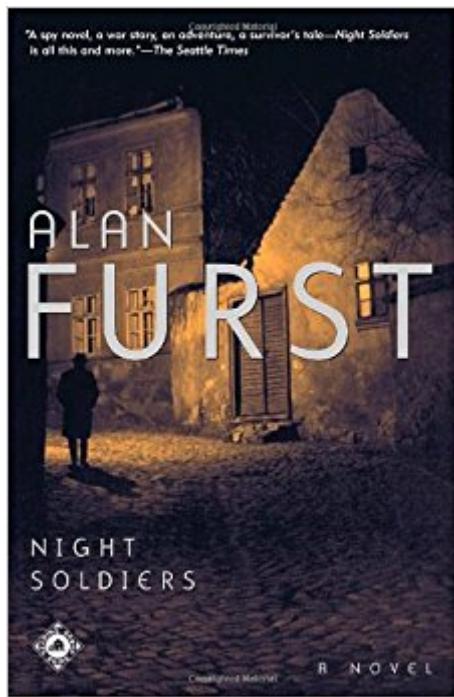


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Night Soldiers: A Novel



Synopsis

Bulgaria, 1934. A young man is murdered by the local fascists. His brother, Khristo Stoianev, is recruited into the NKVD, the Soviet secret intelligence service, and sent to Spain to serve in its civil war. Warned that he is about to become a victim of Stalin's purges, Khristo flees to Paris. Night Soldiers masterfully re-creates the European world of 1934-45: the struggle between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia for Eastern Europe, the last desperate gaiety of the beau monde in 1937 Paris, and guerrilla operations with the French underground in 1944. Night Soldiers is a scrupulously researched panoramic novel, a work on a grand scale.

Book Information

Paperback: 464 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (301 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I have read seven of Alan Furst's eleven (as of 2010) spy novels in rapid succession, so I think it useful to offer these general comments on them as a group, not on "Night Soldiers" per se. But I link this review to "Night Soldiers" because I consider the latter to be the best of Furst's spy tales. It was his first, and it is the longest. That gave him scope to write not just a good spy story but a great novel portraying the deformation of human character entailed in the making of a Soviet KGB (actually then an NKVD) agent. In that regard, the novel draws inspiration from Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon," a defining novel of totalitarianism published 70 years ago, which Furst acknowledges as deeply influencing him. "Night Soldiers" is a worthy successor to "Darkness at Noon," and that is major praise, indeed. But after "Night Soldiers," Furst began to write books not 450 pages in length but 250-300, and has done so in fairly rapid succession. In sum, I suspect he "went commercial." And thus the later books are not really compelling as literature. But, they ARE

tremendously entertaining and beautifully crafted. I've gotten "hooked" on them, even though I almost never read fiction. Their theme is the same: Furst writes about people who, by accident or profession, are caught up as spies or resistance agents in the maelstrom of Europe (especially France and Eastern Europe) during the late 30s and the WW II era. His books offer many pleasures. First, he has the settings and details of pre/trans-war Europe down cold, and so the atmosphere he creates is totally convincing and enveloping--it's rather like "seeing" the movie "Casablanca" in print.

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