



Casino Royale

Ian Fleming , Jeffery Deaver (Introduction)

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‘A dry Martini,’ Bond said.

‘In a deep Champagne goblet. Three measures of Gordon’s, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it’s ice cold, then add a thin slice of lemon peel. Got it?’

‘Certainly, monsieur’

Introducing James Bond: charming, sophisticated, handsome, chillingly ruthless and very deadly. This, the first of Fleming’s tales of agent 007, finds Bond on a mission to neutralize a lethal, high-rolling Russian operative called simply ‘Le Chiffre’ — by ruining him at the baccarat table and forcing his Soviet spymasters to ‘retire’ him. It seems that Lady Luck is taken with James — Le Chiffre has hit a losing streak. But some people just refuse to play by the rules, and Bond’s attraction to a beautiful female agent leads him to disaster and an unexpected saviour ...

Casino Royale Details

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From Reader Review Casino Royale for online ebook

Jason Koivu says

There is a time for every man and this man is of his time.

I might go a step further and say, a profession for every man and this man is of his profession, for James Bond is a psychopath and one would need to be in order to do the things his job requires of him. He is a controllable psychopath. He's not the loner, loose cannon type. He's the loner, well-aimed cannon type. He's not going to fill up his closet with the severed limbs of his random victims, because the voices in his head told him to. He's going to fill up his closet with the severed limbs of his victims, because his boss told him to, and the victims won't be random.

Bond objectifies women, often referring to them as "bitch," seeing them only as a sexual commodity, and so many complain that they simply do not like this literary version of Bond. The movie versions of the books have conditioned people to like James Bond, portraying him as a dashing man's man who takes what he wants and discards the remains when he's done. It's cold-hearted, but we realize he's got a job to do...and gosh darn it, he's so dang handsome and charming! I can't deny the difference between the two. One is lovable, the other is loathsome. One is exciting to watch, but is otherwise a boring person. The other is exciting to watch and is an intensely interesting person. You watch the movies for fun and come away with a warm-fuzzy. You read the books for fun and come away leery of humanity.

I'll put it simpler. Movie Bond likes to make ravaging love to his women. Book Bond has rape fantasies.

I don't deny anyone's subjective tastes to like or dislike one over the other. I see good reason to hate Book Bond. But I wouldn't read Ian Fleming's work for pure fun. He's created a singular character type. In his work with Intelligence during WWII, Fleming must have come across numerous spies that fit Bond's description: cold and calculating cut-throats with anti-social tendencies and a warped world-view. James Bond is not a hero. He's a man paid to do a job. What you think of the man and your opinion of the job is entirely up to you. But real versions of these things have existed in our world and they are horribly fascinating.

Carmen says

Some interesting facts that we learn in this book:

James Bond smokes 70 cigarettes per day.

James Bond loves his car.

James Bond likes to sleep naked.

This is the first Bond novel (1953) and it's a doozy. We have SMERSH, gambling, kidnapping, torture, intrigue, double-crossing, and cackling villains.

Bond is set up with millions of British pounds and told to go to France and out-gamble the evil Le Chiffre, a

holocaust survivor with no "Christian name" and, supposedly, no memory of his life before age 37. His main problem is that he's a criminal in debt to some dangerous people, and needs to gamble at Casino Royale or he'll be murdered.

The long descriptions of gambling and cards in this book are boring. One chapter is basically Bond explaining how to gamble.

Bond is told that he's going to be paired with another agent and he's shocked and appalled to find out that his partner is female. Of course the woman, Vesper Lynd, is amazingly good-looking and Bond alternates throughout the book with his warring feelings of contempt for her and wanting to f*ck her.

No matter how charming Bond comes off in the films, the written Bond is a whole different animal. Hearing his inner monologue is enough to make you want to tear your eyes out. He doesn't consider women to be human, or people. He also makes horrible stereotypes about everyone in the book who is not a white British man. He also gets really turned on at the thought of rape, although he never rapes anyone in this book. It's very disturbing to read about.

Also, to all the women who think James Bond is really hot - you may think that about the movie character but I seriously doubt you would feel the same about the book character. Constantly described as cold, harsh, brutal, cruel, ruthless, and hard (over and over and over) by Fleming, Bond is hardly someone you'd want to have a relationship with - or even a one-night-stand. He describes women in this book as: beasts, wretches, fools, idiots, and bitches. A LOT. He tends to go off on long, sexist/racist rants in his head. Also, his idea of sex is always described as: ravishment, ravaging, 'bending her to his will,' or a way to 'coldly...put his body to the test.'

When Vesper gets kidnapped at one point, he is furious with her and curses her out. He makes the cold, logical decision that her life doesn't matter (since she is an agent) and plans accordingly - her death is acceptable. When both she and Bond are kidnapped and in the back of a car being driven to god-knows-where to be raped or tortured, Bond is TURNED ON by how sexy she looks with bound and with her legs exposed. ON HIS WAY TO BE TORTURED, this is what he's thinking - about a woman who is helpless and probably about to be gang-raped. I mean, this is a sick, sick man here.

I think it's fair to mention that Bond's genitals are brutally tortured for an hour by Le Chiffre. After this ordeal, Bond spends a lot of time in the hospital recovering. I liked that Fleming wasn't trying to make him some super-human who recovers immediately. Of course, Bond eventually decides that taking Vesper to bed will be the perfect test to make sure his equipment is still functioning properly.

I understand that these books are classics and that James Bond is an icon. I really do. And I understand why people love the books - adventure, torture, being a spy who is rich, beds tons of women, and travels to exotic places. It's not that I don't understand the appeal of this pulp fiction. Wholly unrealistic, it's a fantasy. Real, actual spywork (I'd imagine) is NOTHING like the government giving you millions of pounds to gamble away, pairing you up with a sexy female agent that they are fine with you having sex with, and setting you up in a resort-like location where your every whim is catered to. Because that's your 'cover.' *rolls eyes

I don't blame anyone for loving, enjoying, and gobbling up these books. However, as a woman in 2014 I just can't ignore the screaming, in-your-face racism and sexism that permeates every page of this novel.

Fleming is a good author - there are some gems in here, some great lines and some deep philosophical pondering on Bond's part (this surprised me, he's usually very shallow). Also, no one can write a long villain

speech like Fleming can. Le Chiffre's long speech to Bond about how he's going to torture him and there's no hope is wonderful and can be perfectly imagined playing out on the big screen. Classic.

TL;dr - Exciting spy novel drenched in misogyny and racism.

I'll include some of the more inflammatory passages here. Don't read them if you're easily upset.

And then there was this pest of a girl. He sighed. Women were for recreation. On a job, they got in the way and fogged things up with sex and hurt feelings and all the emotional baggage they carried around. One had to look out for them and take care of them.

"Bitch," said Bond, and then remembering the Muntzes, he said "bitch" again more loudly and walked out of the room.

When gambling:

Bond saw luck as a woman, to be softly wooed or brutally ravaged, never pandered to or pursued.

When Vesper gets kidnapped:

This was just what he had been afraid of. These blithering women who thought they could do a man's work. Why the hell couldn't they stay at home and mind their pots and pans and stick to their frocks and gossip and leave the men's work to the men? And now for this to happen to him, just when the job had come off so beautifully: for Vesper to fall for an old trick like that and get herself snatched and probably held to ransom like some bloody heroine in a strip cartoon. The silly bitch. Bond boiled at the thought of the fix he was in.

Note: She gets kidnapped and he's annoyed because it throws a wrench in his plans. How dare she inconvenience him like this?!?!? Doesn't she know how annoying it is?

Here's the part where he's being tortured and thinks about her being gang-raped:

Through the red mist of pain, Bond thought of Vesper. He could imagine how she was being used by the two gunmen. They would be making the most of her before she was sent for by Le Chiffre. He thought of the fat wet lips of the Corsican and the slow cruelty of the thin man. Poor wretch to have been dragged into this. Poor little beast.

When Vesper's bound in the car with her skirt over her head and Bond's also kidnapped, next to her:

...his eroticism had been hotly aroused by the sight of her indecent nakedness.

The appeal of raping the woman you "love":

And he knew that she was profoundly, excitingly sensual, but that the conquest of her body, because of the central privacy in her, would each time have the tang of rape. Loving her physically would each be a thrilling voyage without the anticlimax or arrival.

Bond often talks in this book about getting the "arrogant, private, cold" Vesper to bend to his will in bed. Not only is he talking about spicy rape condiment to make sex more appealing (always like the first time, when they fight you a bit, I guess he's saying) but in an earlier passage he says *he wanted her cold and arrogant body. He wanted to see tears and desire in her remote blue eyes and to take the ropes of her black hair in his hands and bend her long body back under his.* Tears? Really? Crying during sex is just such a turn-on. <-- sarcasm

(view spoiler)

UPDATE: In the name of research, I re-watched the 2006 Casino Royale movie. I must say I find it vastly superior to the book. It embraces all the same plot points and basic ideas, but manages to make both Bond

and Vesper Lynd into much better people than they are in the book. Bond actually seems as if he cares about Vesper, he seems to be more charming and less of a psychopathic a**hole. Also, Eva Green as Vesper brings some much needed cheekiness and teasing to the role. This creates a sexual tension between her and Bond that was stronger than that of the book. In the book she bounces between helpless/teary/servile and sullen/withdrawn/sulky. Neither of these attitudes is as charming as her pretty, sassy, and smart character in the film. The gambling is not as boring as it is in the book, and you don't have to endure Bond's snide comments about anyone who's not white. Not to mention the beautiful, amazing, talented, gorgeous, brilliant, superb Dame Judi Dench is in the film as M. :)

If you know me at all, you'd know that me saying that the film is better than the book is absolute blasphemy. This is only the second time I've ever thought this in my life. So you know it's serious. :)

Councillor says

Never before have I thought of myself specifically as a *fan* of the James Bond movies, although I did watch 13 out of overall 24 Bond films. However, along with the recent release date of "Spectre" (which I haven't seen yet), I wanted to discover how Ian Fleming's works influenced the successful movie adaptations and whether or not those movies lived up to the novel's expectations. "Casino Royale" has been one of the first Bond movies I thoroughly enjoyed watching, so my expectations as to my reading experience with this first Bond novel were pretty high. Too high, I guess.

Some amazing artwork originating from the movie can be found out there on the internet, and doesn't *Casino Royale* already sound pretty cool? Sexy double agents in suits with attractive girls surrounding them and villainous gangsters trying to take over the world who will probably end up being defeated after some sort of showdown - it's always the same procedure used in every film, yet all most of them become a huge success. In contrast to many other Bond movies, I can understand how this success came about since the adaption of "Casino Royale" was pretty well done, but after reading Ian Fleming's original, I am nothing but bored by even hearing the name *James Bond*. But who is this James Bond in the novel?

Raymond Chandler once said that "James Bond is what every man would like to be, and what every woman would like between her sheets". So, if every man would like to be sexy, but tending to brutal, rapey behaviour, and protective with women, but degrading them, thinking of himself as superior to the other gender, and murdering numerous other people as a 'hobby' ... then I definitely don't want to be such a man. Never before did I encounter a character so unlikeable and abhorrent, and neither do I understand why people like those seem to have so much success with women. I'm not opposed to unlikeable characters - some of the most interesting protagonists I've read about are anything but likeable - but the image of men and women depicted by Fleming is simply unbearable.

Ian Fleming's writing is certainly not awful. He included some interesting sections reflecting Bond's behaviour, giving his character time to think over his situation, but it did nothing to transform Bond into a character with depth. The *double agent with a strong leaning towards sex with as many women as possible* remains the only characteristic James Bond is allowed to have. But apart from that, the plot itself did not improve the novel's quality. Quite the contrary, the story of *Casino Royale* was boring. Yes, it was boring as hell. I caught myself skimming through the last chapters, being more annoyed by this book with every new sentence, and constantly struggling not to put it aside. (There's one advantage, however: I could use this as a

bedtime story and thus avoid any potential problems with falling asleep.)

This was definitely the last Fleming novel I've read. In conclusion, I can recommend watching the movie and just skipping the novels in order to not waste any time with this. It isn't worth the expenditure of time.

Joe Valdez says

The scent and smoke and sweat of a casino are nauseating at three in the morning. Then the soul-erosion produced by high gambling--a compost of greed and fear and nervous tension--becomes unbearable and senses awake and revolt from it.

James Bond suddenly knew that he was tired. He always knew when his body or his mind had had enough and he always acted on the knowledge. This helped him avoid staleness and the sensual bluntness that breeds mistakes.

Thus begins *Casino Royale*, which in 1953 launched the exploits of British Secret Service agent James Bond. Until Harry Potter appeared in the rearview mirror of his Aston Martin, Bond may have been the biggest literary franchise of the 20th century, thanks in large part to the success of twenty-five (and counting) official movies. In terms of film franchises, Bond is second in sustained popularity only to Godzilla, with the jolly green giant generating twenty-nine Japanese produced movies and six American ones. Interestingly, Godzilla arrived in cinemas less than a year after Bond made his debut in booksellers. As a kid, I loved both characters. I still do.

The debut novel by Ian Fleming is stark and claustrophobic, with a handsome visual splendor, sparseness of description and a bitter dose of nihilism. Racist and sexist epithets are occasionally thrown in like firecrackers but rather than come off as moral defects for Fleming or date the novel, give James Bond texture and combustibility. Compared to the comic book styling of some of the sillier movies, this is a gambling tale that features spycraft rather than a spy story that features a casino. At 48,000 words, I was able to shoot through it in forty-eight hours, roughly the amount of time one of Bond's missions might last.

Bond's assignment begins in the (fictional) town of Royale-les-Eaux on the coast of northern France, a resort town and site of an "elegantly dilapidated" casino. Bond takes a break from the roulette wheel, where he's actually been keeping an eye on the baccarat table and a gambler named Le Chiffre. He walks to his hotel and learns that ten million francs have been wired to him, approved by M, the head of his department in London. Bond's working capital at the casino now stands at twenty-seven million francs. After checking his room carefully for signs of intrusion, he goes to bed, alone, one hand on a .38 Colt Police pistol under a pillow.

According to a dossier prepared for M, Le Chiffre is a chief agent of the USSR in France and paymaster of a Communist trade union there. His loose spending habits--investing fifty million francs of Moscow's money in a failed chain of brothels--and embezzlement have likely drawn the attention of SMERSH, the Soviet umbrella organization dedicated to smashing agents (the acronym translates to "Death To Spies"). With operating capital of twenty-five million francs, Le Chiffre desperately seeks to refill the plundered union funds at the Casino Royale, where efforts to compete with the neighboring casinos has resulted in a well-publicized and anticipated baccarat bank this June.

Intrigued by the prospect of destroying Le Chiffre at the baccarat table, M selects Bond, one of his agency's

feared double 0's, a designation earned by agents who kill a man in the line of duty. Veteran of a casino assignment in Monte Carlo and a talented gambler in his own right, 007 is tough as well, a skill he may need if he comes into contact with the two bodyguards Le Chiffre keeps. Bond passes himself off as a fop gambling away a family fortune made on tobacco and sugar in Jamaica. He's assisted by René Mathis of the French Deuxième Bureau and Felix Leiter of the CIA, and to his chagrin, a girl from headquarters, personal assistant to the chief of Section M.

Mathis and Bond exchanged cheerful talk about the fine weather and the prospects of a revival in the fortunes of Royale-les-Eaux. The girl sat silent. She accepted one of Bond's cigarettes, examined it and then smoked it appreciatively and without affectation, drawing the smoke deeply into her lungs with a little sigh and then exhaling it casually through her lips and nostrils. Her movements were economical and precise with no trace of self-consciousness.

Bond finds the girl to be professional and easy to converse with. He recognizes their sexual chemistry and would like to sleep with her, but only after their assignment. Bond later learns her name is Vesper Lynd. Fleming not only pauses to show 007 and Vesper at work--the pair communicate vast amounts of information about each other in the way Bond offers her a glass of vodka, before her amused glance forces him to suggest a cocktail--but also illustrates the sensory experience of a European casino in the 1950s and how baccarat is played, with a round of twelve players dealt two cards with the option for a third, a winning hand adding up to nine and face cards useless.

To separate the novel from the movie, I should state that while *Goldfinger* (1964) or *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) are the films typically cited by Bond connoisseurs as the best of the series, with Sean Connery and George Lazenby playing Bond alternately, I'm actually most enamored by Daniel Craig's debut as 007 in *Casino Royale* (2006). In addition to Bond being reintroduced as rougher and more muscular--a killer--than ever before, Vesper Lynd (Eva Green) and Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen) nearly eclipse 007 in intrigue. The bevy of beauties or deranged villains are interchangeable in a lot of these movies, but not this one.

Casino Royale functions succinctly and beautifully as a world parallel to the film series, beginning in the wake of World War II rather than the Swinging Sixties, and with a slightly rougher and more wayward Bond. For the 007 of literature, and the men who defeated the Axis Powers, Asian stereotypes are simply a matter of professional experience and women belong at home cooking or gossiping, not interfering in men's work. At least one of these prejudices--the one about women's work being in the home--are admirably and tenderly subverted in the course of the novel while the other is an aside that demonstrates Bond's self-isolation more than it does a belief by Fleming.

Fleming's writing is like an *Esquire* Magazine article without any of the hooptedoodle or parts for men to skip over.

Luck was a servant and not a master. Luck had to be accepted with a shrug or taken advantage of up to the hilt. But it had to be understood and recognized for what it was and not confused with a faulty appreciation of the odds, for, at gambling, the deadly sin is to mistake bad play for bad luck. And luck in all its moods had to be loved and not feared. Bond saw luck as a woman, to be softly wooed or brutally ravaged, never pandered to or pursued. But he was honest enough to admit that he had never yet been made to suffer by cards or by women. One day, and he accepted the fact, he would be brought to his knees by love or by luck.

Fleming adorns the novel with twenty-seven splendid chapter titles (8. *Pink Lights and Champagne*, 9. *The Game Is Baccarat*, 15. *Black Hare and Grey Hound*) which is something I always like. The story surges in momentum from team building to the big game, then (view spoiler) and then (view spoiler). Fleming makes

the stakes clear in each conflict, articulates both the physical environment and emotional environment succinctly and carries the characters honestly through to their inevitable fate. In contrast to some of the sillier movies in the series, the action is very grounded and there are barely any pyrotechnics, with playing cards and vodka taking precedence to gadgets.

My complaint--and where I think this novel comes up short in satisfaction to the best films of the series--is Fleming's habit of hewing too close to reality. Of the four characters who are killed, only one of them dies in front of Bond. The other casualties occur off the page and seem a bit perfunctory. If you're stuck on a door stopper of short fiction like I was (Edgar Allan Poe) or reading non-fiction that's particularly heavy or deep, I highly recommend giving Ian Fleming a try to blast some cool fresh air through the musty corridor. My reading docket is being revise to make way for the second novel in the series: *Live and Let Die*.

Duane says

Everyone's heard of James Bond I'm guessing. I've seen a few of the movies over the years but can't say I'm a big fan; I can take them or leave them. But I thought I would add a few of the Fleming novels to my read list and I always like to read the debut novel of any author, especially if it's a series. Casino Royale is not considered one of the best of the novels by critics, and I can't say I concur because I haven't read any of the others yet, but I can understand after reading it. I gave it 4 stars, but 3.5 is closer to my thinking. About what I expected although there was more "serious" romance than I thought there would be. I think I'll read From Russia With Love next and see where to go from there.

Nandakishore Varma says

I finally got to read a Bond novel...

Yes, so far I had not read any of his books, but had religiously seen almost all the movies (especially the ones released during the late seventies and the early eighties - my teens and twenties). I enjoyed the movies for their goofy speed, silly plots, the imperturbability of Bond and all those lovely ladies (MMMMM!). But somehow, I never got around to the material where these films took off from.

And now I realise that I am too late. There is absolutely no suspense: one has seen it all. The Soviet Union is long since defunct, so its demonisation is not even objectionable now, only laughable (especially when one considers what the "good guys" are doing nowadays). And Bond's attitude to women should have been objectionable even in those days - he is only interested in how to get them to bed. In fact, he is interested in finishing the mission quickly so as to get down to the serious business of sexually exploiting the pretty girls in the story.

In this book, Bond comes as surprisingly naive. His only positive contribution is his luck at Baccarat (Ian Fleming somehow attributes it to his gambling prowess, but I failed to see the connection). He does not win a single fight, and lets himself be captured by acting like the hero of a third rate melodrama. In fact, the story moves on despite Bond, not because of him.

However, I liked the human face of the character. James Bond is not the cool and super-efficient murderous automaton of the movies here - he is very human and vulnerable (too vulnerable where ladies are involved).

Also, the novel is not entirely black and white with regard to heroes and villains: and the violence is graphic and the sex explicit for a book written in the fifties, which bespeaks boldness on part of the author.

I have decided to read all the original stories one by one, if only to see how the movies compare with the written word.

Matthew says

I think I read *From Russia With Love* first (and, FRWL will always be my favorite Bond book and movie), but I had to go back to the beginning and read the Fleming bond books straight through. I was afforded the opportunity a few years ago when the entire Fleming collection in paperback was available for \$20 at Sam's Club! Still one of the best book buys I have ever come across!

Casino Royale did not blow me away - it is a bit dry and slow. I wasn't going to let that deter me from my quest to work through the series, but it did take some getting used to. I am not sure if it is just that it is from early in Fleming's writing career or if it is just tough to feel comfortable with my image of Bond as I was reading words from his creation. I am reminded of when you go back to watch the first episode of a sitcom while you are 8 or 9 seasons in and none of the characters are developed or comfortable yet.

One thing that surprised me was that the more recent *Casino Royale* movie did include most of the story from the book (view spoiler). It had been years since a bond movie include plot lines or plot points from Fleming's works, it was kind of cool to see!

If you just want a taste of Fleming's Bond, go to *From Russia With Love*, but if you want to experience the whole adventure, be sure to start at the beginning!

Mark says

Update 2018 - This is still a very well written book that introduced us to the world most famous secret agent. It is so well written by Ian Fleming his skill of descriptive writing have always been the best part of his writing. While I am no fan of a game of baccarat the man writes so well you can actually participating in the fun and games. Fleming as a writer deserves much more credit than he has been given. Always a pleasure re-reading a Fleming novel. They remain some of my favorite rereads. Nostalgic as well. My dad being in the claws of Dementia did recently tell me that is was alright that I took some books from his bookshelves, he did refer to *Casino Royale* among them. I still have that copy he bought as a young man.

This is the book where the character of James Bond is being introduced to the world. The plot is essentially an idea that the writer Fleming had during the war when he was involved with the intelligence service, where he was involved in an idea to play in a casino against the opposition and make them lose all their money. Fleming did it not as well as his hero.

Casino Royale is IMHO one of the better books with James Bond as main character. In 1953 with the movies still more than a decade away Fleming introduces his hero:

The scent and smoke and sweat of a casino are nauseating at three in the morning. Then the soul-erosion

produced by high gambling - a compost of greed and fear and nervous tension - becomes unbearable and the senses awake and revolt from it.

James Bond suddenly knew that he was tired. He always knew when his body or his mind had had enough and he always acted on the knowledge. This helped him to avoid staleness and the sensual bluntness that breeds mistakes.

The story is highly improbable but the very entertaining. It is a story about gambling, which is very aptly described by Ian Fleming and does transport you to the smokey casino where Bond plays for high stakes. (Fleming has the skill to write very good about card games and golf, no-one could ever interest me for these activities but Fleming).

The plot is very simple but it is all about the gentleman hero/spy and how he plays the game. The mood is very well written by Fleming as are the actions of the secret agent.

In my humble opinion this is one of the more exciting spy-novels written. And well worth a read before any of the modern day thrillers on that subject.

Jayson says

(A-) 80% | Very Good

Notes: James Bond, embittered professional killer, gambles on humanity and love, while we learn the intricacies of baccarat.

Chad says

Surprisingly most of the plot of the movie is in the book minus the parkour scenes in Africa. Bond is a cold ruthless bastard. It's hard to get past the sexism of the era (The book was written in 1953.), and there's a lot of it in here. The plot is slow and plodding in places, especially the beginning. The excitement picks up after the baccarat scene. It's definitely a cold war era spy novel with lots of double crosses and twists and turns. Definitely not the best Bond novel, but first books for a character rarely are.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

My first James Bond novel which cements my opinion that Daniel Craig is the epitome of this steely MI man.

When one reads these pages one is struck by the description of the character and his actions; he's cold, aloof, calculating, isolated. He's not a swaggering, macho, seducing machine. Don't get me wrong! Bond likes the ladies, but they have their uses. They are props and they are there for an affair once the case is solved. He's probably the most attractive man in the room.

In Casino Royale Bond is after Le Chiffre, a money man for a communist organization who has embezzled. High stakes gambling ensues to recoup his losses. Bond challenges him at baccarat. This is a game I've never seen played. Bond's eventual capture and torture is spot-on the movie. There is also a Vesper, but her story follows a different trail.

I'm looking forward to reading all 13 of this series.

mark monday says

Ian Fleming has some poetry in his veins! I would never have guessed that. much of the prose in this spy thriller is basic and almost ostentatiously declarative. prose from and for a man's man, I suppose. but every so often, we have lines like:

In his mind he fingered the necklace of the days to come.

The moonlight shone through the half-closed shutters and lapped at the secret shadows in the snow of her body...

Bond awoke in his own room at dawn and for a time he lay and stroked his memories.

so Bond is the man, a man's man. he's not a nice man, nor an empathetic one, but he get's the job done. Don Draper Bond? Walter White Bond? if the shoe fits. but he's more than a compelling anti-hero. he's a broken vessel, one who has convinced himself that he's whole. poor Bond. he just needs love. and until he finds it, he's going to convince himself that that's exactly what he doesn't need.

SPOILERS AHEAD

I was really surprised at how much this book is about how Bond relates to women. it is practically a romance novel for anti-romantic men, one that also includes a lot of gambling and enjoyment of the finer things in life. by the end of the novel, Bond - who has been experiencing some existential angst and is questioning whether or not he wants to continue with his chosen profession - decides to stick with his job as a secret agent **because he has had his heart broken**.

so here's what we know:

- Bond is an old school sort, and has strong chauvinistic tendencies in his professional work. he is unsurprisingly a gender essentialist. I'm not sure if I'd call him a misogynist.
- he's a caveman in his outlook on romance. he wants to have rough, rapey ("rapey" not actual rape) sex with a woman who wants to be ravished.
- at one point in his life, a relationship ended badly for him. maybe more than one relationship. love died but the relationship lingered on, the results of which have made him tell himself repeatedly throughout the novel that romance is not for him. he just wants to hit it and quit it. or so he says.
- he sees himself as a cold, brutal sort. the key part of that phrase for me is **he sees himself as**. there's a lot in this book that implies that Bond is creating the man he wants to be, that he's purposely hardening himself to the world - and specifically to women - but he's not quite there yet.
- Bond meets one Vesper Lynd and is immediately attracted to her. his feelings towards her are an interesting stew of irritation at having to deal with a colleague who is a woman, basic sexual attraction, and admiration for her cool composure combined with an equally cool supportiveness towards Bond.
- Bond is captured, tortured, freed. during his lengthy convalescence he experiences a lot of existential doubt

about "heroes" and "villains" and how the two roles are interchangeable. a colleague mocks him when he brings this up. Vesper visits him and treats him with kindness and empathy, and no mockery. he slowly falls for her. it was a genuinely moving thing to read.

- Bond and Vesper go off on a romantic vacation together. Bond is a walking hard-on when he thinks about what's to come:

She was thoughtful and full of consideration without being slavish and without compromising her arrogant spirit. And now he knew that she was profoundly, excitingly sensual, but that the conquest of her body, because of the central privacy in her, would each time have the sweet tang of rape. Loving her physically would each time be a thrilling voyage without the anticlimax of arrival. She would surrender herself avidly, he thought, and greedily enjoy all the intimacies of the bed without ever allowing herself to be possessed.

- on the first night of their romantic getaway, Bond and Vesper finally hit it. it is just as amazing as he imagined it would be. Bond and Vesper are in love.

- something weird and ambiguous comes between them and Bond becomes increasingly confused and depressed. he doesn't understand how and why the love of his life has become so strange and distant. he remains a gentleman throughout but assumes this affair will end like his past relationships... with a feeling of emptiness.

- Vesper and Bond have a wonderful last night together full of drinks, lovemaking, and tears. she writes him a letter that describes how she is a double agent who has fallen in love with him. she kills herself.

- Bond goes into a state of shock. then Bond goes into Efficient Agent Mode. Bond decides that he will remain a secret agent so he can destroy SMERSH (the agency that drove Vesper to kill herself). Bond cannot (or will not) process Vesper's complicated back story and the effect she has had on him, so he destroys the memory of his love for her. or at least he attempts to...

Bond may be fooling himself but he hasn't fooled me. Vesper is a defining person in Bond's life, no matter how much he may want to discard his memory of her. the last sentence of the book is reserved for her, as is the actual last word... *bitch*. and so Bond degrades his memory of Vesper and compartmentalizes her away, and is one big step closer to becoming that cold, brutal man he's always envisioned himself to be. I guess that's what losing the love of your life can do to a person.

this was an absorbing, surprising introduction into the world of 007. I'm not sure what I expected, but it certainly wasn't this.

BrokenTune says

"Well, it was not too late. Here was a target for him, right to hand. He would take on SMERSH and hunt it down. Without SMERSH, without this cold weapon of death and revenge, the MWD would be just another bunch of civil servant spies, no better and no worse than any of the western services."

And so begin the extraordinary adventures of the most famous of all spies. Had it not been for his involvement in bringing down the villain known as Le Chiffre, James Bond could just have been another one of such civil servant spies.

Unfortunately, this is the only aspect of the Casino Royale story that I actually liked. The idea of James Bond and his mission is what draws me to the books, but not in fact the character of James Bond himself.

James Bond, as a character, is an utterly unlikable, chauvinist, self-centered idiot, who happens to be good at playing cards but is otherwise pretty lucky to have anything go his way - whether it is his involvement with women or his actually staying alive.

I first read Casino Royale some years ago, shortly before the film was released, and really liked it for the plot and the fact that a card game could pose more danger to the world's biggest villains than any attempts of arrest or assassination. Incredible! However, I enjoyed that the book dwelt on thinking through Bond's moves at the baccarat table more than on action scenes.

However, on this particular re-read of the story, I felt more drawn to paying attention to the way Bond interacts with the world around him and was reminded why in some of the subsequent books I tend to root for the villains - I just can't stand James Bond.

Would I still recommend this book? Yes. I think it is important to demystify the legend (and the franchise - even tho I do enjoy the films!) and acknowledge that there was a time when the most popular of books was based on a character that was a snob, a chauvinist, a racist, a misogynist, an egotist, and an utter idiot.

2.5* rounded up.

Juli says

Casino Royale is the first book in the James Bond series. I've seen the movie -- the new and the old version - - many times, but this is the first time I've actually read the book. James Bond is a much more complex character than the way he is portrayed in the movies. Yes, he travels to exotic places to kill people and he has more than his share of liaisons with beautiful women....but the books include his thoughts on his job, his fear and apprehension during missions, and his considerations of retirement, settling down, forming a more lasting relationship with a woman, etc. The complexity of the character just doesn't come through in the movies. The movies are pretty much just action-packed fight scenes separated by drinking martinis and having sex.

In Casino Royale, Bond infiltrates a high stakes baccarat game in order to bankrupt and ultimately ruin a Russian operative, Le Chiffre. With some help from an American CIA agent, Felix Leiter, and another British Agent, the beautiful Vesper Lynd, Bond manages to win a record amount of money at the baccarat table. But Le Chiffre is determined not to be ruined. He kidnaps Bond and Vesper Lynd, setting in motion events that might be the end of Bond.

This book contains one of the most gruesome torture scenes I have ever experienced in a book. The movie starring Daniel Craig depicted the basics of the torture, but left out much of the psychological brutality of the entire scene. I thought the movie version was traumatic....but the book's description is so much more gruesome. It's an important scene that's integral to the plot of the book. It's not overdone and there is absolutely no detailed description of the event or in the injuries to Bond. The horror comes in the matter of fact manner in which Le Chiffre explains what he is doing and why, and the description of how he goes about it. The coldness, the violence, the unfeeling nature of a very evil man.....and the brutality yet simplistic nature of his attack on Bond. In the movie, a knotted rope is used for the attack. But in the book it's a simple

household tool, a carpet beater. Le Chiffre comments that it is easy to cause extreme pain and suffering to a man with the simplest of tools if one knows just how to do it. The entire scene sent chills down my spine. It is definitely not for the faint of heart.

The book has 3 distinct sections -- the baccarat game at the casino, the kidnapping and torture, and the aftermath. I didn't much care for the first section of the book. I have absolutely no interest in gambling and there is a lot of explanation about the game, the odds, what cards they are playing, etc. Plus Fleming uses a lot of French, German and Russian words and phrases sprinkled throughout. While that does help create atmosphere, after awhile it just gets old, especially when it's gourmet food, wines, liquors and other details I felt weren't all that important. For me, it was just a bit overdone. After the baccarat game, the action revved up considerably and the story became much more interesting for me. The ending is a bit abrupt, but it makes sense that it ends the way it does.

After reading this first Bond book, I have a better understanding of the character and why he is the way he is. I want to read through the entire Bond series this year as part of my goal to read more books that I've always wanted to read, but never actually took the time. I'm glad I finally read Casino Royale. The book is so much more detailed than the movie.

I listened to the audiobook version of Casino Royale from Audible. I'm glad I chose to listen to the audiobook as as I don't speak French, German or Russian and would have completely flubbed my way through a lot of wine, food, character and place names throughout the entire novel. At just over 5 hours long, it was a relatively quick listen. Dan Stevens narrates. Stevens reads at a nice even pace, and did an excellent job with all different accents and voices of characters. I have hearing loss but was easily able to understand and enjoy this audiobook.

Grace Tjan says

To: M

From : Jane Money Penny

Subject: An assessment of Agent 007's conduct during operation "Casino Royale"

Dear Sir,

I am aware of concerns raised by certain members of the Service regarding Agent 007's performance during the abovementioned operation. Therefore, I would like to offer my personal assessment, based on the debriefing reports and my own long familiarity with the subject.

It is true that Agent 007 had somewhat compromised the operation by letting himself getting caught by the Target, otherwise known as "Le Chiffre". It is also undoubtedly true that he might have compromised the integrity of the valuable intelligence that we gathered by becoming an intimate of No. 3030, a.k.a. Vesper Lynd. However, despite all of that, he had managed to accomplish all of our objectives in the operation, as well as unmasking a potentially dangerous double agent.

I can personally vouch that the 'errors' that Agent 007 had allegedly committed stemmed not from gross negligence or willful disobedience, but strictly from certain aspects of his character, which are regrettable but perfectly understandable in a man of his persuasion. The most obvious of these is his antipathy toward female operatives, best illustrated by these quotes from the debriefing report:

"And there was this pest of a girl. Women were for recreation. On a job, they got in the way and fogged things up with sex and hurt feelings and all the emotional baggage they carried around. One had to look out for them and take care of them."

And also:

"These blithering women who thought that they could do a man's work. Why the hell couldn't they stay at home and mind their pots and pans and stick to their frocks and gossip and leave men's work to the men."

Isn't it patently obvious, sir, that such preconceived notions caused him to fall for the Target's devious trap? However, he had subsequently paid dearly for such deplorable misogyny by suffering the worst kind of torture known to the male of the species --- a ghastly affair that involved a cane chair with cut out seat, a 3 foot long carpet beater and Agent 007's naked nether regions --- the details of which is available in the medical report attached to Head of S's memorandum.

Further on, his psychological condition during the long convalescence led him to develop certain feelings for Miss Lynd, to the extent that he was prepared to propose marriage to her. I can assure you that such feelings were genuine (even though he later rather callously repudiated them) and that he truly had honorable intentions toward her. It is obvious from Miss Lynd's unfortunate reaction that the feeling was mutual.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, I propose that we keep Agent 007 in active duty as he had proved that he was able to overcome his personal weaknesses for the good of the Service. Besides, we now have incontrovertible proof that Agent 007 is irresistible to enemy females, a quality that might come handy in future missions that might require such ability.

Signed: Second Officer Jane Moneypenny, WRNS.

P.S. : Please disregard any insinuation from certain members of the Service (you know who they are, sir) that I have a 'crush' on ~~James~~ Agent 007.

Julian Meynell says

Spoilers

This will be a review of not just Casino Royale, but of the James Bond books in general. I think that there is a good argument to be made, that the Bond books are the most misunderstood books of all prominent books, because the very subtext that accounts for their enduring appeal is buried so deeply that it just passes most people by.

The best way to understand the James Bond books is to understand the heroines of the books. These heroines are often characterized as being glamorous women who it is Bond's role to save. This is completely and totally wrong. The whole key is that these women ALWAYS have short unpainted nails. They are actors and present an existential challenge to James Bond. In fact the best way to understand Bond is as a kind of existential literature.

Fleming was a writer who had a message that he seemed not to be fully and consciously aware of. He says the same message in every book, and he says it in the same way (with the exceptions of *The Spy Who Loved Me* and the short story *Quantum of Solace*, where the same themes are approached from alternative directions).

Fleming is often compared to Le Carre, almost always negatively. This is an unfair comparison in two ways. First of all, Fleming is a great writer and is, along with Lovecraft, one of the two greatest writers of Pulp in history, whereas Le Carre is merely a very good writer. Second, Fleming is not really writing spy literature, he is really writing fantasy in which the hero happens to have the occupation of a spy. As such, criticisms of a lack of realism are about as out of place as they would be for *The Lord of the Rings* or *Alice in Wonderland*. I would have thought, that the Bond books wear their status as fantasy more clearly than, say, the Latin American Magical Realists, but this point appears to pass people by.

The next thing to notice about James Bond is that he is pretty clearly a broken person. The thing that I most love about Daniel Craig's interpretation of Bond is that he conveys this point clearly and repetitively in a way that has not been done before. Bond is a kind of broken Nietzschean superhero who has in a way arbitrarily and for what appear to be purely aesthetic reasons, taken on a specific set of values that we are meant to recognize intuitively as *a priori* superior to competing values. In this he is exactly the same as both the James Bond heroines and villains.

If you read the Bond books critically, one of the things that is most striking about them is how similar in personality Bond is to both the heroines (with a few exceptions) and the villains (also with a few exceptions). Fleming will distinguish Bond from the villains not so much by their actions, which are often quite similar, but instead by things such as the cut of their suit or their taste in luxury watches. These aesthetic choices are meant to be inherently preferable, just as Bond's belief system and set of values is never defended as superior to communism or, ironically, to the vast accumulation of wealth and power that other figures such as Goldfinger are bent on accumulating, e.g. the values of capitalism.

Bond, the villains, and the heroines of the books all have in common that they do not in any way feel bound by conventional morays, rules of decorum or value judgments. All of the major characters have in fact chosen a belief system and a set of values through force of their personal will alone. The other characters have not and this is why those characters are kinds of ghosts within the books and are in some sort of way not worthy of interacting with Bond.

The villains have in fact chosen the wrong values. They are every bit as ruthlessly dedicated to them as Bond, and they will not in any way compromise them just as Bond will not. The women have either chosen the same set of values as Bond or at least a set of values that are not diametrically opposed. They are then worthy romantic interests (this goes only for the main female character in every book). However, Fleming is clear that the heroines Nietzschean superman status means that they are too independent to make the kind of long term bonds necessary for stable relationships. They are not in the next book and presumably, they, like Bond, have moved on unchanged. This is clearest in *Casino Royale* where the doomed nature of the genuine love that Bond has for Vesper Lynd is clearly spelled out in the events leading up to and following her death.

Also, in this book, Bond fails in his mission in a way that he will not do so spectacularly again, but in staying true to the values that characterize him even at the expense of rejecting a genuine love, he maintains his status as a Nietzschean superhero. A status that Fleming clearly means to be a kind of idealization of how to live one's life and not an actually fully achievable ideal. It is by setting Bond in a fantastic world and not in a world where mundane limits can intrude on this ideal that Fleming can over and over again put forth this ideal in its pure form.

Again, it is a world where the choice of a man's luggage is meant to say as much about him as the choice of his political ideals. It is a morality justified by its aesthete and not vice versa.

But even though it is a fantasy world, it is still a world in which it is not possible to simply always force one's will onto that world. Bond may fail to save the woman, he may fail to stop the villain from getting away, his wife might die, his friend's legs might be eaten by a shark, he may be captured, he may be emotionally devastated by events. But it is still a world in which his maintenance of his own values and beliefs can be specifically maintained through every hardship and peril. In pretty much all the Fleming books, Bond is distracted by doubts, or by emotional weaknesses, and in every book Bond overcomes these by simply pushing them away.

In other words the Bond books represent a kind of practical existential ideal. It is not an implausible solution to the practical problems of our world that Fleming is unconsciously advocating and it appears to be what he attempted to practice in real life. But it is a difficult solution that he advocates none-the-less.

Richard Derus says

Rating: well, why not? 3* of five

Oops! Forgot one. This is 1967's film version I'm discussing, not the book, which was *awful*. That's not fair...it's not horrid writing, it's just so very very very dated and not in a good way. Kind of a time capsule of what was wrong with 1954.

Ya know...this film version was pretty damn lame, too. What redeems it is the sheer balls-out what-did-I-just-watch comedic pace of the thing. David Niven is LUDICROUS as Bond, but good as this character who isn't Bond but is called Bond. The return of Ursula Andress, this time as superspy Vesper Lynd (not to be mistaken for 2006's Vesper, completely different character), is notable; but the turn to the comedic and ridiculous is signalled by Bond having a child by Mata Hari, yclept Mata Bond.

It was one of the many moments where I rolled my eyes so hard I think I saw my brain. There's a bit with a flying saucer in London that convinced me I was having an LSD flashback.

Don't go into the film thinking it's a Bond flick and maybe it's okay...but frankly, it feels a little too Sixties-hip-via-Hollywood for me to do more than smile faintly.

Why watch it, then? Because David Niven is very good at being urbanely nuts. It's a meta-performance. If he arched his eyebrow any higher, he's lose it in his receding hairline. Because Ursula Andress is classic as Vesper. Because Orson Welles is endearingly baffled as Le Chiffre, seeming not to have seen a script before being shoved in front of the camera. It's like a Warhol-movie moment. If you're a straight guy, Jacqueline

Bisset and Barbara Bouchet are pneumatically endowed. But Peter Sellers was a major disappointment to me. Clouseau was his only character at that point, I guess. Blah.

Fun. Not Bond, but fun. Sort of.

Brina says

Bond, James Bond. Over the years I have enjoyed watching the action movies starring England's favorite 007 spy, yet, until now, I had not read any of Ian Fleming's classic books explaining Bond's origins. In *Casino Royale*, a tale of stealth, lust, and treachery, we see where Bond's 007 career begins.

It is the years following World War II, and the Cold War has emerged from the ashes of Europe. The Russian intelligence agency SMERSH with backing of Arabian oil money has become a threat to take over the west. Spies and double agents abound, and newly minted 00 agent James Bond is sent to the *Casino Royale* to track agent Le Chiffre back to SMERSH and foil the Russian's plot. What ensues is high jinx and high money stakes that are sure to leave one on the edge of their seat.

Alongside supposed ally Vesper Lynd and foreign friends Mathis and Leiter, Bond takes the case. Because this is Fleming's first Bond story, the novel is more about Bond's background in the service and less about chasing the villains across the globe, as fans of the movies are familiar with. We discover how Bond earned his 00 stripes, his role in the Service during the war, and that he is never without a drink or cigarette. The Bond in Fleming's novel is the same Bond who has appeared on the silver screen all these years and is a thrilling to read about.

In the end there abound chases, girls, and double agents. Bond saves the world from the spread of communism, and his career as a 00 agent lives to see another day. There will be further tales of high jinx espionage, which Fleming gleaned from his own years in the British service. In a documentary, it has been revealed that the character James Bond was created as a composite of people Fleming came across while serving during the war; however, the real James Bond still remains shrouded in mystery.

Casino Royale was a fun read for a gloomy Sunday afternoon. Knowing the cast of characters, it was fun to read about them in print form. I am looking forward to reading more of Ian Fleming's classic Bond tales to see if the films hold as true to them as they have this first one. James Bond will indeed be back, as I rate this introductory story a solid 4 stars.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

The first novel about James Bond, the 00 agent, takes place at the *Casino Royale*. He has to outplay a French/Russian operative to take money away from the communists.

If Bond fails in his mission by losing at the card table, then British government will be directly funding communists. No pressure.

I have a thing for Bond. Cool under pressure, fast cars, looks fabulous in a tux...

I thought I would like this a lot, but I didn't. I don't think the story has aged well.

The best parts of the tale took place in the casino itself, the bar or the dinner table.

"Bond had always been a gambler... above all, he like that whatever happened was always one's own fault. There was only oneself to praise or blame. Luck was a servant, not a master. Luck had to be accepted with a shrug or to be taken advantage of up to the hilt. But it had to be understood and recognized for what it was and not be confused with faulty appreciation of the odds. For, at gambling, the deadly sin is to mistake bad play for bad luck."

Bond certainly knows how to order a drink: *"A dry martini," he said. "One, in a deep champagne goblet... three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet, shake it until its ice cold and then add a large thin slice of lemon peel. Got it? ... I hate small portions of anything, particularly when they taste bad. This drink is my own invention. I'm going to patent it when I can think of a good name."*

His attitudes about women were particularly depressing: *"As he drove, whipping the car faster and faster through the night, with the other half of his mind, he cursed Vespa and M for having sent her on the job. This was just what he had been afraid of. These blithering women who thought they could do a man's work. Why they hell couldn't they stay at home and mind their pots and pans and stick to their frocks and gossip and leave men's work to the men?"*

This blithering woman is going to put down the book now and back away slowly...

Recommended for... not blithering women?

I believe I'll stick to the films from now on.

Will M. says

I've been a huge fan of James Bond ever since Casino Royale(2006) was shown in theatres. I remember watching it with my family and my dream then was to become just like James Bond. I watched all the Bond movies that Daniel Craig starred in ever since that Royale movie. I haven't seen the older ones though, and I heard that this novel is similar to the older movies, and thankfully I haven't seen those.

There's this scene in this novel wherein the villain tortured Bond by repeatedly striking his manhood, and I'm 100% sure that that scene is present in either Casino Royale or Quantum of Solace (more or less Royale). While reading the novel, I imagined Bond as Craig, and I don't think I can ever imagine him as someone else.

The novel itself is very short, but substance filled. Is that a thing? Substance filled. I really enjoyed it, and it brought back a lot of memories. Not that much action I guess, but this is Bond, and I'm pretty biased about him. Deep inside, I'm sure I'd still want to be a spy if given the chance. I almost forgot, this novel explained why Bond got the 007 status, been wondering my whole life. Not sure if they told it in the movies, but I was 8 years old when I watched it, so I can't really remember much.

Before I conclude, let me just say that the movies were not particular about Bond's vices/habits(?). He likes to smoke 70 cigarettes a day, take cold baths, and collect cool cars. I'm a huge car enthusiast, I hate cold

baths, and I don't smoke, but one day, I still believe that I'll be just like James Bond.

I'm a huge crime-mystery-thriller fan, and I'm a huge Bond fan, so this novel was quite enjoyable for me. I've been deciding between 4 or 5 stars, but I believe I didn't find any flaws that bothered me that much. Like I said though, I'm really biased when it comes to Bond. 5/5 stars, and I can't seem to not add this to my favorites list. Read this if you want a short but satisfying crime novel.
