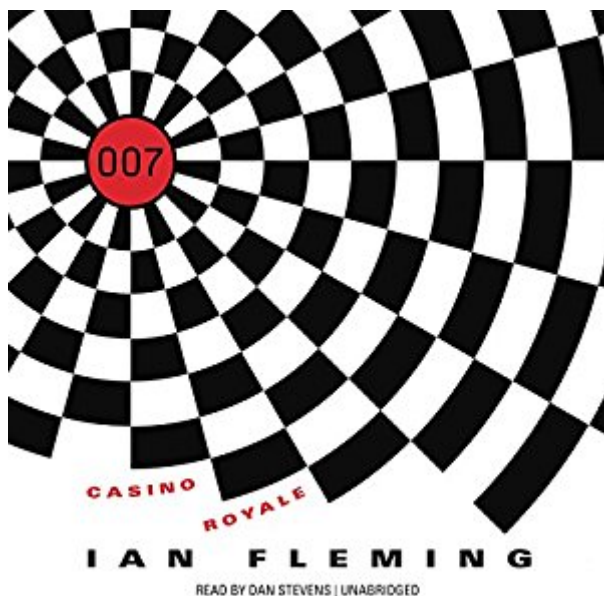


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Casino Royale: James Bond, Book 1



Synopsis

For James Bond and the British Secret Service, the stakes couldn't be higher. 007's mission is to neutralize the Russian operative Le Chiffre by ruining him at the baccarat table, forcing his Soviet masters to "retire" him. When Le Chiffre hits a losing streak, Bond discovers his luck is in - that is, until he meets Vesper Lynd, a glamorous agent who might yet prove to be his downfall. This audiobook includes an exclusive bonus interview with Dan Stevens. Blackstone Audio, Inc. James Bond and 007 are registered trademarks of Danjaq LLC, used under license by Ian Fleming Publications Ltd

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most of the the one and two star reviewers of this book were sadly disappointed, expecting that the glitzy movie version of Bond would be found in Fleming's actual books. But, with the exception of Sean Connery's Bond in the first three movies, and Daniel Craig's back-to-basics interpretation in the first three of the current series, the movie Bond character for the most part has been nothing more than escapist fantasy. The literary Bond isn't the superhero of the movies. He's a flawed, cold killer in the service of his country in a dangerous time. Written during the height of the Cold War, Fleming's Bond novels were based on actual people and operations that Fleming had first hand knowledge of because of his highly placed role in British Naval Intelligence during WW II. Rather than judge Casino Royale, or any of Fleming's Bond novels, by what you've seen in the movies, instead first learn about the real Operation Goldeneye; the real Operation Tracer; the real Operation

Ruthless; the real No. 30 Commando Unit; the real Special Operations Executive; the real 10th Light Flotilla; the real "Smyert Shpionam"; the real Dusko Popov. The tradecraft, operations, units, events, and involved individuals were the very real WW II sources that Ian Fleming used in creating Bond and the world in which he moved. In chapter four of "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy", John Le Carre also alludes to a small group similar to Fleming's 00s as: "...about a dozen men, they worked solo, there to handle the hit-and-run jobs that were too risky" for Secret Intelligence Service agents stationed abroad. Fleming's romanticized works have a ring of authenticity recognizable to anyone familiar with or who may have participated in events that occurred during those times. Read *Casino Royale*; travel back to a time when French was the only international language; a time when Joseph Stalin and the Soviet NKVD represented a very real threat; a time when people feared that threat; and a time when the governments of the Free World had very real people on the payroll like Fleming's fictional James Bond to counter that threat. Perhaps you'll see the same things in it that caused the first three printings to sell out quickly in the U.K., and that later made it a favorite of a Harvard graduate who happened also to be President of the United States. At the time of *Casino Royale* (1951), Bond is about 30 years old and has held the 00 number for about six months. He earns the U.S. equivalent of about \$5,600 annually (or about \$50,000 in 2016 value), and drives a supercharged 1930 Bentley coupe that can reach 100 mph on a good day. He spends what he earns. He knows that statistically he will have at least 10, probably 20, and as many as 30 very tough assignments before the mandatory 00 retirement age of 45. Too many. He knows the odds of his surviving the coming ten years are slim to none. And that depresses him. How do I know? Ian Fleming tells us so in Chapter One of "Moonraker" (third book in the series). That's the Bond that Ian Fleming created. Much more interesting and gritty and real and human. That's the Bond Sean Connery portrayed until the Hollywood idiots ran amok after *Goldfinger*. It's the Bond Daniel Craig resurrected until the new crop of Hollywood fools screwed it up again with November 2015's *Spectre*. I'll stick with the books, thank you very much! Fleming's writing style, while perhaps not rising to the expectations of modern pedantic poseur literary critics, is easy to read and follow. As would be expected from a successful journalist writing for educated U.K. citizens of the 1950s, his audience would have been quite comfortable with his style; his adding color by use of some French terms and phrases in a novel that, after all, takes place in France; and whom would not have needed sub-titles to understand their context. I didn't find that aspect disruptive at all to the flow of the narrative. If you want entertaining glitz, stick with the movies; if want something more, read the books! I've enjoyed them all immensely in the context of the time period in which they take place. Bond fans may want to check out flemingsbond.com, a treasure trove of factual information

upon which Fleming relied in writing the Bond novels, and "Ian Fleming's James Bond: Annotations and Chronologies" by John Griswald.

Possible spoilers below-This kickstarter to the James Bond novels is written very well. From the start, Fleming creates a bond (no pun intended) between the reader and the cold, calculating spy that is James Bond. The atmosphere of the novel is indeed tense, and the expressions on the characters' faces are easily imagined. I was particularly impressed with the Le Chiffre character, who is written in a clear and convincing way. Fleming describes his facial expressions and mannerisms in a way that you feel almost familiar with him, and it's somewhat terrifying. There is a torture scene that is quite difficult to read, but its aftermath is what makes the novel. Despite all his coldness, James Bond's humanity is revealed in his romance with Vesper Lynd. You can feel his happiness at possibly having found a soul mate, his frustration when the relationship sours, and most of all, his bitterness and deep hurt when Vesper denies both of them happiness by committing suicide and revealing herself to him in a suicide note. In the end this is an enjoyable novel, though it feels a tad rushed, and is not really a "spy novel" per se. Only about half the book contains the "meat"- the poker battle with Le Chiffre and the later confrontation that sees Bond brutally tortured. The rest is more of a love story, but still provides valuable insight into the Bond character. The physical book is well put together, I might add. I prefer the modernized look and design to the rather suggestive covers normally used on Bond novels in the past.

IF you're a bond fan, then you need to read it. Many of the movies have made casino royale look dumb or cheesy, the latest movie with daniel craig is actually the best version to date (in terms of matching the intensity of the book). We all know Bond as this adventurous player, doing crazy things that as a man you admire, but this book reveals such a darker, more sexist version of the character. The movies make him seem like this over-the-top alpha male, but the book really shows that he has his own issues, and his view on women is much more harsh than the movies. I think they know that people love to think of Bond as a hero, but in this first novel, he treats this woman he loves (who is actually his equal in every way) as "just a woman". I was surprised to see that Bond wasn't some amazing guy, but a human who just seems to get lucky in so many deadly situations, who is skilled but terribly flawed. It inspired me to read all the other books too. In terms of the book itself, it's well written (though confusing as characters/entities in the fictional world are introduced without explanation) and a very fast read. It was suspenseful, dark, witty, and awesome.

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