



The English Girl

By Daniel Silva
ISBN: 9780062073181

Introduction

Seven days

One girl

No second chances

Madeline Hart is a rising star in Britain's governing party: beautiful, intelligent, driven by an impoverished childhood to succeed. But she is also a woman with a dark secret: she is the lover of Prime Minister Jonathan Lancaster. Somehow, her kidnappers have learned of the affair, and they intend to make the British leader pay dearly for his sins. Fearful of a scandal that will destroy his career, Lancaster decides to handle the matter privately rather than involve the British police. It is a risky gambit, not only for the prime minister but also for the operative who will conduct the search.

You have seven days, or the girl dies.

Enter Gabriel Allon—master assassin, art restorer and spy—who is no stranger to dangerous assignments or political intrigue. With the clock ticking, Gabriel embarks on a desperate attempt to bring Madeline home safely. His mission takes him from the criminal underworld of Marseilles to an isolated valley in the mountains of Provence to the stately if faded corridors of power in London—and, finally, to a pulse-pounding climax in Moscow, a city of violence and spies where there is a long list of men who wish Gabriel dead.

From the novel's opening pages until the shocking ending when the true motives behind Madeline's disappearance are revealed, *The English Girl* will hold readers spellbound. It is a timely reminder that, in today's world, money often matters more than ideology. And it proves once again why Daniel Silva has been called his generation's finest writer of suspense and foreign intrigue.

Questions for Discussion

1. Gabriel Allon has settled with Chiara in Jerusalem. Considering this location and the specific description of their home at the beginning of Chapter 3, how would you describe the state he's in at this point in his life?
2. Consider the fictional version of the painting of *Susanna and the Elders* believed to be by Jacopo Bassano. What do the details offered about her story add to how you think about Madeline Hart?
3. Gabriel, once a talented painter of original works, admits he began to study art restoration because his profound and brutal three-year experience at the center of operation Wrath of God changed him. What might he have lost that a creative artist needs?
4. Graham Seymour, Deputy Director of Britain's MI5, is close to Gabriel as fellow members of "a secret brotherhood who did the unpleasant chores no one else was willing to do" to keep their countries safe. What else accounts for Gabriel's willingness to trust and work with him?
5. Seymour responds to Gabriel's compliment about an esteemed career by saying that "it's difficult to measure success in the security business, isn't it? We're judged on things that *don't* happen—the secrets that *aren't* stolen, the buildings that *don't* explode. It can be...profoundly unsatisfying." What are other important careers or actions that prove difficult to measure regarding success?
6. After Madeline is kidnapped, she appears in a video "as if she were responding to questions posed by a television interview." What connotations does this simile, another journalistic reference, add to the scene?
7. In what various ways does the relationship between Gabriel and Chiara demonstrate real equality? In what ways are they valuably different?
8. What layers of meaning are added to the novel by the fictional discovery and museum exhibition of the "twenty-two pillars of Solomon's Temple"?
9. How does Chiara's tragic experience at the hands of Ivan Kharkov and that of Gabriel's first wife and only son Daniel affect Gabriel's decisions and actions regarding Madeline Hart?
10. What does the location of Corsica and what goes on there bring to the novel? What about the details of the *macchia*?
11. Examine the fascinating character of the *signadora*. What does her supernatural presence and behavior bring to the novel? How does this fit or contradict Gabriel's belief system, one quite important to how he goes about his job? What are the possible benefits or dangers of belief in such a medium?

12. Consider the character of Christopher Keller and his elaborate evolution from upper-middle-class Brit to rebellious soldier and top member of the SAS's Regiment to presumed dead rogue assassin-for-hire employed by Don Orsati. In what ways are he and Gabriel similar or different?
13. Explain the details and psychology that allows Gabriel to trust and work with Keller, someone who was at one point hired to kill him. What qualities are necessary to transform a work relationship into a friendship?
14. What does the banter between Gabriel and Christopher Keller add to the novel? What's the role of humor in a work of such weighty subject matter?
15. Consider the many artists and works of art mentioned throughout the novel (Bassano, Viktor Frankel, Bellini's San Zaccaria altarpiece, Cezanne, Matisse, Monet, Puccini, Wagner, Dumas, Dickens, Forster, etc.). What specific and overall effects do such references have?
16. A number of times Gabriel mentions the immense amount of waiting, often intense or stressful waiting, "always the waiting." What's challenging about such a seemingly simple activity?
17. Will Gabriel make a good director of Israel's secret intelligence service? Why or why not?
18. What profound effects would becoming a father again have on Gabriel?

About the Author

Daniel Silva is the number one *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Unlikely Spy*, *The Mark of the Assassin*, *The Marching Season*, *The Kill Artist*, *The English Assassin*, *The Confessor*, *A Death in Vienna*, *Prince of Fire*, *The Messenger*, *The Secret Servant*, *Moscow Rules*, *The Defector*, *The Rembrandt Affair*, *Portrait of a Spy*, and *The Fallen Angel*. He is married to NBC News *Today* correspondent Jamie Gangel; they live in Washington, D.C., with their two children, Lily and Nicholas. In 2009 Silva was appointed to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.