There's still a lot of blood to be spilled, but now it's Harvath's turn to wield the blade of justice—and he'll stop at nothing to make things right. Fueled by revenge and guilt, Harvath sets out to avenge the fallen Americans and stop an attack against the United States at all costs.

Foreign Agent is a relentless, action-packed political thriller complete with everything readers have come to expect from one of the best authors in the game today. Brad Thor puts the "thrill" in the thriller genre.

If you buy only one book this summer, make sure it's Thor's *Foreign Agent*.

WHY I LOVED IT

Harvath keeps evolving as a character, and it's a real treat to read. He's not perfect, and that shows. He wasn't able to stop the events in *Code of Conduct*, nor was he able to figure out that he was being played early on in *Foreign Agent*. Throw in his frustration from the issues with Lara, and this is quite possibly the angriest we've ever seen him.

All that anger comes to a head as Harvath searches for Sacha Baseyev and tries desperately to prevent the Russian's sinister plan, which includes an attack that reaches all the way to the front lawn of the White House. Reading it reminded me a lot of the eighth season of *24*. Fans of the hit television show (starring Kiefer Sutherland) will remember a different Jack Bauer from the previous seven seasons.

Bauer, like Harvath, had always tiptoed outside the line when necessary, but never fully crossed it. Then, suddenly, as if their BS meter was finally full, they both just said "screw it" and did what needed to be done.

Honestly, I've never cheered so hard for Harvath to complete a mission before. Thor sucks you in early and doesn't let go for a single page, as he masterfully mixes in both action and suspense.

I read this entire book in one sitting, staying up all night to finish it. I'll do that sometimes while writing reviews, but this was the very first time I didn't drink any coffee to get me through the night. While it's true I didn't want to pause long enough to go brew a pot, caffeine is not required when following Scot Harvath. In fact, when coffee needs a pick-me-up, it cracks open a Brad Thor novel!

WHY YOU SHOULD READ IT

Three of Thor's last four novels (*Black List*, *Hidden Order*, *Code of Conduct*) have featured threats other than Islamic extremists. Those books were all fantastic, but Thor is without a doubt at his best while covering this topic. After all, this is the author who had one of his books (*The Last Patriot*) banned in Saudi Arabia after he wrote a fictional plot about the discovery of a lost Islamic text.

The story is also timely, as ISIS continues to dominate the headlines. Harvath is capable of doing the things we all wish our current president would unleash against the most barbaric terror group ever assembled, and it's satisfying to see them getting what they deserve. (I just wish it weren't fiction!)

I've now read advance copies of all the June thrillers and, in my opinion, *Foreign Agent* is without a doubt the best thing hitting bookstores this summer. Buy it and move it straight to the top of your to-read list, it's that good.

BOOK DETAILS

Note: *Foreign Agent* is the fifteenth novel in the Scot Harvath series. While there is a chronological order to the series, each story has been written to stand on its own, allowing readers to jump in at any point. Even if you've never read any of Brad Thor's previous books, you won't miss a beat if you choose to make this your first Scot Harvath experience!

Author: Brad Thor

Pages: 435 (Hardcover)

Publisher: Atria/Emily Bestler Books

Release Date: June 14, 2016 (Order now!)

wally says

seven fifty-eight pee em the 27th of march 2018 tuesday evening...still light out, days getting longer...lots of snow still on the ground, 3" fell overnight and the next thing you know it will be the 4th and a couple weeks after that we'll see the first brown leaf on the ground. just finished. good story, four stars, kindle library loaner and #15 in a series. uh oh. shoulda started at #1? naw...there's some sort of question posted on the page...'should i read them in order' paraphrased. first answer and the only one showing until you click is no, but...so forth so on. i wonder if the people who write these get any fallout for "getting it wrong". heh! thought that, or wondered so, reading along and different arms might be described. why not describe something completely fictional? would it matter? stock up on mail. the p-u-36 space modulator. full auto. hoorah. anyway, good read. i'll see what else the digital library has to offer...so many stories are...what's the word...i forget, means not available...one can "hold" them and i will do that but usually i look for something available, titles...this was the first from thor for me. enjoyed the story. onward and upward.

Skip says

[Russians (hide spoiler)]

Tim says

Less thrilling than other stories produced. Lots of defense with minimal spurts of offense. Sadly, Nicholas is minimalized and he's already short. 5 of 10 stars

Sean Collins says

I feel like the earlier books had a lot more nuance, character development. These days it's Scot Harvath invincibly doing what is right with some small side talk to explain exactly why it is right. This is the path Terry Goodkind went down - and the books suffered. Hopefully the next one has a bit more substance....

Barbara says

This is the perfect summer thriller. I don't favor political international thrillers, but this one is exceptional. In Brad Thor's "Foreign Agent", protagonist Scot Harvath is a secret agent who works for a private intelligence firm, and the President of the United States is a client. So basically, Harvath works for the USA but is removed from the President who can deny responsibility of things go south. Harvath has his orders and is backed by the USA, yet does what he wants.

The US has been targeted by terrorist attacks and Harvath is hired to find out who is behind the series of attacks. It involves Isis, Russia, and the Middle East. What makes the novel great is that all the incidences are believable. The action is fast paced with twists and turns. It's a page-turner that I devoured in two days. It's smart, action-packed and realistic. I highly recommend it to those who enjoy political thrillers.

Dee Hadrill says

Seriously, I don't think there is anything about a Brad Thor book that I don't love. I especially love Scot Harvath and everything he does and says. I love the idea that there are people out there who will go to any length to keep us safe. I know this is not PC but I don't care - sometimes we need to do the dirty work to get the job done. Thank God for people like this who will do that!

Jim says

I've never read anything by Thor before much less another book in this series & was favorably impressed. It was a popcorn, macho-action read, pretty much what I expected, but not nearly as heavy handed as most of its ilk & far better in specifics. I had no trouble following the story, even when there was obviously a lot of history in previous books.

There were some laughable moments. For instance, a glance at a gun from a distance revealed it's exact vintage even though it was one of a myriad of squirt gun knock-offs. Most guns were described in detail, but it was forgivable because they were used correctly & often the description did help. It's not like when some fancy super pistol winds up only getting used as a club. I found the description of field fixing a magazine quite good. That's exactly the sort of thing that happens.

I'm not planning on reading this entire series, but won't shy away from another book of Thor's if it comes my way. I think they're fun occasionally.

Slaven Tomasi says

Foreign Agent is Brad Thor at his very best, I had no idea how he was going to top Code of Conduct, as it was my favorite in his Scott Harvath series. But he did it with Foreign Agent, the book is a non-stop action from start to finish. The threat of ISIS is a worldwide problem in our current situation in the real world, Thor takes a stab at that problem in Foreign Agent but puts a crazy spin on just how the hell is ISIS able to come up with, finance, and execute all of those terrible plans of theirs. I just hope Brad Thor isn't once again predicting the future as he's done in his books before. Putting my fears aside in regards to the real world, Foreign Agent is a must read. Scott Harvath is back as a one man war against terrorism and executing the president's orders to be a wolf who is going to hunt down other wolves preying on the weak. Like all other Brad Thor books, this is a five star worthy best seller.

Will says

READER'S SUBJECTIVE REVIEW FOLLOWS:

View purely from a storyline, pace and readability perspective, Brad Thor's scored another FIVE STARS.

But I had to give him 4.5 for two reasons. First and most important; the 'proportional response' of Operation Full Justice--where the US incinerates every Russian military asset in Syria--is not credible. Jesus Christ Brad, did you forget that Vladdie still has a bunch of ICBMs? Now before you judge me overly conservative, to this day I find Vince Flynn's first novel, 'TERM LIMITS,' the greatest read of all time! Hell, it was published in '97, before Mitch Rapp appeared, and had Scot Coleman and Company assassinating over a half dozen senior US government leaders who badly needed to die. Now to me, that was possible in the pre-9/11 environment, so it was credible and needed to happen in the worst way. So the story was great but the ending was not believable--by me at least. The second reason is my pet peeve; for Christ's sakes Brad, when you've got a golden opportunity to give us a view of Scot Harvath with his hair down--like on that Danube River Cruise boat--don't be afraid to share what is clearly built up as a smoking red hot lusty relationship!

Now getting off of the soap box, I'll say this for Brad Thor; I never knew what the hell ISIS was all about before I read 'Foreign Agent.' Incredible I had to read an action thriller novel to learn ISIS is the Sunni Muslim answer to Shi'a dominance in the northern end of the Persian Gulf. With Saddam gone and Hezbollah predominating for the badly outnumbered Shi'a, some council decided that ISIS would be driven by Wahhabi extremism and borrow from the playbook of Abu Nidal and Black September. Apparently, both major sects of Islam are competing to regain the power of the Ottoman Caliphate--whose empire disintegrated in 1922! Since the organization is also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, they're not limiting empires to the Ottoman, but desire to return to the grandeur of the Arab Levant that dominated the Mediterranean 632-1099 AD?

Finally, I want to take exception to a geographic note made in 'Foreign Agent.' ISIS has chosen to headquarter their leadership in inland desert Syria, first Aleppo and then Raqqa, which are roughly divided by the huge reservoir Lake Assad, built in 1974 to irrigate desert. ISIS presence and power is very much attached to the Euphrates River as it flows through northcentral Syria. Thor casually says the Euphrates' source is Lake Assad, which any reference book would assure you is in the mountains of southeastern Turkey. So enough of that; if you have a chance to read 'Foreign Agent,' by all means do so and enjoy the hell out of it. Tell ya what; when you finish reading it, send me a post and let me know if you agree with my point on Operation Full Justice--no way we'd pull something that bold off until Trump's in the Oval.

SPOILIER PLOT SUMMARY FOLLOWS:

The ISIS Conspiracy. The Islamic State of Iraq & Syria was making a mockery of western political correctness by maiming and killing politicians, celebrities and media masters throughout Europe, especially Paris. POTUS was pissed and told his DCI to 'let the dogs out at 'em.' Scot Harvath, former SEAL and deadly commando, was sent to cut the head off the snake. His task began in Vienna, where he very publicly killed the Paris mastermind al-Shishani, his cover good as a love-happy couple on a Danube River Cruise. Anguishing that it was his last time with Lara Cordero--who'd just been promoted to Ch of Detectives by the BPD--Harvath none the less had the nation's survival riding on his shoulders. So on to Brussels, only to find his key snitch Salah Abaaoud murdered with his mistress, the only clue being his hard drive download for Nicholas the Troll to digest. In the meantime, Army Ranger/CIA-SAD commando Ken Burgland is set up in Al Anbar waiting on word to move against a HVT, so he invites his girl Ashleigh, a CIA mixmaster at the Amman Embassy and two of her friends out to the deserted fort for the weekend. They are overrun and ISIS posts the video of the 3 women being raped, tortured and torn to pieces. Nicholas makes hay from the PC drive as Harvath heads to Frankfurt to solve the 'Lufthansa Link.' In short order, Scot squeezes Jorg Strobl, then with the help of his police wife Anna, snatches Sigmar Eichel who leads them to Russian Mafia don Mikhail Malevsky. Aided greatly by former SVR agent Alexandra Ivanova, Scot grabs Malevsky and delivers he and Eichel to Interrogation King Vella in Malta for deprogramming. The mad chess match continues as US SecDef Devon is ambushed/killed in Antalya, Turkey, visiting his counterpart. Malevsky gives up his

handler, so COL Viktor Sergun is swept from his flat in Berlin to Malta, and Sergun is key for intel. The Russian ploy to eradicate ISIS is run by LGEN Oleg Proskurov out of the Damascus Embassy, but dies before Scot can evacuate him but not before Scot downloads Proskurov's PC to Nicholas, who learns all about Sacha Baseyev finally. Forced to befriend Syrians who hate ISIS, Scot begins his cross country trek to Lake Assad, only for pure mayhem to erupt in DC as a female Kuwaiti student Zainab jumps the White House fence and runs towards the WH before detonating her vest bomb, waving an ISIS flag. Now out of money, Scot promises two Syrian families asylum in US, allowing him to get close enough to Sacha in Furat to capture he and ISIS social media mastermind. He manages to exit Syria w/Sacha, Rafael & ISIS' social media hard drives. Sacha/Rafael tell all as POTUS prepares a proportional response: Operation Full Justice eradicates the Russian naval and air presence in Syria as POTUS pledges his sole support to Israel in the Mid-East. On the side, DCI McGee has foiled his arch-enemy US Senator Wells and his nimble Staff Chief as spies. Harvath moves to Boston to live with Lora and Marco.

Tucker Elliot says

1.0 out of 5 stars this is a bad book in what is otherwise a great series, June 28, 2016

Edit Review

Delete Review

Verified Purchase(What's this?)

This review is from: Foreign Agent: A Thriller (Scot Harvath) (Kindle Edition)

Brad Thor is one of the best writers in this genre and I am a longtime fan of the Scot Harvath series.

However, this is one of the most convoluted and illogical “thrillers” I have ever read.

The plot is similar in many respects to recent titles by Brad Taylor, Alex Berenson and Mark Greaney, in that it has a foreign bad actor trying to lure or trick the United States into declaring war with a third party. But in this instance, the rationale is absurd: Russia wants to destroy ISIS ... but Russia is so inept and incapable of defending itself its leaders decide their best option is to create a super villain/spy/assassin/terrorist who infiltrates ISIS in Iraq and Syria (while simultaneously maintaining a job/cover/lifestyle/apartment as a flight attendant for Lufthansa in Frankfurt, Germany) who then works his way up to one of the highest leadership positions in the Islamic State, and then plans and carries out a string of daring and very successful terror attacks against U.S. interests on three different continents.

And why?

Well, obviously ... because Russian can't destroy ISIS (even though it can infiltrate it at the highest levels), the U.S. has never thought about destroying ISIS, but hey, maybe if Russia helps ISIS attack the U.S., then the U.S. will destroy ISIS for Russia.

That's the plot.

It's a convoluted mess.

And even worse is the way it unfolds. Scot Harvath is no longer a compelling heroic character. Instead he's a caricature, and not a good one. It's like a bad season of 24, only in written form. Remember how Jack Bauer could get called into CTU and infiltrate a group of criminals in exactly 43 minutes of airtime? Even though the criminals knew he'd been CTU previously? That's what Harvath is in this book—an amped up caricature

of Jack Bauer.

Harvath turns person after person into informants/allies after absurd conversations/confrontations/actions that happen so fast its impossible to suspend disbelief even for a work of fiction that you know ahead of time is going to require it. He leaps from country to country, chasing crisis after crisis, tracking one thread after another in the most ridiculous ways.

Case in point: “the drive from Berlin to Frankfurt was just over an hour” (no, it’s not – check a map) and “moving people and black market antiquities ... required a network of people on the take. Eichel had given all of them up.” And why does that matter? Because Harvath, who drove around Bavaria for days with a guy in his trunk, and then drove the guy to Berlin, has now decided to fly him on a private jet owned by the CIA to a black site for interrogation ... but apparently, the CIA doesn’t know how to sneak prisoners onto planes. Instead Harvath forces yet another guy to give up his “network” and then Harvath drives the prisoner from Berlin to Frankfurt just so he can USE the network (made up of criminals that he doesn't know) to sneak his high value prisoner past Frankfurt airport security and onto the private jet. Apparently that was easier than using one of the many U.S. Air Force bases in Germany. You know, the ones with big, private hangers and runways. No, no ... Let's use mainland Europe's busiest airport and a bunch of criminals because that's what Jack Bauer would do.

Oh man.

Really? Who at the publisher thought that whole scene was necessary, added anything to the book, or furthered the plot?

I honestly feel cheated by this book because of instances like the scene described above. It’s a lazy way out for the author. It’s like giving the protagonist a magic bullet to solve all his problems instead of actually creating a character that learns and grows and fails and tries again and eventually works his way to a solution. It’s a gimmick that’s supposed to be cool or ... something. But it’s not. It’s annoying, and I hate that this series is going in this direction more and more with each new book.

Meanwhile, back in the states, the president and every good guy bemoans “oh Harvath, Harvath, please save us, you’re the only one who can save us” or nonsense to that effect.

Plus, Harvath isn’t the only one who rips through scene after scene in this manner. The bad guy does too. He has a foolproof way to enter the U.S. as a flight attendant—but instead, he flies to Mexico and then scuba dives beneath the border and emerges four hours later on U.S. soil.

Okay, then ...

I know I’m ranting, but the thing is, I have read every book in this series. There are people giving this book one star because they want to bash Brad Thor for his political beliefs. That’s nonsense. If you haven’t read the book, don’t review it. But similarly, it’s nonsense for people to give a book five stars just to show their support for Brad Thor. It’s a book review. We’re supposed to be objective about the book, not the author’s politics. And that's what I'm trying to be when I say this book is a new low for the Scot Harvath series. I’m really, really pained to say that because it is honestly one of my favorite series.

I wish someone would take Brad Thor aside and tell him two things: stop chasing conspiracy theories (HIDDEN ORDER), and stop trying so hard to make Harvath a master of every cool thing we see on the news (i.e. Harvath had always been described as former Navy Seal Team 2 and former secret service, but

after the real-life Bin Laden raid, suddenly, in the next book, Harvath is described as a former Seal Team 2 member who got bored by the lack of action and so he jumped to Seal Team 6 ... seriously, check **HIDDEN ORDER** page 76).

Well, my point is this is a bad book in what is otherwise a great series. If you're new to Brad Thor, give his early books a try but skip this one: 1/5 stars.
