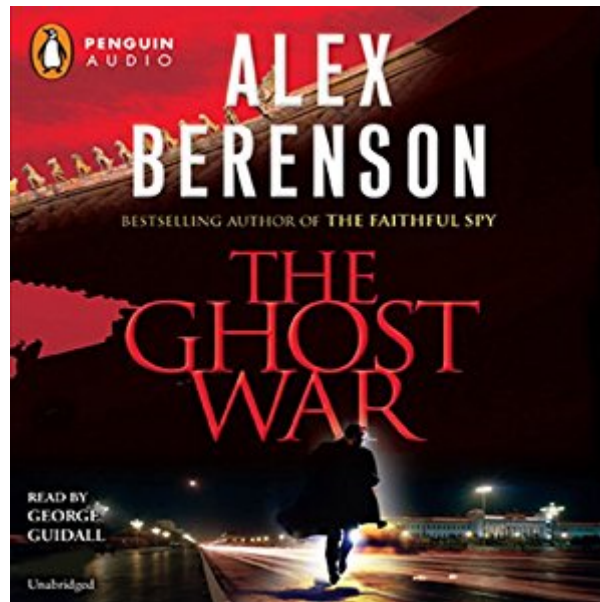


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The Ghost War



Synopsis

CIA agent John Wells returns, in a novel that reaches beyond today's headlines to foretell dangers yet to come, from the author of *The Faithful Spy*-"one of the best spy stories ever told" (*The Wall Street Journal*). --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Berenson's first book, *The Faithful Spy*, was amazing - crisp writing, well-thought-out action, fine character development. The loss that John Wells incurred by serving as the secret servant of the US for many years was staggeringly portrayed: the deaths of his parents, the loss of contact with his child, the sense of being out-of-step with what he thought of as his own culture, all of this should have made even the most cynical readers think about what deep-cover agents agree to give up. It's hard to imagine how Berenson could have upped the stakes in a second novel. And he doesn't. He simply provides a compelling and realistic continuation of the narrative. What can Wells do to top saving the world in Times Square? Not much. But Berenson gives us another tale well worth reading, as well as a number of political zingers to wonder over. The John Wells character continues to develop in *The Ghost War*, and unsurprisingly he is beset by doubts about how he can sustain the life he has fallen into back in the States. Berenson, realizing that his readers expect action, doesn't let this introspection go on too long, but it is a necessary preface to the main events of the novel; without that we would just have James Bond walking in the door and greeting Moneypenny, ready for the next adventure. Jennifer Exley, the CIA handler who saves Wells in the first book, is

back, but we see less of her than I had hoped. There are some passages about her choice of a professional life over the young children she has, but these all have a slightly formulaic ring. Yes, Exley avoids stereotypes, but that's about the best that we can say for her in this book. Even her out-of-the-box solution for getting Wells back is given only the briefest brush of ink. More next time?

Alex Berenson's premiere thriller, *THE FAITHFUL SPY*, introduced CIA agent John Wells, a character who truly stood out among fictional spies. He had been under cover for ten years, infiltrating Al Qaeda. Embedded, he became a practicing Muslim in deed and, intriguingly, thought. *THE GHOST WAR* picks up Wells' story after he has been back in the U.S. for some time. Insomnia plagues his restless mind and body, so he speeds along largely empty interstates in the dead of night on his black Honda motorcycle, taking "joyless joyrides." He's become a re-Americanized guy, a guy who no longer prays five times a day, who is no longer Muslim (or "Moslem," the alternate spelling) and therein lies a loss of distinction. Suddenly, Alex Berenson's hero tends to blend into the crowd of fellow super-spies whose tales line the bookstore adventure shelves. Once one has accustomed oneself to Wells' more generic identity, *THE GHOST WAR* is a solid (but not exceptional) read. He is a hero at loose ends, a man in need of a new mission, his loyal and loving girlfriend (and boss), Jennifer Exley, is sure. And since the world is never a static, uncomplicated place, one comes his way in short order. The basic geopolitical premises the fuel the plot are credible. Certainly, China and the U.S. could flirt dangerously with war. Certainly, North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, and other "hot spots" could play parts in exacerbating tensions between the current superpower and, according to some predictions, its presumed successor. And it goes without saying that the CIA sends spies to gather vital intelligence and extract foreign nationals who are vital assets. So, *THE GHOST WAR* is, in many ways, a believable techno-thriller.

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