



A good old-fashioned spy novel

BOOKS & LITERATURE

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“The Dead Don’t Bleed” by David Krugler (Pegasus Crime, 309 pages, \$25.95)

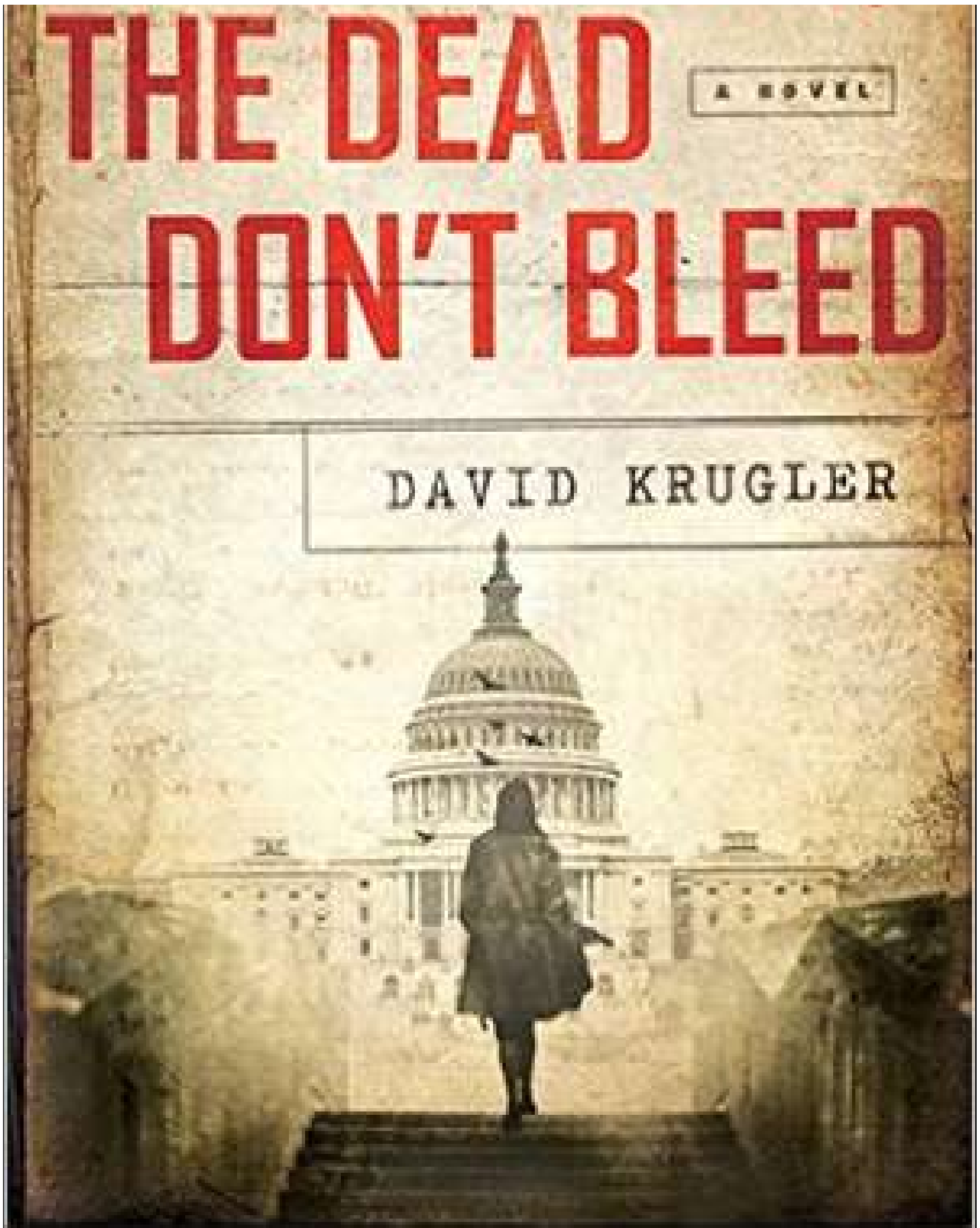
Twenty-five years ago, the Soviet Union was fading away. The Cold War was ending. There were still Chinese spies lurking, but the USSR had been providing significant secret agent action. The current Russian leader Vladimir Putin is a former KGB agent. That fact speaks volumes.

Hitler’s Third Reich collapsed in 1945. The Red Army swept into Berlin. An Iron Curtain soon rose up from the rubble and sealed off a swath of Europe. For the next 45 years, the region was crawling with spies.

As this spy craft flourished, some espionage writers depicting clandestine activities thrived, too. The period from 1945 to 1991 was a golden age for spy novelists who wrote about it. Fortunately we have a new crop of writers who are re-inventing this literary form.

David Krugler’s “The Dead Don’t Bleed” is set in Washington, D.C., in 1945 just as World War II was drawing to a close. On Page 2, the body of Lieutenant junior grade Logan Skerrill, U.S.N., has been discovered in a poor neighborhood. It is 1 a.m. and our narrator, another naval officer named Lieutenant Voigt, has been called in to investigate and examine the crime scene.





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The body is still warm. The investigators converse: "This a lotta blood?" "Depends on how many times he was shot. One thing for sure, he didn't die right away." "How do you know?" Terrance gestured at the stain covering the bricks and filling the mortar lines. "Because the dead don't bleed."

We are only on Page 5, and we already have our title. Crime novelists often make their readers wait a bit longer to figure out the sources for their titles but in "The Dead Don't Bleed," the author David Krugler is in a hurry. The action is fast paced and the mystery of Skerrill's death is gorgeously wrought and splendidly opaque.

Skerrill was a spy. Voigt is there because he is also an espionage agent and he needs to find out who had sniffed out then snuffed out his colleague. Skerrill and Voigt were trained together to work undercover for the Office of Naval Intelligence. The two men didn't get along.

The War in Europe had just ended. In the Pacific the Japanese still fought on. During that summer of 1945 Washington, D.C. was bristling with spies. There were whispered rumors that a top-secret project was underway in New Mexico. Soviet spies were working overtime trying to find out all about it. Most readers will recognize that it was the Manhattan Project that was in the final stages of delivering the atomic bombs that would be dropped on Japan.

Voigt goes deep undercover. He begins working for a newspaper clipping service that is really a front for a Soviet spy operation. Voigt is young, and he's in love. He keeps sneaking away from his spying to rendezvous with his girlfriend. Will his indiscretions compromise national secrets and allow the Soviets the wherewithal to construct their own atomic bombs? Read "The Dead Don't Bleed" for a thrill-packed ride with a truly stunning ending.

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