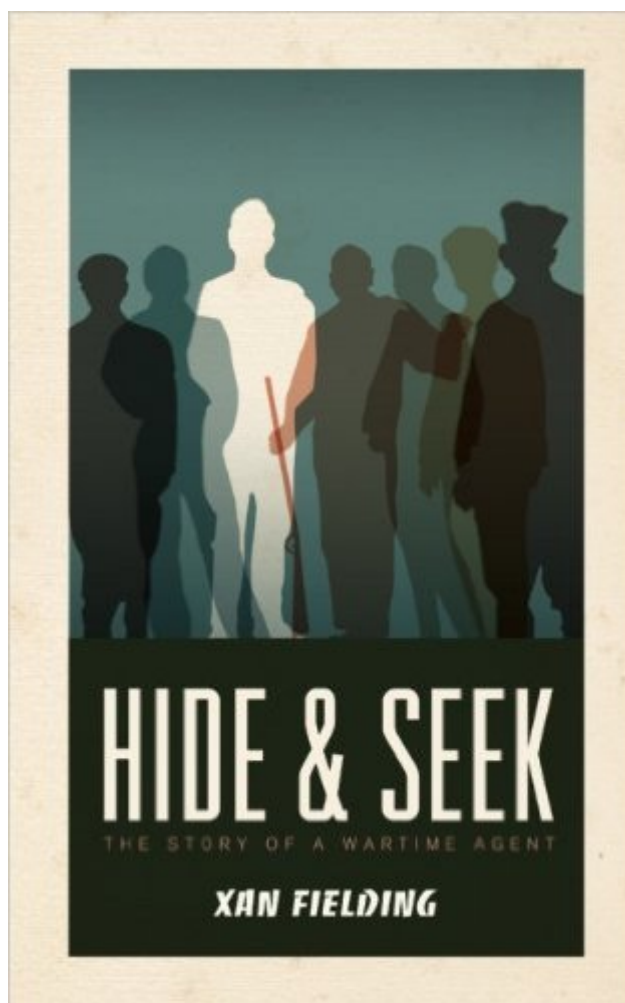


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Hide And Seek: The Story Of A Wartime Agent



Synopsis

"One of the great books of the Second World War" – Antony Beevor "Hide and Seek, first published in 1954 and unavailable for many years, is surely among the best wartime memoirs. It is narrated in a vivid close-up style; by a man who spent two years in caves and other hideouts in the White Mountains, venturing to the coast only to guide a supply submarine with flashing torch, or to smuggle endangered or exhausted colleagues to safety in Cairo. It is remarkable that he lived to tell the tale; that he does so with such modesty, grace and humour is extraordinary." – James Campbell, Times Literary Supplement

Xan Fielding was a gifted, many-sided, courageous and romantic figure, at the same time civilized and Bohemian, and his thoughtful cast of mind was leavened by humour, spontaneous gaiety, and a dash of recklessness. Almost any stretch of his life might be described as a picaresque interlude." – Patrick Leigh Fermor

In January 1942, Xan Fielding landed on German-occupied Crete with orders to disrupt the resupply of Rommel's Afrika Korps and establish an intelligence network in cooperation with the Cretan resistance movement. Working with bands of Cretan partisans, he succeeded magnificently. In this memoir of his wartime exploits, Fielding presents a portrait of the quintessential English operative – amateur, gifted, daring, and charming.

From the new foreword by Robert Messenger: "Hide and Seek is a classic of British war literature, an understated account of a man's coming-of-age thanks to the sudden shouldering of great responsibility. Fielding is deprecating about the dangers and his own achievements. It is typical of the quiet and reticent man who preferred to live outside the limelight and wrote matter-of-factly about the war rather than with a gloss of adventure or heroism. There's a scene, late in 1943, when Fielding and a group of partisans study the German's list of 'wanted' men. He notes 'with regrettable but only human pride that the entry under my local pseudonym, which outlined in detail my physical characteristics, aliases and activities for a period of eighteen months, took no less than three-quarters of an octavo page in closely-set small-point type.' The Germans had surely measured his worth." Xan Fielding (1918–1991) was a British writer and traveler, and a lifelong friend of Patrick Leigh Fermor, who served with him in Crete during World War II. (The introduction to Fermor's *A Time of Gifts* is written as a "Letter to Xan Fielding.") Fielding also translated many novels from French, most notably, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *The Planet of the Apes*. Robert Messenger is the books editor of the Wall Street Journal.

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Customer Reviews

One of the lesser-known battlegrounds of World War II was the island of Crete. In May 1941 the Germans invaded the island, spearheaded by the first airborne assault in military history. Once defeat was imminent the British evacuated as many troops as possible to Egypt, but hundreds were left stranded on the island. Many of them were hidden and protected by peasants in the rugged mountains of Crete for months and even years. British intelligence services, principally the SOE (Special Operations Executive), installed agents on the island to coordinate periodic evacuations and to gather and transmit intelligence information, most importantly concerning German air operations supporting the war in North Africa. That the extended British behind-enemy-lines endeavor was so gloriously successful was due to the courage and resourcefulness of a handful of British intelligence agents and, even more critically, to the widespread antipathy for the Germans among the native Cretans. Indeed, of all the regions that the Germans occupied during World War II, resistance probably was strongest and collaboration the least frequent in Crete. Xan Fielding was one of the principal SOE agents in Crete. He was infiltrated by nighttime boat landing in January 1942 and he served there for the next two years. *HIDE & SEEK* is Fielding's memoir of his career as an SOE agent, most of which occurred in Crete. As time passed, the Germans realized the harm that British intelligence was inflicting on their operations and they extended their presence into more remote areas of the island, so that Fielding's spy network had less and less room to operate. By the end, "we kept dodging them, playing hide-and-seek through the numerous ravines and round the intervening peaks". Hence, the title.

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