



Flight of the Fox

Gray Basnight

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Gray Basnight's *Flight of the Fox* is the ultimate paranoid thriller—a major page-turner dedicated to one wrongfully accused man's flight from the law. This is a big-league ride from start to finish, and at its core, it discusses what a postmodern democratic dictatorship might look like.

A Columbia mathematics professor, Sam Teagarden, receives a coded notebook from the FBI archives. It is sent by a former colleague's son who hopes that the ex-CIA cryptologist can make heads or tails of the document. As it turns out, the notebook is the diary that former FBI official Clyde Anderson Tolson kept in order to blackmail J. Edgar Hoover.

With this volatile information in his hands, Teagarden becomes the target for a pair of black-ops FBI men. Their job is to kill the "fox" (Teagarden) before he can expose the depth and breadth of the FBI's crimes between 1938 and 1972.

Basnight's novel moves at the speed of light in brief chapters, some of which are only one page long. It is peppered with political and cultural asides. In one instance, Teagarden, in disguise as a Hasidic Jew, gives a know-it-all New York hipster a good verbal thrashing; in a series of e-mails, he reveals how a common housewife in Missouri is obsessed with New York City's potentially dangerous Muslim population.

Flight of the Fox is something of a love letter to the classic espionage thrillers of the Cold War. Easy-to-consume prose serves as commentary on the state of high-tech surveillance in American life.

This is a fun, entertaining read that flies by faster than its own predatory drones. Part chase story and part political thriller, it is the perfect summertime read for anyone worried about the machinations of the US government, especially the FBI.

BENJAMIN WELTON (July/August 2018)

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