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... pp. \$ 16.95

YOU'VE GOT TO hand it to anyone who can create a readable novel out of U.S.-Soviet research into the paranormal, which is what David Wise has done in The Samarkand Dimension, an arresting and engaging spy thriller in which blind

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... for the launch site at Vandenberg Air Force Base, the CIA literally gets some very bad vibes, namely that the Soviets have sabotaged the project through telekinesis -- the ability to move objects through mental concentration. The agency taps one of its most tried and trusted agents, Markham, to penetrate the Soviet parapsychology facility at Samarkand, deep in Soviet Central Asia. His orders are simple: Report back on the state of Soviet research into the paranormal. And, in the event that his cover is blown and he elects not to kill himself, he has the agency's blessing to cooperate with his captors rather than

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... It's a surreal journey into a world of experiments where documents in remote locations are accessed by psychics through "remote viewing," thoughts are "implanted" in unrealizing humans, and laboratory animals are zombieized with doses of "psychic energy." "You've turned a rabbit into ...

... Markham. "True," sniffs a research honcho, "but it's a far cry from being able to zap a Soviet leader in the Kremlin from a distance of 4,800 miles. In terms of practical application, we have a long way to go." ...

... Kansas, on the Denver-Chicago run.

AFTER this lengthy lull, Wise gets things rolling as Markham/Weaver is "dangled to the Soviets as a vulnerable, alcoholic, in-debt American scientist with access to secret research into the military and intelligence applications of parapsychology." The KGB bites, and Markham is whisked off to Samarkand to try to finesse his double agent high wire act for some very skeptical Soviet interrogators. When his seemingly airtight cover is unexpectedly shredded, the Soviets start demanding hard answers, and the whole operation unravels with riveting grimness.

Markham's interrogation and torture are convincingly nightmarish -- "Ludmilla

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