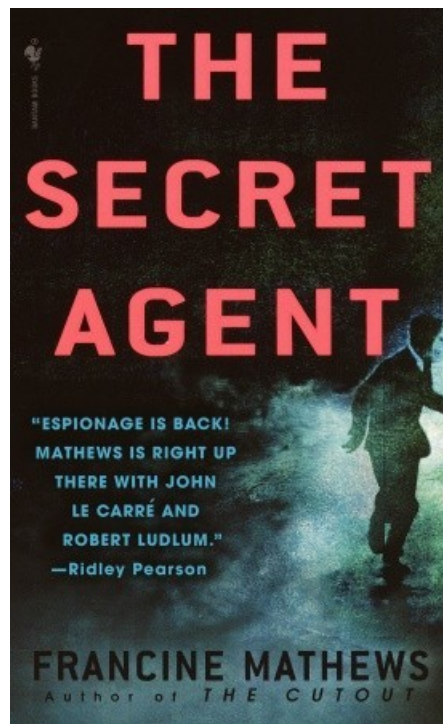




The Secret Agent

Francine Mathews

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In her acclaimed debut, *The Cutout*, former CIA analyst Francine Mathews defined a world of intrigue where only the savvy survive. Now, in *The Secret Agent*, Mathews propels us deep into the baffling history of a maverick American's glittering life and his sudden, cataclysmic disappearance. ... Here is the masterful story of secret agents of many kinds—in a realm where truth is the most dangerous secret of all.

Who was Jack Roderick?

Trained by the OSS, Jack Roderick plummeted into Bangkok one rainy morning in 1945 and never left. Silk King, pirate, ruthless collector of beautiful objects—especially women—Roderick was feared and respected as a foreign spy, a business kingpin, and a trader in men's souls. And then, at the height of the Vietnam War, caught in a killing web of treachery and revenge that would determine the fate of his only son, Rory, Jack Roderick walked into the jungle ...and vanished from the face of the earth.

Four decades later, can the mystery be solved?

International fund manager Stefani Fogg is recruited by a man whose job it is to know the unknowable. Wealthy beyond corruption, impervious to romance, and equipped with a mind that can crack any enigma, Stefani signs up for the adventure of a lifetime: playing Secret Agent to Max Roderick, grandson of Bangkok's long-vanished Legendary American. A world-class skier tangled in a sordid Thai murder investigation, Max is consumed with the riddle of Jack Roderick's disappearance—and with his own father's death in the jungles of Vietnam.

Seduced by Max's charm and intrigued by his family history, Stefani ignores the warning signs and follows her heart. But when Max's quarrel with the Thai police turns deadly and a killer strikes, she knows she must return to the place where it all began, to unravel the lies, penetrate a deadly conspiracy, and expose a killing truth. She flees Max's France for Bangkok's *khlongs*—into the ruins of the Silk King's dark past and the mesmerizing shadow of the Roderick family curse. What she finds, in Jack Roderick's story and in the fate of his fighter-pilot son, is an American dream that crashed and burned in the rice paddies of Vietnam and a chilling legacy that haunts our own to this day.

Propelling us masterfully through half a century, from Manhattan to the Alps to the colorful and treacherous heart of Bangkok, and based on the life of American expatriate Jim Thompson, *The Secret Agent* is at once a murder mystery, a touching love story, and a lavishly atmospheric journey through the exotic landscape of love and history—an historical thriller of the first rank.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Secret Agent Details

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Author : Francine Mathews

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From Reader Review The Secret Agent for online ebook

Travis Kendall says

Loosely based on the exploits and disappearance of American spy/silk king Jim Thompson, The Secret Agent moves between modern day and 1945-67. The portion dealing with the 1945-67 is infinitely more interesting and better written. The story is far more involved and the characters are far more interesting and complex (maybe because they are based on real people). The modern day part is filled with stock characters, cheesy dialogue, and annoying Dan-Brownish plot twists. If this had just been the Jack Roderick story it would have fared better. On the whole, kind of average.

Jacqueline says

Stephanie Fog is recruited as an agent by a private security firm and becomes embroiled in a story going back to Vietnam War. Set in Geneva, Bangkok and New York. A page turner following the quest to retrieve the inheritance of Max Roderick grandson of the silk king

Jenney says

the action was swift and compelling, to the point i did not want to put the book down. however, i found the story-line of Jack Brodrick much more interesting than the Max/Stephanie chapters. the descriptions of life in bangkok was right on the money.

Eric Pollard says

Elements of the plot were a bit, okay more than a bit, far-fetched, but I did like the description of post-WWII Bangkok. In that sense, I felt the flash back portion of the book was much stronger, almost as if the modern thriller was bolted onto a decent piece of historical fiction.

Dan Downing says

In a sweeping display of mixed genres, Mathews takes us from the clutches of an early version of Red Reddington (The Black List) to ice cutting ski adventure in the French Alps to Southeast Asia, where we watch a drama of intrigue, mayhem and corruption unfold over a 60 year period. Interspersed with touches of improbable but satisfying romance, this story is based in the hard realities of life in ancient societies struggling to emerge into the 20th century. A stellar effort. Five, in fact. Recommended.

Margaret Stickland says

I knew of Jim Thompson and the Silk trade. Bought a card with one of his designs. So I didn't know that this book was a romp around with his life. I gave it three stars probably deserved 2, too many characters and flashbacks. All a bit messy.

Matt says

The first book in a while that I didn't want to put down. It's not so much an espionage thriller the title implies, but the layers of personal, financial and political intrigue hooked me. The story develops over two time lines with a family link. Matthews does great job put you in the time and place of her characters.

Martha Nance says

OK, 3.75 stars. Francine Mathews redeems herself with this tale of Southeast Asia from the end of WWII through the Vietnam War and up to the end of the 20th century. The plot skips among 3 time periods and has lots of characters that are sometimes hard to keep straight, but, overall, a very good story.

Lani says

A fun summer read. A step up from a regular spy book. It's semi-historical fiction. This would be really great to read in Thailand or before you go. I learned a lot about post World War 2 and how Thailand fit into the geopolitical landscape between WWII and Vietnam.

Jeanne says

This book is a real "sleeper," with so few reviews & mediocre ratings. Part semi-historical fiction, part espionage thriller, it held my attention right up until an interesting ending. After finishing it, I was compelled to read more about Mathews' research on the disappearance of Jim Thompson. And then one thing led to another...Thailand's history surrounding WWII, the murder of Rama the 8th & on & on. I feel as though I've just taken a crash course in Asian history, but without the worry of an exam:>

Jannelies says

De zijdekoning is een boek voor de liefhebbers van het 'echte' spionageboek. Gebaseerd op een ware gebeurtenis vertelt Matthews met vaart en gevoel het verhaal van Stefani Fogg en de familie Roderick. In 1945 komt de jonge geheim agent Jack Roderick aan in Bangkok. Hij besluit er te blijven. In de loop der jaren bouwt hij een heel imperium op: Roderick Silk. In 1969, tijdens de Vietnam-oorlog, verdwijnt hij spoorloos. Zijn enige zoon Rory wordt enkele weken later opgepakt en doodgemaakt. Gelukkig heeft ook

Rory kans gezien om nog net een zoon te verwekken: Max. Deze Max is het die Stefani Fogg, steenrijke jonge vrouw, moet gaan helpen zijn erfenis uit Thaise handen te krijgen. Het huis van zijn grootvader Jack staat nog steeds in Bangkok, maar is in gebruik als museum. Stefani krijgt haar opdracht van ene Oliver, een geheimzinnige en eigenaardige figuur.

Zoals ik al zei, het verhaal is neergezet met spanning en gevoel. We springen heen en weer tussen de gebeurtenissen in 1945, 1969 en de huidige tijd. Langzamerhand zien we het verhaal zich ontwikkelen. Dit alles wordt gelardeerd met informatie over de politieke toestand in de wereld in de desbetreffende tijd. Dat is natuurlijk wel nodig, want wie heeft dat nu allemaal onthouden? Wat blijft is wel het besef dat de wereld toen al net zo'n akelig politiek broeinest was als nu. Er is helaas niets veranderd...

Francine Mathews werkte jarenlang voor de CIA. Grappig is wel dat ze in haar dankwoord vermeldt dat de censuurcommissie van de CIA het boek heeft gelezen voor het werd ingeleverd bij de uitgever. Ahem, je zou er bijna wat van gaan denken.

Ik heb het boek met veel genoeg gelezen. Wat het plezier wel bedierf is het enorme aantal fouten dat ik aantrof. Het is werkelijk stuitend. Waarschijnlijk was de corrector op vakantie toen dit boek ter perse moest gaan, want het is om te huilen. Er zitten verschrikkelijke inconsequenties in: iemand gaat dood en laat aan persoon A een wijnkelder na. Enkele pagina's later blijkt die wijnkelder blijkbaar van persoon B te zijn. Het boek bestaat uit verschillende delen, en deel 2 is verkeerd genummerd. Ik kwam verder ook nog vreselijke dingen tegen als: 'het meisje die'. Om beroerd van te worden! Het héle boek zit vol met dit soort dingen. Ik heb een mailtje gestuurd aan de uitgever.

Van de verantwoordelijk redacteur van die uitgeverij kreeg ik een allervriendelijkste mail terug. Zij verzekert mij dat het voor haar - en de desbetreffende uitgeverij - bijzonder belangrijk is dat er zo weinig mogelijk fouten in een boek zitten. Ik ben heel blij met deze reactie! Het laat zien dat het niet allemaal kommer en kwel is in uitgeversland. Dit geeft hoop voor de toekomst.

Luann says

An interesting story - made me want to learn more about Jim Thompson. I struggled at times with keeping the different story lines and characters separate with the constant switch between past and present. Overall a pretty good book and story although I was NOT surprised by the ending.

Kathy kennedy says

The book was action packed. It started out slowly and was a bit confusing as some of the characters were hard to keep track of as the names were similiar. Story of 3 generations of men in South East Asia from WW2 to early 21st century. Lots of commentary on political environment at the time. A good read.

Robert Scott says

Stefani Fogg is roped into a seemingly impossible job by Oliver Krane because she is bored as the manager of an international finance fund. She is assigned the task of getting information from Max Roderick a famous

champion ski racer that has retired and is living in the French Alps. After several attempts on his life/or hers his spine is fractured and with her help he is sent to an exclusive private clinic for surgery and rehab. He sends her away although she has fallen in love with him. She travels the far east trying to trace his claim to the assets of the grandfather Jack Roderick and is stymied by the Thai government in the form of the minister of culture Sompong Suwannathat. Stefani is caught in the intrigues of Bangkok and is not sure that OK is on her side nor whom else she can trust.

D says

A fascinating story with a strong female character:) The action primarily takes place in Southeast Asia. Francine Mathews, the author, does an excellent job with character development. The pace gradually increases to the point that you cannot put the book down. So very envious of Stefani and the exciting life that she leads!
