

House of Spies

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By Daniel Silva

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Introduction

Four months after the deadliest attack on the American homeland since 9/11, terrorists leave a trail of carnage through London's glittering West End. The attack is a brilliant feat of planning and secrecy, but with one loose thread.

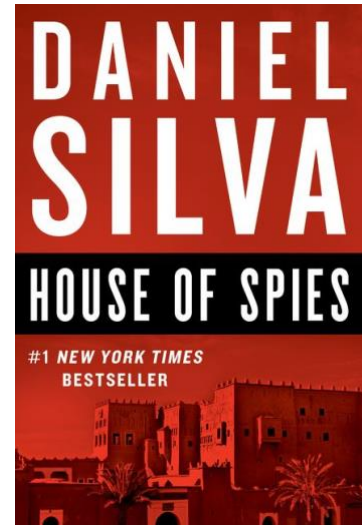
The thread leads Gabriel Allon and his team of operatives to the south of France and to the gilded doorstep of Jean-Luc Martel and Olivia Watson. A beautiful former British fashion model, Olivia pretends not to know that the true source of Martel's enormous wealth is drugs. And Martel, likewise, turns a blind eye to the fact he is doing business with a man whose objective is the very destruction of the West. Together, under Gabriel's skilled hand, they will become an unlikely pair of heroes in the global war on terror.

Written in seductive and elegant prose, the story moves swiftly from the glamour of Saint-Tropez to the grit of Casablanca and, finally, to an electrifying climax that will leave readers breathless long after they turn the final page.

But *House of Spies* is more than just riveting entertainment; it is a dazzling tale of avarice and redemption, set against the backdrop of the great conflict of our times. And it proves once again why Daniel Silva is "quite simply the best" (*Kansas City Star*).

Questions for Discussion

1. Gabriel Allon is now the chief of Israel's secret intelligence service and his personal life has changed dramatically. He and his wife, Chiara, are now the parents of infant twins, Irene and Raphael. How has this changed his life? In particular, how does having a family affect Gabriel and his approach to his work?
2. Gabriel's life has been about restoring others. Is he now restored?
3. The men and women of King Saul Boulevard are "liars by trade" and speak the truth "only among themselves." Is that justified when dealing with a dangerous world? What are the differences between withholding information, lying, and deceit?



4. What is it about Saladin that makes him particularly effective and dangerous? What does his character represent in terms of the dangers facing the world today?
5. The book opens with Julian Isherwood's heroic act. What is the importance of an unlikely hero? What might explain Julian Isherwood's unexpected decision during the attack on St. Martin's Theater to risk his life to save the many dining at the Ivy? Why was this decision "the easiest of his life"? How might his family history have been a factor?
6. How do you feel about how the modern technological landscape has changed both terrorism and the attempt to combat it? How do you feel about the loss of privacy?
7. What is "cyberjihad"? What does it mean for the future of both the fight against terror and the nature of those who perpetrate it? What are the implications of the fact that "Saladin had made his last stand not with a gun but with a Nokia 5 Android phone"? How will "the new normal" be decided?
8. British instructor Tony Quill argues that in the war on terror, "Americans depended on technology, MI6 specialized in human intelligence." What are the benefits and limits of each? Are you comfortable with the use of drone technology in the war on terrorism?
9. Gabriel Allon has restored Christopher Keller to his home, his parents, and to MI6. He was once an assassin, working on the island of Corsica. How does his unique history make him an important asset and character in his new life? What unusual or even contrary experience does he bring to Her Majesty's government?
10. Consider Keller's musing on the second half of the ancient proverb, "He who has lost two homes loses his mind." What defines a home for a person? Is it a place or a feeling, or both? How important is the notion of home to other characters in the book such as Julian Isherwood, Gabriel Allon, and Ari Shamron? Many of the characters have grown up in other countries. Does this influence who they have become or how they feel about their missions?
11. The French Alpha Group functions undercover as the International Society for French Literature. Where are there literary allusions (names of authors or characters, book titles,

narrative components) throughout the novel? What significant ideas or connotations does each add?

12. Gabriel is reassured by Paul Rousseau's nonchalant "private rebellion" of French smoking laws. What is the relationship between rule and rebellion in the kind of work they do? How might one determine when breaking a rule is justified or valuable?
13. Do you have any sympathy for the characters Olivia Watson and Jean-Luc Martel, "hotelier, restaurateur, clothier, jeweler"?
14. How do you feel about the relationship between Christopher Keller and Olivia Watson? Do they make a good romantic match or not? Why does Gabriel think they "were made for each other"? What would each of them need from a relationship to, as she suggests, "make it all better"?
15. How is the idea of patience important in the novel? Why, according to Gabriel, is there "nothing more dangerous...than a patient man"?
16. Why is it important that Gabriel goes into the field...that he insists on walking "an administrative tightrope, a chief one minute, a field man and planner the next"?
17. What challenges does Dr. Natalie Mizrahi confront during and after serving undercover as Leila Hadawi? Why did she choose to save the life of "the greatest terror mastermind since Osama bin Laden"? Of what significance is it that during this time Saladin referred to her as Maimonides?
18. Chief of the CIA's Directorate of Operations, Adrian Carter believes that it is "dangerous to mix ideology and intelligence." What does he mean? How might one determine the difference between "operational caution" and "weakness"?
19. What role does Ari Shamron play in this book and in his relationship with Gabriel Allon? Of what significance is it that Ari Shamron chose to make his home just north of Kfar Hittim? Personally or symbolically, what is suggested by Shamron's "only hobby," repairing old radios?

20. Why did Gabriel—despite the importance of Chiara, their new twins, and being injured—insist on risking his life to be the one to stop Saladin?

21. What operational difficulties—politically, geographically, and otherwise—exist in Morocco? What particular challenges are posed by having to carry out part of the operation in the Sahara? How does the team combat them?

22. Consider how what remained of the Antonovs' money, art, and property was distributed after the operation. What do the chosen charities suggest about other important necessities in this war on terror? In what ways, as Gabriel argues to Ari, might helping to care for Syrian refugees be “smart policy”? Why is “a scholarship program for promising Israeli artists from lower-income families” important?