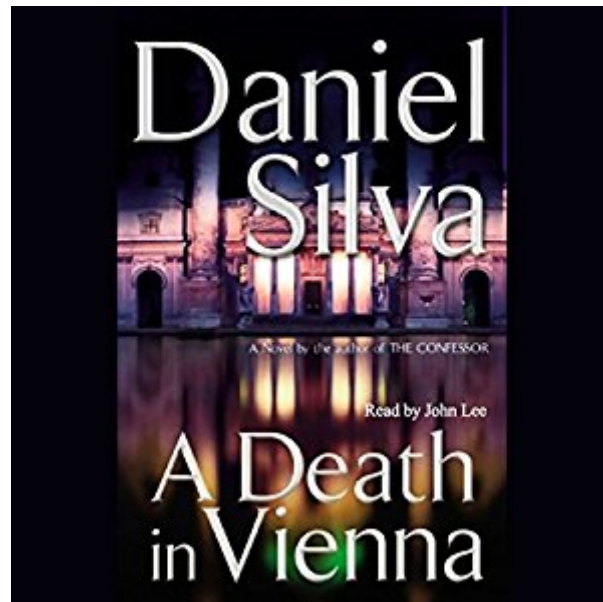


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A Death In Vienna



Synopsis

The sins of the past reverberate into the present, in an extraordinary novel by the new master of international suspense. It was an ordinary-looking photograph. Just the portrait of a man. But the very sight of it chilled Allon to the bone. Art restorer and sometime spy Gabriel Allon is sent to Vienna to authenticate a painting, but the real object of his search becomes something else entirely: to find out the truth about the photograph that has turned his world upside down. It is the face of the unnamed man who brutalized his mother in the last days of World War II, during the Death March from Auschwitz. But is it really the same one? If so, who is he? How did he escape punishment? Where is he now? Fueled by an intensity he has not felt in years, Allon cautiously begins to investigate; but with each layer that is stripped away, the greater the evil that is revealed, a web stretching across sixty years and thousands of lives. Soon, the quest for one monster becomes the quest for many. And the monsters are stirring... Rich with sharply etched characters and prose, and a plot of astonishing intricacy, this is an uncommonly intelligent thriller by one of our very best writers. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The death camps of the Reich provide the underpinnings of this intense and fast-paced novel in which the author draws new attention to the collusion of governments and institutions in protecting Nazi war criminals into the present day. Gabriel Allon, the main character, is working peacefully as a fine art restorer in Venice when he is suddenly summoned by his mentor in the Israeli secret service

to investigate the bombing of the Vienna Office of Wartime Claims and Inquiries. Although the Austrian government has declared the bombing to be the work of an Islamist terrorist group, Allon believes it is more likely the result of current anti-Semitism within Austria. An extremely conservative candidate for Chancellor is given a high likelihood of winning the coming election and, the author points out, bringing the philosophy of the Reich into the twenty-first century. As Allon searches for the perpetrators, the action careens from Vienna to Israel, Italy, Argentina, the US, and back to Vienna, and involves complex political, financial, and national security issues affecting a number of countries. Always, the present is tied to the history of the Reich. Erich Radek, a former Nazi, is still alive and active in Vienna, his war-time obliteration of the graves and bodies at Polish death camps so total that a new generation of Austrians is now asking, "Where is the evidence that the Holocaust ever happened?" Konrad Becker, a Zurich banker, has a mysterious client with over two billion dollars in assets; a Catholic bishop who helped war criminals escape is still connected to governments and police; successive governments in Argentina have provided aid to war criminals since the time of Peron; and American CIA agents have protected some war criminals during the Cold War.

"A Death in Vienna" is Daniel Silva's third novel about how the horrors of the Holocaust reach into the present. Gabriel Allon is a former Israeli spy who now works as an art restoration expert in Venice. His old boss from the Israeli Intelligence Service, Ari Shamron, appears one day with devastating news about an explosion in Vienna. Gabriel is not anxious to go back to the city where his wife and son had been victims of a car bomb in 1991. However, Shamron persuades him to return to this "forbidden city" to investigate the bombing of the Wartime Claims and Inquiries Office, which left two young women dead and an old friend, Eli Lavon, in a coma. Gabriel soon learns that a man named Max Klein had set the events in motion that may have led to the bombing. Klein had once been a violinist in the Auschwitz camp orchestra and he had a particularly vivid memory of a Nazi named Erich Radek. In front of Klein, Radek once killed fifteen concentration camp prisoners in cold blood when they could not correctly identify a musical piece by Brahms. Many years later, Klein spots this same war criminal placidly having coffee in a Viennese café, and he reports what he has seen to Eli Lavon, who then begins to make the inquiries that almost cost him his life. Gabriel's investigation leads him to make some horrifying discoveries, the most painful one being the heart-rending story of his mother's two years of hell as an inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Silva writes with great feeling about the harrowing events of the Holocaust and the culpability of those who helped the Nazis escape punishment after the war ended.

The synopsis of *A Death in Vienna* has been laid out beautifully in most of the reviews presented here. Just to sum it up again: Gabriel Allon an Israeli sometime spy is sent to Vienna in order to investigate the recent bombing of the War-time Claims and Inquiries. In the course of events he discovers that a notorious SS man responsible for the death of millions of Jews during WWII is now living peacefully under a new name in Vienna. As to make things even worse he also seems to be meddling with current political affairs notably the election of the new chancellor. Silva's language is brisk and precise. The characters portray a seldomly seen depth. And the storyline is vivid, intense and fast paced. In short an excellent book that will keep you hooked. As I am an Austrian I was further amazed by the accuracy with which Silva describes the city. His book referring often to wartime history is most definitely well researched. Nevertheless many parts are fictional which I would like to put into perspective. First of all Austria or Vienna is not the dark somber place harboring Anti-Semites as it may seem judging from the book. It has come a long way and is trying to deal with its past. True there is and there has been a right-winged party (as in most countries) however it has been discredited due to a recent scandal. Support for it has hit an all time low. Further Austria was never even close in getting a "Nazi" chancellor. In fact the chancellor is not even voted directly by the people, which is not made clear in the book. The party with the most votes usually nominates the chancellor and that has never been a right-winged party since the war.

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