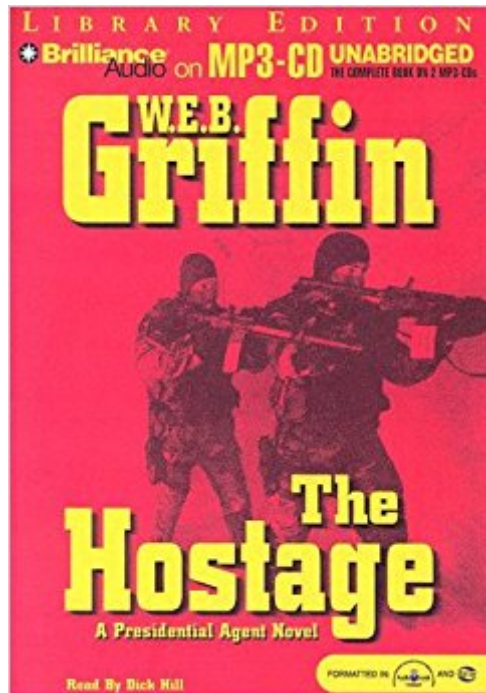


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The Hostage: A Presidential Agent Novel (Presidential Agent Series)



Synopsis

By Order of the President, the first novel in Griffin's crackling new Presidential Agent series, won immediate acclaim from critics and fans alike. "True virtuosity," praised the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "Cutting-edge," agreed Publishers Weekly. "The end leaves readers standing on the tarmac waiting for Castillo and his newly minted band of can-do compatriots to touch down and carry them away again on a new adventure." Charley Castillo works with the Department of Homeland Security, but more and more is the man to whom the President turns when he needs an investigation done discreetly. And no situation demands discretion more than the one before them now. An American diplomat's wife is kidnapped in Argentina, and her husband murdered before her eyes. Her children will be next, she is told, if she doesn't tell them where her brother is - a brother, as it turns out, who may know quite a bit about the burgeoning UN/Iraq oil-for-food scandal. There is an awful lot of money flying around, and an awful lot of hands are reaching up to grab it - and some of those hands don't mind shedding as much blood as it takes. Before the investigation is over . . . It might even be Castillo's blood.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Until now, I suppose I was the only person left in America who had not read anything by the prolific W.E.B. Griffin. Glad that's changed AND what a great book The Hostage was. At nearly 500 pages it is sort of long for a thriller, but I can't say there was very much if any real "fat" in the book. This is the second book in Griffin's new Presidential Agent series. For what it's worth, if you have not read

the first book in this series, I don't think you really need too. Griffin does a very thorough job of bringing you up to speed on how his "presidential agent" actually got the job he now holds. The editorial review from Booklist is a good plot review so I won't repeat that, but I can add that getting Major "Charlie" Castillo into his current position involves on-going turf battles with a lot of governmental intelligence agencies, and while you may not think that would make for good storytelling, it actually does. Put another way, each encounter is a satisfying adventure in and of itself. The book is as timely as reading today's newspaper or watching the evening news, only more exciting and more authoritatively reported! This is an easy read, primarily because of its extremely accurate conversational quality. I have read countless books about soldiers or former soldiers who are doing the things that soldiers do, and I would think to myself that soldiers don't talk or act that way. Griffin however, has the lingo and the mannerisms cold. Hostage will appeal to a wide variety of people and especially people who are familiar with the areas portrayed in the book. I am amazed at the sort detail and "insider" knowledge Griffin shares with the reader.

The second book in the Presidential Agent series is excellent. The character, Carlos Castillo, was introduced in the first novel of this new series. The exposition of the backstory is done very well and is not as obtrusive as it was in some of the other series. Another review comments that you don't have to read the first book to enjoy this one and that is true. The author is in top form. He combines a topical subject with his favorite scenes in Argentina and Germany. Griffin fans like me know that his novels follow his own life story with the addition of inside information that he is privy to through old friends in the military. The lead character Charley Castillo is also a German national named Karl Gossinger. His father was a Green Beret and helicopter pilot who was killed in Vietnam. His mother is a wealthy German woman who was not married and who knew nothing of what had happened to the father of her child. She dies young in the first book leaving Karl an orphan. An Army officer acquaintance traces the father at her request as she is dying and finds that he has been dead for years. That is why he never returned to her. The grandparents, wealthy Texas Hispanics, come to Germany, bring the boy to America and he assumes his second identity. He graduates from West Point and becomes a helicopter pilot like his father. Griffin was a young soldier in Germany during the occupation after WWII. He then attended Phillips University in Marburg, as do many of his characters. He served in Korea, called up from the Reserves just as some of his characters were. In recent years he has lived part of the year in Argentina and the Honor Bound series, also excellent, explores the history of that country when Peron came to power.

I've read various books in Griffin's Presidential Agent series, but I've read them out of order. I wish I'd read this one in its proper place, number two, because it explains how Charley Castillo goes from his first-book exploit recovering a stolen 727 from terrorists, to becoming head of a secret team, how he assembles it, and the back stories of many of the characters. A lot of that wasn't apparent to me earlier. It also has tremendous background on the Oil-For-Food scandal. With Iraqi oil embargoed in the 1990s, Saddam Hussein was allowed to use some oil to barter for food and medicine in a UN program. The program instead became massively corrupt, as Hussein used oil to buy friends at the UN by making them rich, with UN officials themselves heavily implicated in it. They took bribes to look the other way as huge amounts of oil were smuggled illegally out of the country. Back to this book: When the wife of the number two American diplomat in Buenos Aires is kidnapped, there are no leads. Fearing slow movement and ass-covering by the bureaucracies involved, the president asks Castillo, still a Special Forces major but now also a deputy to the secretary of Homeland Security, to go there and take charge of the investigation. Castillo, with little background in this type of investigation, is sent into the situation over the heads of nearly everyone – the US ambassador, the Argentine security forces, the FBI and CIA – and where they are now potential enemies who may block his work. He must make them his allies, while trying to make sense of a baffling situation and forestalling – unsuccessfully – subsequent attacks.

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