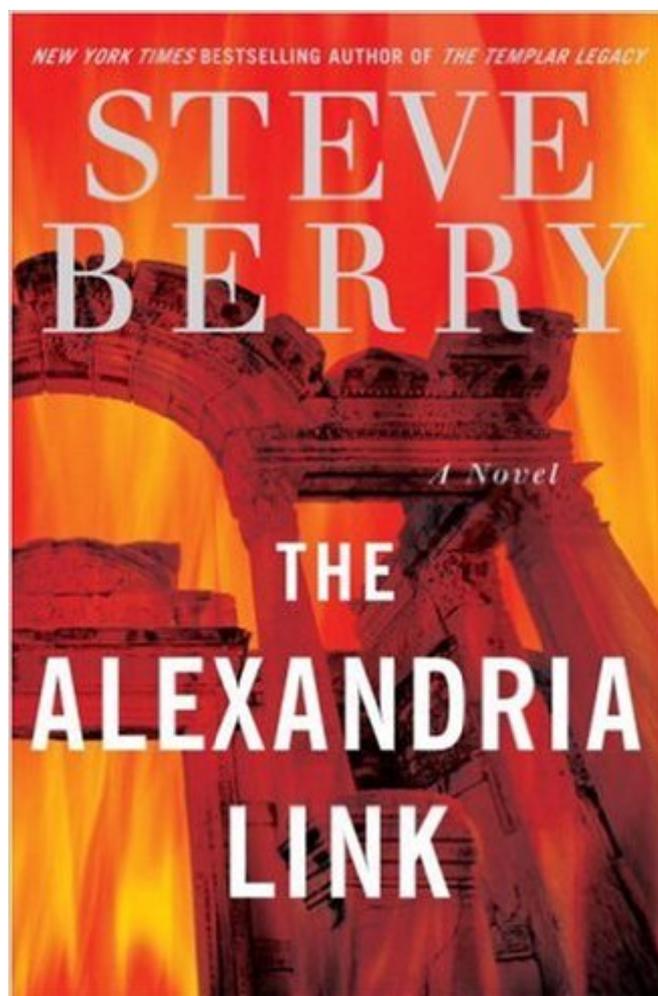


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The Alexandria Link: A Novel



Synopsis

Cotton Malone retired from the high-risk world of elite operatives for the U.S. Justice Department to lead the low-key life of a rare-book dealer. But his quiet existence is shattered when he receives an anonymous e-mail: "You have something I want. You're the only person on earth who knows where to find it. Go get it. You have 72 hours. If I don't hear from you, you will be childless." His horrified ex-wife confirms that the threat is real: Their teenage son has been kidnapped. When Malone's Copenhagen bookshop is burned to the ground, it becomes brutally clear that those responsible will stop at nothing to get what they want. And what they want is nothing less than the lost Library of Alexandria. A cradle of ideas "historical, philosophical, literary, scientific, and religious" the Library of Alexandria was unparalleled in the world. But fifteen hundred years ago, it vanished into the mists of myth and legend "its vast bounty of wisdom coveted ever since by scholars, fortune hunters, and those who believe its untold secrets hold the key to ultimate power. Now a cartel of wealthy international moguls, bent on altering the course of history, is desperate to breach the library's hallowed halls "and only Malone possesses the information they need to succeed. At stake is an explosive ancient document with the potential not only to change the destiny of the Middle East but to shake the world's three major religions to their very foundations. Pursued by a lethal mercenary, Malone crosses the globe in search of answers. His quest will lead him to England and Portugal, even to the highest levels of American government "and the shattering outcome, deep in the Sinai desert, will have worldwide repercussions.

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Customer Reviews

With *The Alexandria Link*, author Steve Berry takes us on a search for the legendary lost Library of Alexandria which was assumed to have been destroyed but has in fact been preserved by a group known as the Guardians. We ride along with retired U.S. government operative Cotton Malone as his quest takes him from damp streets of London to a chateau in Vienna, from historical locations in Lisbon and the United States to a desert in the Sinai as he hunts for the document which could reveal a secret from the distant past which, if disclosed, could jeopardize the security of our modern world. Berry has taken stories about actual historical characters like David Ben-Gurion, actual locations such as the Monastery of Santa Maria de Belem in Lisbon, old manuscripts, the works and conclusions of various scholars, the existence of an actual medieval society called The Order of the Golden Fleece, the fabricated correspondence between a couple of Saints and utilized these as the framework around which he has constructed his story. For those readers who will immediately attempt to point out the historical discrepancies contained in this book, one needs to remember that *The Alexandria Link* is ultimately a work of the author's talent and imagination and this is why it is sold under the classification of fiction. The one factual thing the book does point out (either wittingly or unwittingly) is that through the ages, religion has been used to incite wars, create economic chaos, disrupt the harmony that could potentially exist between peoples and nations, and ultimately has been the tool employed to satisfy the political aspirations and objectives of various individuals and countries. As an entertaining distraction with which to satisfy your thirst for vicarious adventure, this book more than fills the bill.

Steve Berry delivers another globe-hopping thriller with retired US operative Cotton Malone attempting to live a quiet life running a bookshop in Copenhagen. Retirement comes to an abrupt halt when he escapes the assassins who burn down his bookshop and tell him they have kidnapped his son. Cotton is forced to join forces with his acerbic ex-wife Pam when it seems assassins may be on her tail, as well. They get their son back, but then they find themselves caught between ancient organizations: the Guardians of the Library at Alexandria, pledged to keep its secrets safe, and the Order of the Golden Fleece, a ruthless sect of the powerful who meet in secret and who have vowed to claim the Library for themselves. Accompanying Cotton and Pam is the Order's pet assassin, who has a few plans of his own regarding the library. At the same time, treachery is afoot

in the US government with the president, vice president, secretary of state, and the heads of several security departments all mistrusting each other as a web of secrets and lies is unraveled. Some find this kind of thriller gripping. Unfortunately, I find it a bit tiresome, and in this book, everything that was happening inside the government was not essential to the main plot of Cotton Malone following a quest to the lost Library of Alexandria. This is also the third Steve Berry book I've read starring an idiotic and unlikeable female lead. When Pam Malone, yet again acting stubborn and stupid, gets herself shot, I found myself wishing they'd put her down then and there. This author obviously has some issues with women. The author also seems way out of touch with children. Gary Malone was supposed to be 15 but came across as a 10-year-old in size, maturity, vocabulary, and deed. I think they're a dime a dozen, but thrillers involving clueless protagonists doing a lot of chasing around the globe while unaware of the web of lies surrounding them as they follow a trail of clues in close proximity to the know-it-all bad guys are pretty popular. Some such books are sometimes a thrill to read, but often they miss the mark and fail to grab my interest. Since this book also contained one of my least favorite plot devices of all the characters knowing something that was kept from me until the very end, it failed to grab my interest.

Making a mad dash for the Oregon coast to escape the heat, The Alexandria Link caught my attention in a local bookstore. (Sorry, .) I had read his The Templar Legacy: A Novel, and I was intrigued by the plot - what if the texts from the destroyed library at Alexandria survived? What gems of literature, history and philosophy would we discover? Barry takes the premise further - how might a clearer understanding of ancient history influence the Middle East today? What if the "Promised Land," source of so much strife and bloodshed, wasn't in the Levant, but elsewhere? Cotton Malone, the protagonist from The Templar Legacy returns, this time with his ex-wife in tow. The plot is complicated, and intrigue and double-crossing abounds, as Barry tries to surprise the reader and keep them off balance as characters double and triple cross each other. The action is fast-paced, and the clues are intriguing. However, the geography of Washington, DC is poor, and Barry's explanation of historical events are thin. Borrowing from Dan Brown, the chapters are short, intentionally leaving you hungry for more as the focus of the story hops from one competing group to the next, each racing to either recover or destroy an ancient text that would change the nature of politics in the Middle East forever. Even with the suspension of realism that I reserve for these sorts of stories, I wasn't buying Barry's premise. That both Arabs and Jews would work together to suppress the mystery document was a reach; the series of impossible situations that Malone found himself in - and that he managed to get out of - continued to stretch the credible, and

the writing itself was a pale comparison to others of the same genre. For want of something better to read, this would do. Otherwise, I'd pass.

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