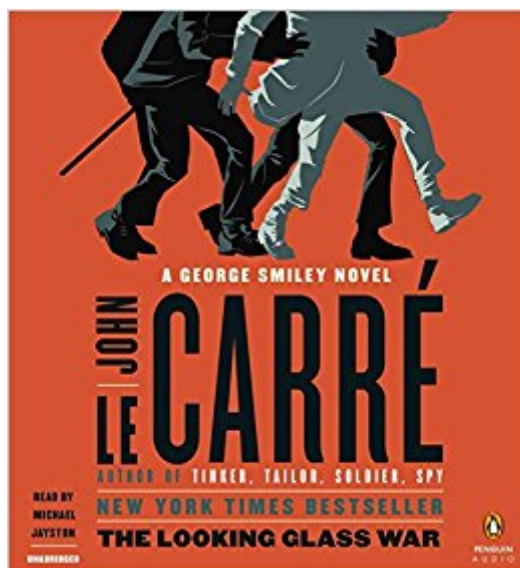


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The Looking Glass War (Penguin Audio Classics)



Synopsis

"You are either good or bad, and both are dangerous." It would have been an easy job for the Circus: a can of film couriered from Helsinki to London. In the past the Circus handled all things political, while the Department dealt with matters military. But the Department has been moribund since the War, its resources siphoned away. Now, one of their agents is dead, and vital evidence verifying the presence of Soviet missiles near the West German border is gone. John Avery is the Department's younger member and its last hope. Charged with handling Fred Leiser, a German-speaking Pole left over from the War, Avery must infiltrate the East and restore his masters' former glory. John le Carre's *The Looking Glass War* is a scorching portrayal of misplaced loyalties and innocence lost. With an introduction by the author.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A bitter, bleak, superlatively written novel." *Publishers Weekly* "A book of rare and great power." *Financial Times* *Praise for The Looking Glass War*

Pre-eminent spy novelist John le Carre weaves an intricate spell of suspicion and deceit as three men play a double-sided game of war. It's been twenty years since the end of World War II and things just haven't been the same in British intelligence. But now comes word that Russian missiles have been sighted in East Germany. Suddenly, the Department's old juices begin to flow as the Cold War rapidly heats up. And three British subjects find themselves undertaking the most perilous

mission of their careers: Avery, young and on the way up, willing to sacrifice his marriage, his honor, even his manhood for the "greater good"

One of his earlier novels, it uses a power struggle between two post-war intelligence agencies as its background. His depictions of this internecine combat ring true but there really aren't any memorable characters in this one - whether major ones like Smiley and Guillan, or the minor ones who sparkle like Esterhase and Connie Sachs. By the way, it's not really a Smiley novel - he's a very minor character whose only role is to clean up someone else's mess at the very end of the book.

Realistic spy novel

Another marvelous work of art by one of the most gifted writers of all time. John le Carre's novels simply leave me speechless. Well done!

This is one of LeCarre's lesser works. It's hard to nail down what he is trying to convey. The motivation of the characters is not very well defined. You jump from one character to another, so that it is hard to identify with anyone.

It's a classic, and I can see why.

This is NOT, repeat, NOT a "George Smiley" novel despite what it says on the cover -- Smiley was born out of this novel, but I was disappointed that his role in the novel is slim to none. Still, it's LeCarre, how disappointed can you be?

No James Bond. No infallible security service. Bureaucrats, fools, and misguided patriots playing power games. Each level lying to those below them and expediency the only test of right & wrong.

The Looking Glass War is billed as "A George Smiley Novel." It is the fourth installment in the series of John Le Carré books where Smiley plays a part, but his role here is very small. The main story concerns the U.K. "Department" (military intelligence) competing with its "Circus" (political intelligence) for glory. The Department ran agents

against the Nazis during World War II but has since fallen in missions, personnel, and funding. The Circus, on the other hand, seems to be gobbling up all those things. So, when the Department receives intelligence of a possible missile program in East German, it reactivates an old agent to confirm that program's existence. The program doesn't exist, the agent is captured but his fate left unknown, and Smiley is sent by Circus to communicate to the reorganization of the Department. While The Looking Glass War has some interesting bits about interdepartmental rivalry, the training of spies, and the perils of espionage to those who are carrying it out, on the whole, the novel failed to capture my imagination. I read it more out of duty than delight. Even Le Carré admits in his Introduction that it was received poorly by critics. After reading The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, this novel was a disappointment. Thankfully, Le Carré followed The Looking Glass War with Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, which I am currently reading, and that is a real page-turner. If you, like me, prefer to read series novels in order, I can honestly recommend that you skip this one and go directly from The Spy Who Came in from the Cold to Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy. You won't be missing much.

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