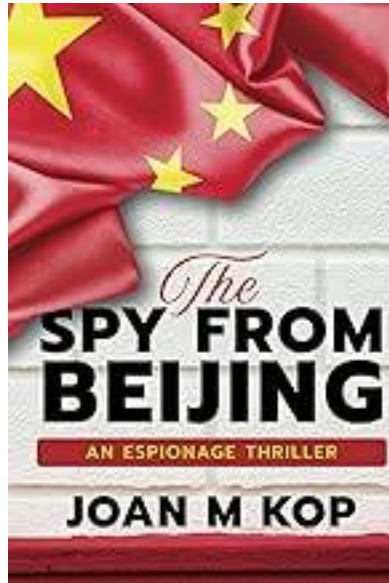


The Spy from Beijing



By Joan Kopczynski

Reviewed by Elena S. Smith

Joan Kop's *The Spy from Beijing* is a masterfully crafted espionage thriller, rich with suspense and unexpected turns. It immerses the reader in the frigid, perilous realm of international intelligence—a world inhabited by individuals who willingly embrace a life defined by secrecy, risk, and brain gamesmanship. Kop humanizes her spies, revealing them not as faceless operatives, but as complex individuals whose extraordinary choices set them apart. Through realistic dialogue and astute narrative insight, the novel invites reflection on contemporary geopolitical tensions, the looming challenges posed by biotechnology, and the resurgence of authoritarianism. *The Spy from Beijing* is not only a gripping read, but also a thought-provoking exploration of our modern world.

Reviewed by E .J. Deuber

An only child, Jen Hae Chu, aka Jenny, the main protagonist, is a Chinese American flight attendant-turned FBI agent, who longs for a sibling.

On a flight, Dave Kamakar, an undercover FBI agent, watches her handle a difficult situation and admires her independent, confident, diligent work ethics. He thinks the young woman would make a good FBI agent. He convinces her to change careers. Later they meet in Seattle. During her FBI career, she falls in love with Dave. In her first assignment, she meets Yichen Zhang, her nemesis, who lives in Beijing and works for China's Secretive Ministry of State Security (MSS), which is China's civilian intelligence, security and secret police agency.

At this time, Yichen's father (*Bohai*) who also works for the MSS is caught spying. Unknown to Yichen, Bohai has been spying for the CIA for the past thirty years. MSS members force Yichen to watch them mutilate his father. After the mutilation, Yichen's boss tells him he can expect the same fate if they ever catch him spying. He must do as he is told, or they'll see to it that his mother gets the same treatment as Bohai. When the MSS asks him to become a double agent. He reluctantly agrees and ends up in Seattle.

Jenny and Yichen, working their respective tasks in Seattle, finally connect, and they become friends. Soon after, she becomes suspicious of Yichen activities and suspects he is responsible for the nefarious crimes that are happening in the vicinity. Through a DNA test, she discovers Yichen is her biological twin. She had no idea she had a sibling or a biological mother in the USA or China. On one hand, she wants to help her brother and her new-found mother, on the other, she wants to stay a loyal FBI agent. She is left with the burning question: What is more important—family or patriotism?

The spy activity is well-researched from China to Seattle. The complicated twists of family, love and patriotism are compelling from start to finish. *The Spy from Beijing* awakened me to the complex web of undercover intelligence activity in Washington State.



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