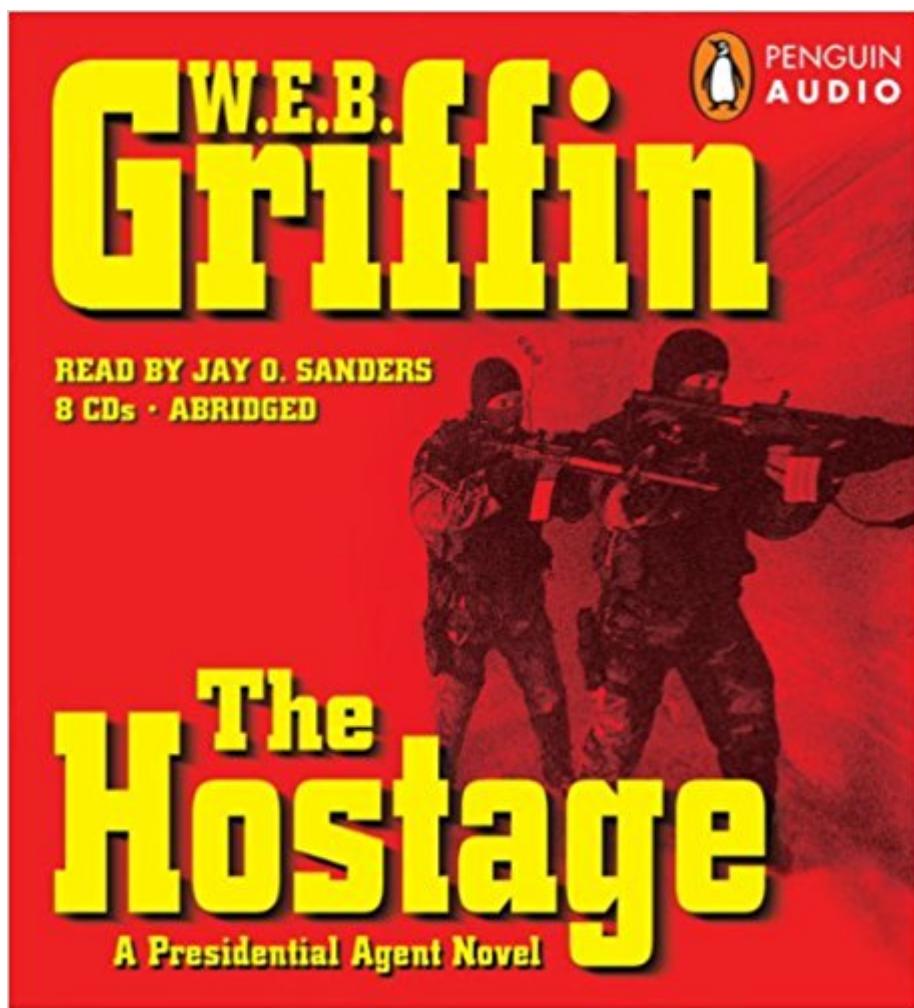


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# The Hostage (A Presidential Agent Novel)



## **Synopsis**

A New York Times Bestselling Author Charley Castillo is a man that the President turns to when he needs an investigation done discreetly . . . like now. An American diplomat's wife is kidnapped in Argentina, her husband murdered, her children are next unless she tells them where her brother is. A brother who may know quite a bit about the burgeoning UN/Iraq oil-for-food scandal. There is a lot of money flying around with many hands reaching out to grab it - and some of those hands don't mind shedding as much blood as it takes. Simultaneous Publication with G. P. Putnam's Standard Print edition. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Prolific Griffin brings back Delta Force Maj. Charley Castillo (last seen in 2004's *By Order of the President*) for a second outing in this fast-paced adventure. What begins with the kidnapping of an American diplomat's wife in Argentina soon escalates to murder with links to the international Iraqi oil-for-food scandal. This is Griffin's 36th novel and it is clear that he is writing at the top of his game as he manages to imbue this complex, timely thriller with plenty of action, steely-eyed heroes and ruthless villains. Dick Hill, no stranger to the thriller genre or Griffin's audiobooks, gives a solid, assured performance. He smoothly balances the book's numerous characters and accents with ease, and is able to keep the considerable expositional narrative simple and straightforward without ever lapsing into a monotonous reading. This is no easy feat given the intricacies of the book's story line, and its 18-hour running time. Hill is ably assisted by Brilliance's first-rate editing and production

values, all of which combine to keep the story moving and the listener involved. Griffin has written a terrific story and hopefully it won't be the last to feature special ops agent Castillo. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Griffin's second novel in his Presidential Agent series is the best-selling author's thirty-sixth book. Delta Force Major Charley Castillo is the protagonist-hero; he works with the Department of Homeland Security. He is asked by the president to go to Buenos Aires, where the wife of the deputy chief has been kidnapped and her husband has been murdered, shot twice in the head as she was forced to watch. Terrorists threaten to kill her children if she doesn't tell them how to find her brother, who, it seems, may have knowledge about the UN-Iraqi oil-for-food scandal. The twists and turns here include the handling of a large amount of money--\$16 million, to be exact--that a variety of people would like to get hold of, and the storyline is peppered with forged passports, special agents, and never-ending cell-phone calls. The convoluted plot will appeal to thriller readers, especially Griffin's many fans, and although some of the dialogue is hackneyed, fans of the genre and author won't care. The important thing is the fast pacing and the relevance of the story to today's events and headlines. George CohenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I've read various books in Griffin's series, but I've read them out of order. I wish I'd read this one in its proper place, number two, because it explains how Charley Castillo goes from his first-book exploit recovering a stolen 727 from terrorists, to becoming head of a secret team, how he assembles it, and the back stories of many of the characters. A lot of that wasn't apparent to me earlier. It also has tremendous background on the Oil-For-Food scandal. With Iraqi oil embargoed in the 1990s, Saddam Hussein was allowed to use some oil to barter for food and medicine in a UN program. The program instead became massively corrupt, as Hussein used oil to buy friends at the UN by making them rich, with UN officials themselves heavily implicated in it. They took bribes to look the other way as huge amounts of oil were smuggled illegally out of the country. Back to this book: When the wife of the number two American diplomat in Buenos Aires is kidnapped, there are no leads. Fearing slow movement and ass-covering by the bureaucracies involved, the president asks Castillo, still a Special Forces major but now also a deputy to the secretary of Homeland Security, to go there and take charge of the

investigation. Castillo, with little background in this type of investigation, is sent into the situation over the heads of nearly everyone — the US ambassador, the Argentine security forces, the FBI and CIA — and where they are now potential enemies who may block his work. He must make them his allies, while trying to make sense of a baffling situation and forestalling unsuccessful subsequent attacks. His charm, savvy and ability to think on his feet — plus his independent wealth, multiple identities and languages, and the many organizational hats he wears (he's quickly sworn in as a Secret Service agent) — allow him to make his way. The situation worsens when the diplomat himself is killed trying to ransom his wife. Is it terrorism? Kidnapping for ransom? Or neither? The wife's brother, though, is a UN official who has just gone missing. Uruguay is a world capital of money laundering. And the South American cone is a great place to hide. Castillo starts to assemble his team of colorful, talented operators who need a place to land.

WEB Griffin is justifiably the best writer of military novels. Unlike Clancy, he doesn't rely on reciting the details of various weapons systems, what matters most are the personalities. His characters are human, not perfect warriors or totally evil bureaucrats. What I think is the most unexpected facet of Griffin's work is the humor in his writing. My only significant complaint is his use of German. Although Griffin studied in Marburg, Germany, his understanding of German customs and, occasionally, language is ...um... lacking. I'm fluent in German and spend time there annually; the errors are distracting, to be kind. It's a relatively point issue, however, which won't bother non-German speakers. All of that said, I can readily recommend this book and Griffin's Presidential Agent series, and Griffin's writing in general.

Griffen indulges in an overly detailed narrative that makes you suspect he's padding to boost the book cost. Once you wade through that, this is an exciting book with a well crafted plot and great characters. Neither the author nor his protagonists "suffer fools gladly" and his put downs of self important players are wonderful, are the dialogues.

Excellent character build-up, suspense, intrigue, a hint of sex and of course plenty of gun play as well as international spies, counter-spies, terrorism, counter-terrorism...what you'd expect of a W.E.B. Griffin novel if you've read even one. This has more and better. I really enjoy reading it though it does get bogged down at times with too much unnecessary detail, in my opinion. Other

than that it could easily have earned a five star. I will recommend this book nonetheless. When the action moves, it goes off without a hitch. I don't know how Mr. Griffin does it but I'm damn glad he does it for our side.

After reading two 10-book series from W.E.B. Griffin and am now on book four of ten of this series, I am hooked. I enjoy military-related books and Mr. Griffin pulls you into the story to the point where you hear the sounds, smell the smells and come to think of his characters as friends. I highly recommend to all who know the pleasure of reading.

Book two of the series has Charley off and running on another adventure!. A good read.

W.E.B. Griffin is one of the most prolific and best known authors of what is generally known as "historical fiction." His characters come alive on the page and the stories are page turners. The Presidential Agent series is less historical fiction than the author's other books: The Honor Bound and Men of War Series (OSS), The Corps Series (USMC), Brotherhood of War Series USA), but it has the same great writing. I have read all of Griffin's books at least three times (and I almost never re-read a book). You may find that there is a certain formula to Griffin's works but that somehow doesn't detract from them. If you like a good read -- pick up The Hostage. I guarantee you will soon find yourself unable to put it down -- and you will likely want to read the rest of the series -- and probably everything else in the W.E.B. Griffin library.

Continuation of the presidential agent novel. Good story, relies as do most of his on some repeat of information/storyline, but still good.

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