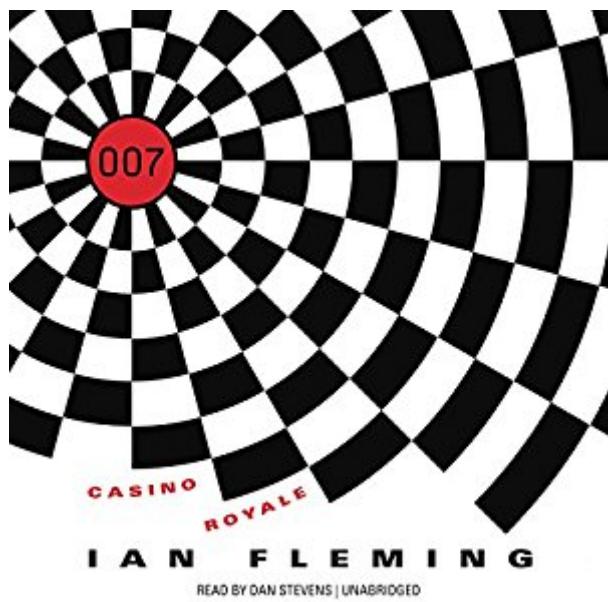


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Casino Royale: James Bond, Book 1



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

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Customer Reviews

Bond...James Bond is the name. And the game is extreme Baccarat. Ian Fleming's 1953 novel - premier introduction of the post WWII, fantastical cold war intrigues of Her Majesty's Secret Service's Master Spy, Agent 007, Bond - is a riveting read. I first read CASINO ROYALE, as well as a few others in the series, while in my early teens - back when I'd only read stories in order to immerse myself in the plot - to find out what happens next, essentially - not caring a jot about writing style, descriptive detail, or character development. Back then, I found it curious that the Bond of the books was so different from the Bond of the movies (THE SPY WHO LOVED ME and MOONRAKER being the contemporary releases of that time.) I wondered, for instance, why the James Bond in the movies didn't have black hair and why, in the books, he wasn't funny at all...Indeed - well, so much for my pre-adolescent review. Now, more than 20 years later, indulging

on a whim, I'm reading the series again. And I must say I am thoroughly enjoying it - but not for the same reasons I had when I was young. I'm actually nearly through it in its entirety - and must say that, though they're all very good, CASINO ROYALE has a palpable raw depth rarely visible in the rest. I can now see and appreciate the fine quality of the writing, the extraordinary sculpturing of an ideal action hero, and the magical lure that has begotten the most well-known, long-standing film series of all time. And, yes, these books are great fun!"M," head of the British Secret Service, hands Commander Bond what appears on the surface to be a posh assignment: thwarting an enemy Russian spy, Le Chiffre, in his attempt to win an exorbitant 50 million francs - KGB funds which he had lost through an ill-advised investment in a chain of brothels.

It's hard to believe the book is nearly 50 years old but it is. This novel marks the entrance of James Bond into the world. The real Bond doesn't have much to do with his movie counterparts--he's colder, more ruthless and has no charm or humor. He's also a deeper character. 10 years later at the end of the Bond cycle he would grow and become more humorous and personable, (See "You Only Live Twice") but here meeting him may be like taking a cold shower if you're only familiar with Connery, Moore, and etc. As the prototype novel of the Bond series "Casino Royale" has less action and more concentrated violence than the future books. Its mood is claustrophobic but it's grasp of defined character is somewhat airy. Bond is not quite fully fleshed out--what we can grasp is that he believes himself a professional but often loses or comes close in both love and business. He speaks like a misogynist but falls very badly for women; he plays cards like a pro but needs to be bailed out. The other characters are also compelling--Leiter and Mathis are agreeable national stereotypes, while LeChiffre is the first of Fleming's great villains--subtly monstrous and grotesque to the point of being king devils, not people. Fleming never wrote a convincing female character until he spoke in first person for the heroine of "The Spy Who Loved Me," but Vesper Lynd is one dimensional in a non-shameful way. Fleming's style isn't yet fully formed, but it's still evident. No one has written better scenes of torture (And this undoubtedly one of the most harrowing torture scenes you'll ever read) or card games than Fleming, and as an action writer on the whole he was undoubtedly a master, and deserves to be acknowledged as one. At the moment his literary reputation is quite low.

Now that Casino Royale has been released as a movie I decided to reread the book to see if it held my interest as several readings before, and yes it did. When Ian Fleming set pen to paper to write about things he knew well, having been involved during WWII with such matters, he tailored the figure of Bond on things he not only knew well but fashioned Bond after many things he, Fleming,

spent his entire life pursuing. While Bond is not an exact clone of Fleming he is most certainly somewhat Ian Fleming's near shadow. This first book not only establishes a style and pattern of writing for the other 13 books in the Bond series, but sets a new enemy before us: SMERSH, short for SMYERT SHPIONAM which translates "Death to Spies". And in the case of James Bond in this first book he gets the ideogram for SMERSH cut by a knife into the palm of his hand. As Bond would later say in another book, "he got the point". The location of the story is Royale-les-Eaux and casino, situated as a resort in N.E. France. Since the book was first published in 1953 that may be an approximate time for the action, and it most certainly has to be a few years after WWII from references made by Bond. Quite a bit of the story is set at the card tables within the casino involving the card game baccarat. Other than 'M' there are only 5 main characters: James Bond, Vesper Lynd, Rene Mathis, Felix Leiter, and one of Fleming's most interesting creations: Le Chiffre or the cypher. And had it not been for the intervention of SMERSH, Le Chiffre had the best of Bond and would have killed Bond in this first novel; Le Chiffre certainly came close enough. Sub characters concern a group of Bulgars or Bulgarians who are hired hit men trying to use several camera bombs to blow James into tiny, little pieces.

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