



Nomad

James Swallow

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A pulse-racing terrorist thriller with a sickening twist - perfect for fans of I Am Pilgrim, Bourne, 24 and Homeland

Marc Dane is a MI6 field agent at home behind a computer screen, one step away from the action. But when a brutal attack on his team leaves Marc as the only survivor - and with the shocking knowledge that there are traitors inside MI6 - he's forced into the front line.

However the evidence seems to point towards Marc as the perpetrator of the attack. Accused of betraying his country, he must race against time to clear his name.

With nowhere to turn to for help and no one left to trust, Marc is forced to rely on the elusive Rubicon group and their operative Lucy Keyes. Ex US Army, Lucy also knows what it's like to be an outsider, and she's got the skills that Marc is sorely lacking.

A terrorist attack is coming, one bigger and more deadly than has ever been seen before. With the eyes of the security establishment elsewhere, only Lucy and Marc can stop the attack before it's too late.

Nomad Details

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From Reader Review Nomad for online ebook

James says

I liked it. Man who is consistently underestimated wreaks havoc on nefarious plots. All the elements available to todays thriller writers are thrown in the mix, over his head hero, accomplished sidekick,evil terrorists, evil cabal, evil mercenary, double agents, good cabal and angry government agents mix it up. It's all very entertaining.

Rita Costa (Lusitania Geek) says

It was a good easy read this novel, you could understand the story itself and his writting was ok. Action, battles, shooting etc but there are too many 'extremely badly scripted' fight scenes that are absolutely impossible to believe. The plot is complicated and the characters too far fetched to accept. This is the sort of novel to who loves to Gabriel Allon series by Daniel Silva with Jason Bourne type of action, but not in the same level, unfortunately. I will give a 3, but i had high expectations on this book, but no, it wasn't that sort of 'the amazing thriller book of the year'. 3 ?? ?

Helen says

Thanks firstly to the publisher for access to this novel in return for an unbiased review. What an absolutely blistering read! The tension gripped you from the first paragraph and never let up to the very end. There are some twists and turns that leave the reader reeling. Do not be put off if you love mystery/crime/thrillers but the term "espionage" or "spy" novel deters you from selecting to read it as this is in no way like the dusty novels of old whereby spies loitered in dark overcoats and slowly yet deliberately finally solve the mystery like a jigsaw puzzle. This is cutting edge, of the moment, realism which is all too scary. An excellent read!!!

Quintin Zimmermann says

A steady diet of Tom Clancy and Robert Ludlum was a veritable feast of fine spy thrillers consumed in my younger days.

More recently, I am Pilgrim and Orphan X burst onto the spy thriller scene, with awesomely cool protagonists, fantastic don't mess with me action and yes, thrills.

In Nomad, Marc Dane can't cut the mustard as a bona fide action hero. He didn't enthrall and the plot just didn't grip me. While James Swallow's writing is solid, it failed to ignite off the page.

Nomad had some good ideas, but with bland characterisations, it is the execution that is lacking. Don't get me wrong, there is a great deal of action, typical of the genre. I just wasn't invested in the storyline as much as I tried to be and that is a cardinal sin for any thriller.

Zippergirl says

Nomad starts with a bang and the surprises never stop coming. Terrorists have developed a new weapon, "the conventional suicide bomber was no longer the most expedient option for militant extremists." This is some scary stuff.

MI6 resides 200 feet beneath the streets of London, and operates in a dark parallel world of guns and secrets. Marc Dane is a forward mission specialist, which means that he's one of the "blokes in the van," a back-seater. His battlefield is "corridors of data, lines of intel." When NOMAD, his rapid-reaction team, falls into a trap, Marc must use all his hi-tech skills to discover the mole who sold them out. To do this, he needs to get inside the mind of the charismatic Omar Khadir, leader of Al Sayf, The Sword.

James Swallow ably follows in the footsteps of Ian Fleming, Robert Ludlum and Tom Clancy, all of whom he admits were influential in the construction of this techno-thriller. Don't miss this non-stop international--from London to the White House lawn--undercover operation.

I received this book in exchange for an honest review.

Jirka says

Je to zabavny spionazni roman. Reklama uvadi, ze se bude libit vsem, kterym se libila kniha Ja, poutnik. A je ti pravda a i problem. Podobne tema, stejny zanr, podobny hrdina... dobre se to cte, bavi vas to, ale mate pocit, ze tohle vse uz nekde bylo. Navic, nesnasim deus ex machina zachrany a tady je jich silene moc. Marc Dane je nejvetsi stastlivec na svete. Spis 3,5 hvezdy :)

Jo says

Nomad (Rubicon #1)

By James Swallow

Genre - Thriller

Synopsis - Thriller

Someone has betrayed your country and murdered your friends. You're the only suspect. And the only one who can stop them striking again . . .

FIND THE TRUTH BEFORE THEY FIND YOU

A pulse-racing terrorist thriller - perfect for fans of I Am Pilgrim, Bourne, 24 and Homeland

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country, he must race against time to clear his name.

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Review

This book is being compared to Terry Hayes block buster *I am Pilgrim*. *Nomad* is a high-octane action thriller, with a digital age spin added in.

Its thrilling, sharply plotted and very topical, it's a gripping story that does everything a spy thriller should. It draws heavily on the classics of the genre, and occasionally veers into predictable territory, but there's plenty here to enjoy for fans of a good old spy story. Add in an unusually powerful look at the individual, human cost of the terrorists' methods, and it's a recipe for an absolutely cracking read. It might be a standalone novel at the moment but this is ripe for opening up a worthy new series – hopefully there's more where this came from.

Nick Brett says

British author James Swallow gives us a full on thriller here. A British Intelligence Black Ops team is betrayed and wiped out, except for a sole survivor. Marc Dane, the survivor of the "Nomad" team is no special Ops guy, he is a technician who is forced to 'man up' and use all of his skills when he realised that there is a traitor in MI6 and he is being put into the frame for the destruction of his team.

So, who can Dane trust and why was Nomad wiped out? His journey will force him to take sides with a mysterious third party to track down and stop a deadly terrorist attack on American soil.

The positives are that this is a fast paced and entertaining thriller, an easy page turner. The downside is a central figure who flips a little too easily from background technician to Operator and a plot that is made of components that have all been seen somewhere else before. Having said that, it is good fun and offers a suggestion that future books in the series will be worth picking up, I just want to see something a little more original in them.

G.J. Minett says

High-octane thriller which hints early on that it might be going down the Le Carré route, exploring MI5 and MI6 with its public school rivalries, grey men, acerbic wit and clandestine power struggles. Pretty soon though it becomes clear that this is more Jason Bourne territory and I say that with not a hint of regret or condescension. This flies along at an electrifying pace with all the gadgetry and detailed technical knowledge you can wish for and if Marc Dane has more lives than a sackful of cats (at one point even one of his enemies says something to the effect that he should be dead several times over) it's testimony to James Swallow's skill as a writer that you imagined for one moment our hero might be in serious danger.

Don't come to this with a critic's scalpel, looking to highlight any flaws or inconsistencies because you can always find those in any thriller. Don't ask meaningless questions about why the villain doesn't just pull the

trigger instead of pushing his luck. Instead just sit back and soak it all up as you would do a good film. I'd be very much surprised if this didn't make it to the screen some day soon as it is absolutely made for it. I don't think it's much of a spoiler to say I'll be looking forward to Marc Dane 2.

Samuel says

A LONE RANGER

"Well, the fact is, what I do is not a bad occupation. Someone is always willing to pay."

"I would find it... tiring".

"Oh, no — it's quite restful. It's... almost peaceful. No need to believe in either side, or any side. There is no cause. There's only yourself. The belief is in your own precision".- Three Days Of The Condor.

"When you find that one person who connects you to the world, you become someone different, someone better. When that person is taken from you, what do you become then?"- John Reese.

"Owe and own nothing to push back against. Never wear your beliefs on your sleeve. In assuming an impermeable facade of ignorance, poverty and banality, you blind the enemy to your true strength and intentions."- Robert B Baer, CIA Officer.

"You should know something about me and the people I work with. We deal with the left or the right, with dictators or liberators. If the current president had been more agreeable, I wouldn't be talking to you. So if you decide not to sign, you will wake up with your balls in your mouth and your willing replacement standing over you. If you doubt that, then shoot me, take that money, and have a good night's sleep." - Dominic Greene, Quantum of Solace.

This century has seen a rise in non-state actors becoming more prominent in world affairs. The Islamic terrorist groups are the most famous example but then there are the private intelligence services and private military corporations. These are lesser known and perform similar functions that armies and nation state intelligence services do, but for profit. One such non state actor which combines the functions of a P.I.S and a P.M.C is the focus of "Nomad", the first original foray into spy fiction by author James Swallow.

Mr Swallow primarily specialized in science fiction novels before being contracted by Fox for a special project. He was commissioned to write a tie in novel for their "24" TV show. The book focused on the events that took place 48 hours after Day 8. I found it a well plotted continuation novel and by itself a pretty good spy novel in its own right, capturing the feel and tone of the show and providing enough violent action and thrills that one could find in an established thriller series. I suspect this brief dip into the world of espionage had some influence Mr Swallow's decision to write "Nomad" and enter the espionage genre with an original creation of its own.

So, what is Nomad about? It focuses on the story of Marc Dane. He's a technician and member of a fictional branch of the UK SIS which conducts paramilitary operations similar to what the CIA Special Activities Division is tasked with executing. During the story a terrorist group working in conjunction with a mysterious non state actor slaughters Dane's team in an attack, and an asset working for the bad guys inside the SIS frames Marc as a traitor. Hunted by his own service who refuse to listen to his belief that a major terrorist incident is in the works, Dane is forced to turn to a non – state actor of his own, a Private intelligence service called Rubicon, and its mysterious point – woman in order to prevent the biggest terrorist

atrocity since 9/11.

We start the novel in Barcelona Spain. A policeman is on his beat and runs across what appears to be a young man caught in the grip of a panic attack. Calling a paramedic, he tries to assist the first responders in taking off the victim's jacket. Overlooking the scene in a plush hotel is an Islamic terrorist. The man briefly muses on the decadence that surrounds him before activating a unique surgically implanted I.E.D. Below him, the police, paramedics and tourists watching the spectacle are turned into red mist and some of the surrounding buildings are demolished by the blast. A few hundred miles up north in the French port of Dunkirk, Marc Dane and the SIS paramilitary team are prepping for an operation. The team is designated NOMAD. Made up of former British military and law enforcement personnel, we're quickly introduced to the main players and Dane reflecting on the divide between the shooters and technicians like him.

Across the channel at the SIS Vauxhall Cross office, an analyst named Talia Patel and her superior, Donald Royce discuss the pending Op Nomad is to undertake, namely interdiction of a suspected armaments shipment belonging to an Islamist terrorist group. Before giving Nomad the order to execute the operation, Royce has a quick glimpse at a file designate "COMBINE", a geopolitical Ghost that may or may not exist.

The op begins and things go mostly smooth. Things disintegrate when the NOMAD assaulters discover the container ship they've infiltrated has been doing people trafficking. This surprise wouldn't have been disastrous but among the human flotsam is a reluctant terrorist who catches the team leader off guard and proceeds to detonate the explosives hidden on the boat. In the ensuing inferno, all but one of the assault team is taken out. Disobeying orders, Marc sprints towards the scene of the inferno and finds the survivor who reveals she knows who is responsible and that the perpetrators have an asset in Vauxhall Cross. Just before he can bring the survivor back to the extraction point, an operative sent to deal with the Nomad support section launches grenades on the warehouse where the getaway van is concealed. Knocked out and with the surviving assault team member bleeding to death, Marc Dane becomes the last man standing.

The cleaner sent to deal with NOMAD however has other ideas. Surprising Dane just before he can flee, Marc makes a desperate effort to save himself, managing to strangle the better trained killer to death before the man can shoot him. Back at Vauxhall Cross, Royce and Patel immediately begin damage control and are forced to contend with Wells, director of the in house counter – intelligence division who insinuates there might have been a traitor on the team. Royce is later blindsided when Dane walks into Vauxhall Cross on his own free will. Wells takes Marc into custody and proceeds to belittle Dane during the debriefing. Marc is then shuffled off to a black site. With the help of a fellow SIS officer, Marc takes the opportunity to crash the Range Rover he's being transported in and go on the run. Predictably this does not go down well with the SIS director general who orders his subordinates to recover the escapee.

In London, a woman, Lucy Keyes does her morning workout in an upmarket hotel. She receives her first phone call of the day from her employer. Keyes, who in a past life was the first woman to qualify for Delta Force, in her US Army days, now works as the hatchet – lady and trouble shooter for a private intelligence service founded by one of the world's most powerful men. The man in question informs her that the SIS have broken the no – domestic operations protocol and orders her to hunt for Marc Dane before they do. She finds him minutes before an SIS team begin staging for an assault on a housing estate. Disobeying her bosses' orders to not interfere with the operation, Keyes plays guardian angel and saves Dane from being given an impromptu BASE jumping lesson. Both Keyes and Dane then flee the UK, the former trying to recover the latter before he disappears from existence. From London to Europe and then the American East Coast, Keyes and Dane are forced to make a shaky alliance and try stop the machinations of a cabal that seeks to prove their power, regardless of the millions crushed underfoot along the way.

In terms of plot, NOMAD is one of the most smoothly written first novels I've read this year. It's even more impressive when you remember Mr Swallow prior to writing this book, had only slight experience with spy fiction, namely the 24 Deadline novel. It has everything a first rate contemporary spy novel should have and then some. From touching on issues like the increasing sophistication of non – state actors and the paramilitary side of espionage taking over the business, Swallow throws in a well-developed, layered story that examines the increasingly violate world of contemporary spying that the War On Terror has brought about.

Next, action and setting. Mr Swallow had proved back in 24 Deadline that he could write a good gunfight. Here, he gets a wider canvas on which to portray quality, blood splattered violence. From the shocking Dunkirk disaster which opens the novel, to a dicey standoff over an active Southern European volcano, an exciting day trip to a terrorist training camp in East Turkey and climaxing in a fight to sabotage a killing that would make history in Washington DC, NOMAD's twists, turns and thrills are the equal of spy novelists who have been in the game longer than Mr Swallow.

Now, research. This came as something of a shock. Mr Swallow delivered the goldilocks amount of real world detail in NOMAD. Hardly any spy novelist's first book has been able to pull off such a feat, but Mr Swallow somehow pulled it off. There's more than enough kit, geopolitical information and tactical nuggets to make the purists like me smile, while not overwhelming mere mortals who just want a good read. From a crash course on Al Qaeda's infamous Al – Asari project, to the vulnerabilities of UAV systems, Mr Swallow then utilizes the real world information in creative and imaginative ways. Most prominently, he gives the UK SIS, a surprisingly realistic, yet fictional paramilitary unit. Miles away from the outlandish 00 section of Fleming, Swallow's creation is more CIA Special Activities Division or DGSE Action Service. It's something that is not too hard to imagine the firm secretly possessing in real life unbeknownst to us.

Surprisingly one of the most prominent parts of NOMAD, and the element which makes it stand out in the crowded thriller market, is the atmosphere. The story resurrects the paranoid universe of "Three Days of the Condor", and in some respects is the best spiritual sequel to the source material that never will be. It's even better than the actual sequel "Last Days of the Condor". The universe of NOMAD is one bursting with paranoia, where illusions kill, powerful cabals reshape geopolitics for lunch and office politics makes bodies hit the floor. It's a world where brute force is worthless against competence and trickery. The main character even fits the archetype of Robert Redford's Condor, albeit a former Royal Navy veteran who does know how to shoot back. It's this 70's atmosphere garnished with a contemporary 2016 touch which gives NOMAD a highly distinctive identity of its own, and further makes me impressed by the author, due to atmosphere having played a much diminished part in 21st century spy fiction.

Now, characters. Competently done. I'll focus on a select few. Firstly, there's Marc Dane, the hero of NOMAD. I've always, apart from a few exceptions, loathed the "every man protagonist" template. Most of them are foolish and would get killed if it weren't for luck and plot armour protecting them. Dane on the other hand is different. Perhaps it's because he take a lot of elements from the granddaddy of everyman heroes, Condor, but I find him a cut above his equivalents. He's competent, but not a badass killer, despite having had the potential to become one when the SIS assigned him to NOMAD. One of the elements in his character arc over the story, is rediscovering that potential he had to become an outstanding intelligence officer, potential that he had rejected but is forced to tap into as the SIS and Combine close in on him. He can shoot a gun well but where Dane shines is his intelligence. Going up against trained killers, Marc fights dirty. A moment where this is highlighted is when he corners the real traitor, a homicidal former SAS trooper. Rather than the direct approach, Dane smashes the lights in the room they're in and grab's the man's discarded SIG – Sauer before he can react. Marc is also very relatable, with Mr Swallow nailing his characterization perfectly. While he gets hit with fear, doubt and self – pity during the story, he isn't

overtaken by such problems unlike many other everyman protagonists. The single minded drive he has to kill the men who ruined his life helps of course, but Dane balances his humanity with a clear objective that he will do anything to accomplish.

Next, we have Lucy Keyes, hatchet lady for RUBICON and the deutertagonist of NOMAD. Making history as the first woman to qualify for Delta Force, Keyes suffered a tragic event which led her to become a woman without a country and the point – woman for a private intelligence service. While Marc is the fearful and paranoid straight man, Keyes plays the funny guy hiding some very dark secrets. Jovial and optimistic, Lucy plays off well in her interactions with Mr Dane and provides the muscle in their partnership. As the more experienced killer, Keyes as you would expect is a highly competent badass. And you would be right. From her first appearance in London to an attack she mounts with Dane against a team of mercenaries on a freighter in New York, Lucy has gained membership to the growing club of strong, female protagonists that have hit spy/military fiction in this decade. During the story, her character arc is that of an amused protector, getting surprised and appreciative at how capable the protegee is. Despite being more experienced and capable at handling herself in a straight up fight, Keyes lacks the lateral thinking Dane has and where she occasionally falters, his out of the box solutions pick up the slack.

Finally, we have Solomon, owner of the RUBICON non – state actor. A most enigmatic figure, he began life as a Sierra Leone child soldier. Somehow he managed to survive the war but was left with a desire to right the wrongs of the world. Years passed and through mysterious means, he soon became one of the wealthiest and most powerful men on the planet. Despite the newfound riches, Solomon hadn't forgotten the promise he made to himself back in the hell hole he was born into, and in an act of nobles oblige, he built RUBICON, a non – state actor which would right the geopolitical wrongs that nations and those that wished to watch the world burn committed. As a character, Solomon combines an affable fatherly charm with an edge of menace. While a good man, he's got a lot of baggage from when he built up his empire, baggage which makes him willing to do whatever it takes to protect his investments and employees by all means necessary.

Constructive suggestion? Well while well researched and thought out, Mr Swallow will need to up his game with the next “epic threat” for the NOMAD Sequel. Be daring and willing to change things up from the usual bombs and other overused threats.

So, NOMAD, my verdict is this. Love the great 70's spy/conspiracy thrillers? Believe that contemporary thriller fiction no longer has atmosphere and character? Look no further, to Mr Swallow's first original spy novel. NOMAD is the best sequel to James Grady's Six Days of the Condor that never will be, a book which combines an extraordinarily well crafted 21st century spy fiction plot, with the wild, paranoia inducing climate of a darker time. Combining rock solid plotting, impeccable characterization of a cast of compelling, flawed characters searching for redemption, and an astonishingly perfect level of research and technical detail, NOMAD is a first time spy novel written to perfection. James Swallow up until now has remained an unknown quantity. I knew he had talent but he has blown away my expectations. NOMAD is his coming out party to the world of spy fiction. And the entrance has been perfectly staged. He and his creations Marc Dane and Lucy Keyes are to be watched closely. In 2017, Dane and Keyes will be return. Their past lives are dead. The fire have started. And a new war has just begun.

RECOMMENDED.

Phillip Ramm says

Sorry Mr Swallow, but I had to give up at 6% (Kindle edition) of this chest-thumping testosterone burner when "Bell's lip twisted as he fired a three round burst that opened up a sucking chest wound in the closest of the men." Seconds later, "This one's done."

Apart from my automatic revulsion at the clichéd sneer, I know that a sucking chest wound is a type of traumatic pneumothorax in which air is sucked into the chest cavity through a hole in the chest wall *with each breath*. A sucking chest wound takes time to develop - it's a progressively advancing situation as the lung collapses, a few breaths at least... You just don't create one instantly you see the bullets hit the chest and describe it as such. And as this anonymous goon has had no time to breathe those few times, there can have been no "sucking" chest wound. It just sounded like a tough and macho thing to say, right?

I was on the verge of giving up earlier (at 2%) when a child is rigged with explosives (c.f.:Hurt Locker) and an allegedly huge explosion occurs. No. I thought immediately that there simply cannot have been enough explosive material within "the sample", and for him to be still alive, to create the degree of damage to the police station as described. I am in no way an explosives expert, but that struck me as a gross exaggeration of the potential of whatever material was used - C4, I presume.

These petty things annoy me and perhaps I am overly sensitive to situations and descriptions that struck me as false when I do occasionally (very rarely) pick up an well-hyped airport thriller like this (and almost always throw away immediately in disgust) due a sense of disappointment with myself for giving in to marketing pressure. But you know, I hate this type of book generally because they are always riddled with silly genre-compliant stuff that does annoy me, and by 6% this book had offered no reason for me to alter my feelings on the matter.

End Review.

Liz Barnsley says

I loved Nomad. A totally banging thriller, a modern day spy story with a great main protagonist in Marc – forced out of his comfort zone and onto the front line in the fight against terrorism, you are with him all the way.

Nomad starts explosively and does not really let up – it is a beautifully written thrill ride of a novel that ticks all the boxes, has an underlying intelligence that allows contemplation as well as adrenalin rush and keeps you on the edge of your seat throughout. A book where you turn the last page and immediately want more – so its a good thing that this is only the start.

Its scary stuff too – there is a new weapon out there, horribly believable, standing between it and the wider world is one man who is not really best placed to save us – another thing that I really thought was great and brought a lot of realism to the wider story. Marc has skills but often gets through things with more luck than judgment – enter Lucy Keyes, another fascinating character and a great “sidekick” to have along for the ride.

It is a twisty journey for sure, trust no-one, seriously Marc could probably have done with a little help from Fox Mulder on that score – James Swallow has a fantastically gripping writing style, the story works on

many levels all of them good ones. There is enough technical wizardry to keep the geek in us happy, some terrifically well drawn and fascinating characters quite apart from Marc himself and some beautifully immersive action scenes that will have you hanging off every word...

Nomad is utterly gripping, cleverly plotted and one hell of a thriller. Highly Recommended

Todd Simpson says

I really enjoyed this story. It was so well written and easy to read. I also enjoyed that its 512 pages, and it easily held my attention all the way through. Which is definitely not an easy thing to achieve. However there is plenty of action, and a story line that certainly captured my attention. The plot is elaborate and suspenseful, with a diverse range of characters. What should have been just another operation for the Nomad group, had quickly gone to hell down at the docks. Marc Danes job was to sit in the van and assist the field operators in their task on finding out what was on board the ship. However when a massive explosion erupts from the vessel, he suddenly finds himself outside looking for survivors. As with most things in life, nothing as it seems, and it looks like someone want's there to be no survivors left alive from this mission. Marc is now on his own, and he knows if he wants to stay alive and out of jail, then he will need to find out who's responsible. He may just have someone on his side, who wants the same thing him. Since I was late to the party in reading Nomad, I was thrilled when I got to the end and saw that the Author has continued the series on with another book 'Exile", which I'm certainly looking forward to. Well worth the 5 star rating.

Yasmin says

DNF

This started off very well, but quickly became boring due to over- description. It is tiresome to read through pages of fight scenes blow by blow, for example.

The author attempts to make us care for the lead character by having him reflect on his relationship, but it felt false and hollow.

I didn't care enough about the main character or his motivations to go on reading.

Disappointing

Ben Aaronovitch says

FULL DISCLOSURE - THE WRITER IS FRIEND OF MIND

I read the original first draft of this book and was immediately envious of how good it was but, then, what was I expecting from someone as polished as our Jim. I could wax lyrical about how the book is tense, dramatic, exciting and other good things ending in -ing but then you would just assume I'm schilling for my mate. So let's just say that I really enjoyed it and leave it at that.

You should definitely read it though.
