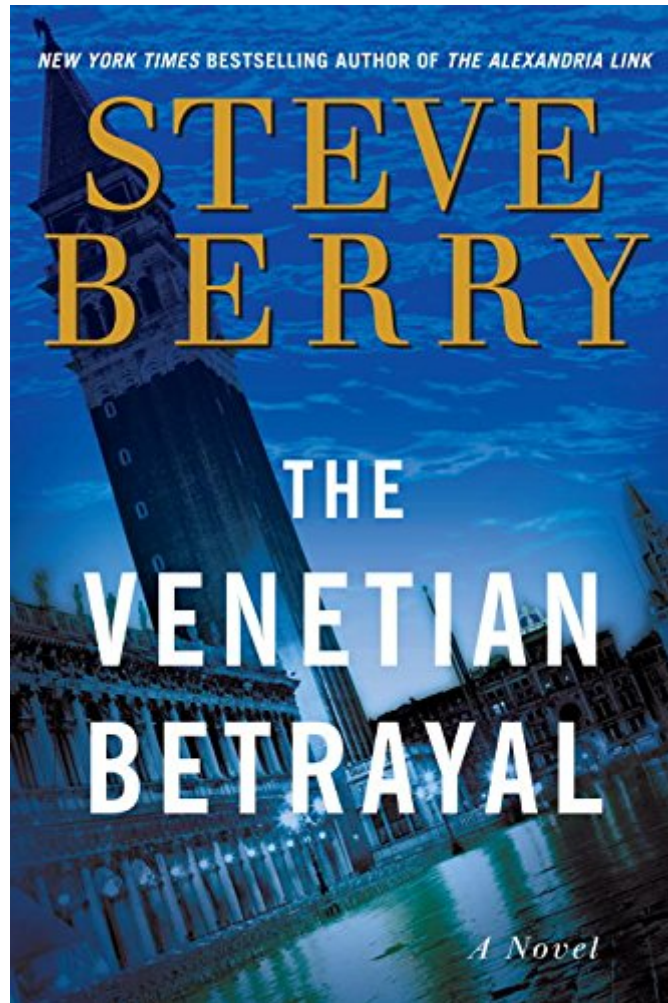


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The Venetian Betrayal: A Novel (Cotton Malone Book 3)



Synopsis

BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Steve Berry's *The Columbus Affair* and a Cotton Malone dossier. In 323 B.C.E, having conquered Persia, Alexander the Great set his sights on Arabia, then suddenly succumbed to a strange fever. Locating his final resting place "unknown to this day" remains a tantalizing goal for both archaeologists and treasure hunters. Now the quest for this coveted prize is about to heat up. And Cotton Malone "former U.S. Justice Department agent turned rare-book dealer" will be drawn into an intense geopolitical chess game. After narrowly escaping incineration in a devastating fire that consumes a Danish museum, Cotton learns from his friend, the beguiling adventurer Cassiopeia Vitt, that the blaze was neither an accident nor an isolated incident. As part of campaign of arson intended to mask a far more diabolical design, buildings across Europe are being devoured by infernos of unnatural strength. And from the ashes of the U.S.S.R., a new nation has arisen: Former Soviet republics have consolidated into the Central Asian Federation. At its helm is Supreme Minister Irina Zovastina, a cunning despot with a talent for politics, a taste for blood sport, and the single-minded desire to surpass Alexander the Great as history's ultimate conqueror. Backed by a secret cabal of powerbrokers, the Federation has amassed a harrowing arsenal of biological weapons. Equipped with the hellish power to decimate other nations at will, only one thing keeps Zovastina from setting in motion her death march of domination: a miraculous healing serum, kept secret by an ancient puzzle and buried with the mummified remains of Alexander the Great "in a tomb lost to the ages for more than 1,500 years. Together, Cotton and Cassiopeia must outrun and outthink the forces allied against them. Their perilous quest will take them to the shores of Denmark, deep into the venerated monuments of Venice, and finally high inside the desolate Pamir mountains of Central Asia to unravel a riddle whose solution could destroy or save millions of people "depending on who finds the lost tomb first.

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Customer Reviews

If you're familiar with Steve Berry, you know that there's no way possible to read his novel and be bored. His books start moving, twisting and turning and just don't stop. In fact, in this book, one of the bad guys changes sides so many times; you're never really sure exactly where it all ends up... even when the book is finished and the problems & plotline solved. The premise of this book is that Alexander the Great's tomb is within reach and the good guys are out to stop the bad guys from getting to the tomb and getting the goods to rule the world. Well, not exactly, just kill the world, but hey it's close enough in fictionland. The major evil-doer is obsessed with Alexander the Great, his mummy and the draught said to cure anything that ails the person who might drink it. Cotton Malone is paired up with Cassiopeia Vitt to solve a world class problem. This time Cassiopeia has the complex problem and Malone is more or less pressed into service by his friend and mentor Thorvaldsen. The adventure starts in Copenhagen, but quickly runs to Venice and then to the Fictional Central Asian Federation (think Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan) and a far western portion of China. The twists and turns in this book are truly amazing. Seriously, following the plot line from one place to another is truly exhausting. Berry has out done himself; I think he's taken the running all over the planet to a whole new extreme. The great thing about this is that so much is going on; the reader can't possibly solve the riddle. The bad thing about this is that there's so much going on that the reader risks losing interest in the whole thing. I found, in several places, that I simply began not to care what was going on at all and just reading to get finished with the whole thing.

After reaching a peak with *The Templar Legacy*, I thought Mr. Berry slipped a little with his last outing, *The Alexandria Link*. Fortunately, he seems back on the right track with *The Venetian*

Betrayal. If this one doesn't quite live up to The Templar Legacy, it certainly was much more fun for me than the last one. Back for his third outing is one of my favorite characters in thriller fiction, Cotton Malone, that spy-turned-bookseller-turned-reluctant-hero. This novel also sees the return of many of Mr. Berry's regular cast of characters, including some of my other favorites like Cassiopeia Vitt and Henrik Thorvaldsen. In fact, at this point, Mr. Berry is well into creating his own little alternate universe, peopling the White House and Vatican with his own characters and changing the geopolitical landscape to suit his needs. For those of us that have followed Mr. Berry's progress, it works fairly well. Not that you have to read previous novels to enjoy this one but it doesn't hurt. What's new this time out is the Central Asian Federation, a new mega-state of former Soviet Republics like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan ruled by an interesting new character, ruthless and intelligent, Irina Zovastina. It is her obsession with finding the tomb of Alexander the Great that drives the plot forward, taking us from Denmark to the borders of China. Zovastina seeks the tomb for the political power associated with a claim on this world conqueror; however, there is another reason to seek the tomb. Apparently, there is a miraculous cure associated with the tomb which brings in the interest of an international pharmaceutical company (which also produces biological weapons). But I don't want to unravel too much of the plot. There are many layers here and Mr.

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