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JOHN
LE CARRÉ

THE
HONOUR-
ABLE
SCHOOL-
BOY

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY

**by
John le Carré**



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John le Carré
at the peak
of his enormous powers
in a novel of passion, intrigue
and betrayal

"John le Carré is the premier spy novelist of his time. Perhaps of all time. . . . [In his newest book, *THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY*,] all the good things are there: the balkan complexities of plot; the Dickensian profusion of idiosyncratic characters; and above all le Carré's glistening social observation. He has reinvented the realistic spy story as the supreme theater of paradox, where heroism breeds vice, and virtue is a quite accidental byproduct of impudent crimes."

—*Time*

"The achievement is in the characters, major and minor, and the correspondences, the private lives, erotic depths, furious guilts, mute understandings of hunter and hunted, expert and amateur, the war within, hot and cold. . . . Not a page of this book is without intelligence and grace. Not a page fails to suggest that we carry around with us our own built-in heart of darkness."

—John Leonard, *The New York Times*

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY “is bound to hit the top with predictable ease. Little wonder. Le Carré has developed the technique of the espionage thriller to a level where he has been called, without stretching the comparison and without taking anything away from either writer, the Solzhenitsyn of the genre.

“This is no slick, easy-to-read James Bond-type thriller. You have to think, to feel, to let the excitement of what is happening wash over you, and when it all comes together in the end it is even more ironic in its implications than *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY “is one of the most effective thrillers we have had for years. It was Mr. le Carré, after all, who wrote it. His command of detail is staggering, his people never overstep the bounds of credibility . . . and his straightforward, unaffected prose is superb. In short, wonderful value.”

—*The Sunday Times, London*

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY "is both a refinement and a summation of le Carré's work so far. All his virtues are on ample display—his almost Dickensian facility for characterization, his mordant satire of English bureaucratic infighting, the mazelike plotting that compels our rapt attention. There are, as well, searing evocations of the battle-scarred Asian landscapes to match Graham Greene at his finest. While rigorously adhering to the rules of a popular genre, le Carré has once again elevated the possibilities of the spy novel."

—David Ansen, *Newsweek*

John le Carré's
ultimate novel of espionage
THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY

Bantam Books by John le Carré

Ask your bookseller for the books you have missed

THE HONOURABLE SCHOOLBOY

THE LOOKING GLASS WAR

THE SPY WHO CAME IN

FROM THE COLD

TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY

For Jane, who bore the brunt,
put up with my presence and
absence alike, and made it all
possible

I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

—W. H. Auden

FOREWORD

I offer my warm thanks to the many generous and hospitable people who found time to help me with my research for this novel.

In Singapore, Alwyne (Bob) Taylor, the *Daily Mail* correspondent; Max Vanzi, of U.P.I.; Peter Simms, then of *Time*; and Bruce Wilson, of the *Melbourne Herald*.

In Hong Kong, Sydney Liu, of *Newsweek*; Bing Wong, of *Time*; H. D. S. Greenway, of the *Washington Post*; Anthony Lawrence, of the B.B.C.; Richard Hughes, then of the *Sunday Times*; Donald A. Davis and Vic Vanzi, of U.P.I.; and Derek Davies and his staff at the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, notably Leo Goodstadt. I must also acknowledge with gratitude the exceptional co-operation of Major General Penfold and his team at the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, who gave me the run of Happy Valley Racecourse and showed me much kindness without once seeking to know my purpose. I wish I could also name the several officials of the Hong Kong government, and members of the Royal Hong Kong Police, who opened doors for me at some risk of embarrassment to themselves.

In Phnom Penh, my genial host Baron Walther von Marschall took marvellous care of me, and I could never have managed without the wisdom of Kurt Furrer and Madame Yvette Pierpaoli, both of Suisindo Shipping & Trading Co., and currently in Bangkok.

But my special thanks must be reserved for those who put up with me the longest: for my friend David Greenway, of the *Washington Post*, who allowed me to follow in his distinguished shadow through Laos, North East Thailand, and Phnom Penh; and for Peter Simms, who, before settling in Hong Kong, guided my eye through unfamiliar territory and helped me with much of the leg-work. To them, to Bing Wong, and to certain Hong Kong Chinese friends who, I believe, will prefer to remain anonymous, I owe a great debt.

Last there is the great Dick Hughes, whose outward character and mannerisms I have shamelessly exaggerated

for the part of old Craw. Some people, once met, simply elbow their way into a novel and sit there till the writer finds them a place. Dick is one. I am sorry I could not obey his urgent exhortation to libel him to the hilt. My cruellest efforts could not prevail against the affectionate nature of the original.

And since none of these good people had any more notion than I did, in those days, of how the book would turn out, I must be quick to absolve them from my misdemeanours.

Terry Mayers, a veteran of the British Karate Team, advised me on certain alarming skills. And for Miss Nellie Adams, for her stupendous bouts of typing, no praise is enough.

—John le Carré
Cornwall, 1977

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN LE CARRÉ is the pseudonym of David Cornwell. Born in 1931, he attended the universities of Berne and Oxford, taught at Eton and later entered the British Foreign Service. He has been described recently in *The New York Times* as belonging to the select company of such spy and detective story writers as Arthur Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald. His first two novels were *Call for the Dead* (1961) and *A Murder of Quality* (1962). His third novel, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), was greeted with great enthusiasm and secured his worldwide reputation. Mr. le Carré is also the author of *The Naive and Sentimental Lover*, *The Looking Glass War*, *A Small Town in Germany*, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and *The Honourable Schoolboy*.

JOHN LE CARRÉ

"The premier spy novelist of his time. Perhaps of all time," is what *Time* magazine recently called him.

Others echo the praise. But it took John le Carré many years to reach this position. He began his writing career while in the British Foreign Service. Unable to use his real name (David Cornwell) because the Foreign Office forbids its staff to publish under their own names, he adopted the name le Carré (French for "the square") which he claims to have seen printed on a London shop window.

As he states, "When I first began writing, Ian Fleming was riding high and the picture of the spy was that of a character who could have affairs with women, drive a fast car, who used gadgetry and gimmickry to escape." What le Carré has brought back to the genre is the realistic spy story.

It was his third novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* which broke through to bestsellerdom. It features the antihero Alec Leamas, a cold war spy, out to rescue friends from Berlin. In *The Looking Glass War* our hero learns of the double-dealing needed to survive in the intelligence game. A change of pace, *A Naive and Sentimental Lover* follows an unhappy but successful businessman beguiled by a glamorous, wayward couple. The international best-seller *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* followed. George Smiley (a minor character in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*) is the hero. Head of a British Intelligence department he must ferret out the "mole" who has wasted some of the department's best agents. Le Carré's newest and biggest bestseller *The Honourable Schoolboy* deals with Smiley's attempts to use one of his friends as a pawn to flush out a pair of mysterious Chinese brothers.

Le Carré, who has elevated the spy novel to its highest point, is a demon on research. For *The Honourable Schoolboy* he made five trips to Southeast Asia. Pinned down by automatic weapons fire in Cambodia, he dived under a car and coolly noted his impressions on file cards.

Read all these novels by John le Carré, now available in Bantam Books wherever paperbacks are sold.

PART I

Winding the Clock

I HOW THE CIRCUS LEFT TOWN

Afterwards, in the dusty little corners where London's secret servants drink together, there was argument about where the Dolphin case history should really begin. One crowd, led by a blimpish fellow in charge of microphone transcription, went so far as to claim that the fitting date was some sixty years ago, when "that arch-cad Bill Haydon" was born into the world under a treacherous star. Haydon's very name struck a chill into them. It does so even today. For it was this same Haydon who, while still at Oxford, was recruited by Karla the Russian as a "mole" or "sleeper"—or, in English, agent of penetration—to work against them. And who with Karla's guidance entered their ranks and spied on them for thirty years or more. And whose eventual discovery—thus the line of reasoning—brought the British so low that they were forced into a fatal dependence upon their American sister service, whom they called in their own strange jargon "the Cousins." The Cousins changed the game entirely, said the blimpish fellow, much as he might have deplored power tennis or bodyline bowling. And ruined it too, said his seconds.

To less-flowery minds, the true genesis was Haydon's unmasking by George Smiley and Smiley's consequent appointment as caretaker chief of the betrayed service, which occurred in the late November of 1973. Once George had got Karla under his skin, they said, there was no stopping him; the rest was inevitable. Poor old George: but what a mind under all that burden!

One scholarly soul, a researcher of some sort—in the jargon, a "burrower"—even insisted, in his cups, upon January 26, 1841, as the natural date, when a certain Captain Elliot of the Royal Navy took a landing party to a fog-laden rock called Hong Kong at the mouth of the Pearl River and a few days later proclaimed it a British colony. With Elliot's arrival, said the scholar, Hong Kong

became the headquarters of Britain's opium trade to China, and in consequence one of the pillars of the Imperial economy. If the British had not invented the opium market—he said, not entirely serious—then there would have been no case, no ploy, no dividend; and therefore no renaissance of the Circus following Bill Haydon's traitorous depredations.

Whereas the hard men—the grounded fieldmen, the trainers, and the case officers who made their own murmured caucus always—they saw the question solely in operational terms. They pointed to Smiley's deft footwork in tracking down Karla's paymaster in Vientiane; to Smiley's handling of the girl's parents; and to his wheeling and dealing with the reluctant barons of Whitehall, who held the operational purse strings and dealt out rights and permissions in the secret world. Above all, to the wonderful moment where he turned the operation round on its own axis. For these pros, the case was a victory of technique. Nothing more. They saw the shotgun marriage with the Cousins as just another skilful bit of tradecraft in a long and delicate poker game. As to the final outcome: to hell. The king is dead, so long live the next one.

The debate continues wherever old comrades meet, though the name of Jerry Westerby, understandably, is seldom mentioned. Occasionally, it is true, somebody does, out of foolhardiness or sentiment or plain forgetfulness, dredge it up, and there is atmosphere for a moment; but it passes. Only the other day a young probationer just out of the Circus's refurbished training school at Sarratt—in the jargon again, "the Nursery"—piped it out in the under-thirties bar, for instance. A watered-down version of the Dolphin case had recently been introduced at Sarratt as material for syndicate discussion—even playlets—and the poor boy, still very green, was brimming with excitement to discover he was in the know. "But my *God*," he protested, enjoying the kind of fool's freedom granted to naval midshipmen in the wardroom, "my *God*, why does nobody seem to recognise Westerby's part in the affair? If *anybody* carried the load, it was Jerry Westerby. He was the spearhead. Well, wasn't he? Frankly?" Except, of course, he did not utter the name "Westerby," or "Jerry" either, not least because he did not know them; but used