

Spencerville

By Nelson DeMille

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Back from the Cold War, intelligence officer Keith Landry returns to his hometown of Spencerville, Ohio. Twenty-five years after their last encounter, Keith runs into his first love, Annie, now unhappily married to the town's chief of police--an abusive alcoholic. In his efforts to reclaim Annie, Keith will have to draw on all the skills of a violent lifetime.

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Spencerville By Nelson DeMille Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #594035 in Books
- Brand: Grand Central Publishing
- Published on: 1994-10-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x 1.25" w x 5.98" l, 1.97 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 496 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Cannily combining some of the emotional appeal of Bridges of Madison County with a riveting cat-and-mouse game between a retired CIA man and a psychotic rural police chief, DeMille's latest novel (after The General's Daughter) has bestseller written all over it. Keith Landry, his Cold War intelligence job a victim of the Soviet collapse, returns to the little Ohio town where he grew up and begins to tinker with thoughts of reviving the family farm. A former sweetheart, Annie, despondent after Keith went off to Vietnam, had married aggressive, good-looking Cliff Baxter on the rebound, but Keith and Annie had never ceased to correspond. Now that he's back, the old interest is rekindled in both, but Baxter, now police chief and a womanizing petty tyrant, is fiercely jealous-and the novel takes off as a deadly struggle between a man trained in the arts of deception and one with all the built-in advantages of police power in a remote spot. In the process, DeMille works in some poignant reflections on the diminishing role of the American heartland and some acute satire at the expense of the Washington power elite; he also manages a nice combination of wryness and passion in his middle-aged lovers. The pacing is expert: there is plenty of time for leisurely scenes, but the narrative tension never flags, and the final third keeps up a crackling drive. There are a few pat and unconvincing moments, and the inclination of DeMille's characters to think aloud is an odd quirk, but no readers, once hooked, are going to complain-or do much else-until they have finished the book. 400,000 first printing; BOMC main selection; major ad/promo; author tour.
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From Library Journal
DeMille's thrillers (e.g., The Charm School, LJ 5/15/88) are a cut above most, and his many fans won't be disappointed with Spencerville. Keith Landry, a Cold War spy cashiered after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, returns to his rural Ohio birthplace hoping to rekindle an old flame. Alas, she's married to Spencerville's chief of police, an abusive, microcephalic goon who tries to run Landry out of town. DeMille is at his best when things are happening, but his thoughts on rural life and farming are a bit saccharine. Nonetheless, riveting suspense and likable characters make this a likely candidate for popular collections. --*Mark Annichiarico, "Library Journal"*
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From Kirkus Reviews
A usually reliable and best-selling author (The General's Daughter, 1992, etc.) comes a-cropper with this tale of star-crossed lovers who finally meet again after a quarter century and then must deal with her psychotic husband, the sheriff and de facto dictator of their Ohio hometown. Such a story requires that the individuals involved seem likely to have held onto their youthful romance into middle age. When one, Keith Landry, is an exintelligence operative with the National Security Council, a man competent and experienced enough to have the president of the United States request his return to government service in the White House, such emotional gridlock seems pretty far-fetched. And when the other, Annie Prentis Baxter, has married the town psychopath and remained an apparently willing victim of her own stupid choice for more than 20 years, one must wonder what exactly it is about this woman that has kept Landry captivated. Readers are left to hope that DeMille's reputation for accomplished storytelling and the ability to create memorable characters will save the day. No such luck. This is pure (and unbelievable) melodrama with a stock cast: farmers who are almost actively unsophisticated (Landry's elderly aunt is absolutely baffled by a bottle of red wine), a kindly and understanding old preacher, the town drunk who is a Vietnam veteran and one of the sheriff's prime victims, and so forth. (There is a disdain for Middle America that ranges from implicit to overt throughout these pages.) Even those who fall outside the Spencerville paradigm , Landry's former high school pal and

his wife, are clich,s of another sort: unreconstructed '60s peaceniks: They turn out to have no real role to play in the story. Only Landry's ex-boss from Washington is even vaguely interesting (and his role is essentially that of deus ex machina). Some tension in the final pages, but too little, too late. Very disappointing. (Book-of-the-Month Club main selection; author tour) -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gemma Jackson:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or even read a book entitled Spencerville? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have other opinion?

Patrick Vanmeter:

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