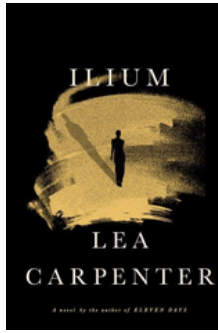


Karen's Summer Buzz 2024

The Inner Lives of Women Spies

Fiction

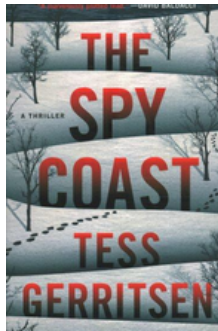
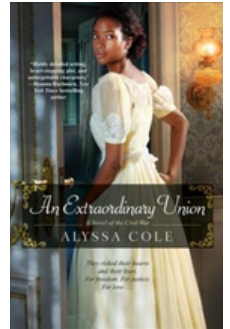


Carpenter, Lea. **Ilium** (2024)

The cool, minimalist tone, the inexorable build, and the main character's introspection might not scream Spy Novel in the traditional sense, but as the plot tensions deepen, layers of mystery are peeled away, and the action explodes, you'll come away from this very slim volume feeling you've delved as deeply into the making of a modern spy as any Le Carre novel. PS - if you love your spy novels set in rich people's playgrounds, you'll enjoy the London and Mallorca locations.

Cole, Alyssa. **An Extraordinary Union** (2017)

In the mood for some Civil War era spying with a little romance mixed in? Nothing will make you turn pages faster than an Alyssa Cole novel. Elle Burns, formerly enslaved and now free, returns to the indignity of slavery as a Union Army Spy. Cole creates scenes worthy of a film set, full of historical detail with action on page one, not to mention other kinds of tension when Elle meets the undeniably attractive Malcolm McCall. But will forbidden love and a highly dangerous mission keep them apart?



Gerritsen, Tess. **The Spy Coast** (2023): **The Martini Club** series

After 40 years of writing Gerritsen turns her focus to the world of espionage in this perfect summer spy read. Maggie Bird is 60 and has retired to mid-coast Maine after a full career in the CIA. When a past mission involving the only man she ever loved comes back to haunt her, her CIA buddies rally around to help. Fast-paced with plenty of action and travel to far-flung locales, not to mention some great secondary characters with stories to be developed when book two arrives in 2025.

Glass, Ava. **Alias Emma** (2022) and **Traitor** (2023): **Emma Makepeace** series

These slim, fast-moving, modern takes on the spy novel have high entertainment value and won't weigh down your beach bag. Starring Emma Makepeace, a newly fledged member of MI6, Glass gives us all the taut action, love interests, and settings you'd find in a Bond film. And don't let the name fool you, Makepeace is no '60s Bond girl - she's driven, resourceful, and knows London, not to mention Russian and hand-to-hand combat as well as the next shaken-not-stirred guy.



Katsu, Alma. **Red Widow** (2018) and **Red London** (2023): **Lyndsey Duncan** series

With over 30 years' experience as an intelligence professional at CIA and NSA, Katsu knows something about what it means to be a spy, and this series set in Putin's and post-Putin(!) Russia that will have you rethinking what a spy's life might really be like. Yes, there's action, love, and exotic locales, but Katsu also makes you feel the waiting, the boredom, the isolation, and gives you a look deep into the inner lives, relationships, insecurities, and moral dilemmas of everyday spy life.

Karen's Summer Buzz 2024

Fiction, continued.

The Inner Lives of Women Spies

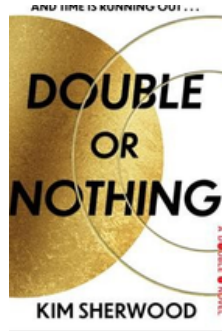


Knecht, Rosalie. **Who is Vera Kelly?** (2018) Trilogy

The answer to the question in the title may not be easily answered, but we come to know our hero, flipping between past and present, from her dysfunctional childhood to undercover work in South America, from looking for love in the gay bars of 1960s Greenwich Village to clandestine Argentinian assignments. (The trilogy takes her beyond the CIA and into life as a private investigator and yes, into a relationship!) Laconic prose, an eminently capable heroine, and an “unrushed but never slow” pace, make this a series for those looking for their spies not shaken, but with a twist.

Matthews, Jason. **Red Sparrow** (2013) Trilogy.

No, not written by a woman, but this classic red vs. red/white/blue spy trilogy has one of the great women characters (she's the Russian spy) in the genre, not to mention an enemies to lovers story that will rip at your heartstrings. The details of tradecraft, torture, international intrigue, and double/triple crosses are all the more believable given Matthews own tenure in the CIA. Unputdownable suspense filled with great characters (and, for audio lovers, a great listen too!).

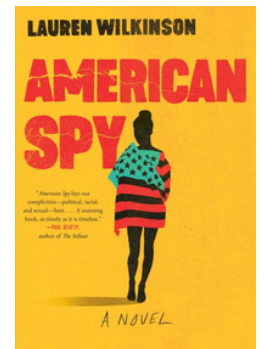


Sherwood, Kim. **Double or Nothing** (2023)

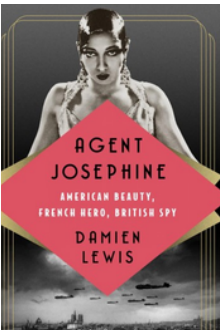
While we're in waiting for the next cinematic James Bond, why not try this latest, and frankly superior, addition to the Bond universe? Bond is missing and the other double-0s are called in to, you guessed it, save the world from certain destruction (and find Bond at the same time). Come for the modern tone and characters, unconstrained by the old Bond tropes, and stay for a well-written densely plotted spy thriller that owes a lot to the energy, verve, and grit of Fleming's originals.

Wilkinson, Lauren. **American Spy** (2018)

It's 1986, the heart of the Cold War, and Marie Mitchell is an intelligence officer with the FBI. She's brilliant, but she's also a young black woman being sidelined in an old boys' club. She reluctantly accepts an assignment to Burkino Faso, knowing that she will be required to do things she does not want to, and that she has probably been chosen because of the way she looks. Like cinema verité or a juicy docudrama, Wilkinson's “stoic” tone and matter-of-fact, clear-eyed telling rip this story of political intrigue and violence, seduction, love, grief, and race off the page and toss it into the reader's lap.



Nonfiction



Lewis, Damien. **Agent Josephine: American Beauty, French Hero, British Spy** (2022)

Like your spy stories full of real-life glamor and derring-do? Turns out that Josephine Baker was more than just an immensely talented singer and dancer; her love affair with Paris and the French led her to WWII spy work that took her from Europe to Casablanca. Damien Lewis, war journalist and author of numerous British WWII histories, brings his research skills and a penchant for propulsive, colorful prose to this dramatic tale of resistance, describing a dramatic period of her dramatic life that Baker described as being the highlight of her career.

Mundy, Liza. **The Sisterhood: The Secret History of Women at the CIA** (2023)

A thorough history, delivered with a light touch, of the unseen women who underpinned the workings of the CIA for decades without recognition. Mundy tells the stories of the real-life women of the CIA, from secretaries and wives of CIA officers who used their wits and invisibility in a man's world to subtly shift the tide of history, to those few who broke barriers through sheer brilliance and gutsy determination to rise to the top of this male bastion. Prepare to be enlightened and wowed by the history she uncovers.

