

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

-IAN FLEMING

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ABOUT IAN FLEMING

- Ian Lancaster Fleming was born on 28 May 1908, in Mayfair district of London.
- He first worked at Reuters News Agency as a journalist, then as a stockbroker briefly, before becoming a Naval intelligence officer.
- But most importantly, he is an English author, known for his James Bond series of novels, based on the character of the English spy called James Bond.
- He wrote twelve Bond novels, two works of non-fiction, short stories and, also a children's classic called *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.
- *Casino Royale* was his first among the Bond series, published in 1953.
- His wartime experiences as a member of Naval Intelligence Division and the people he met during the war shaped his writings.

Casino Royale (1953)

- One day, on his way to U.S , where he had to go often to settle security collaborations between the two Allies, he stopped at Portugal. He spent an evening at Casino Estoril with Rear Admiral John Godfrey and that is when he was creative enough to think about an idea for his first novel.
- As he was leaving the casino he tells Godfrey, that it would have been so much fun if they had won the money from the German agents. And this sets the idea for the plot of *Casino Royale*, where James Bond's mission is to take over the SMERSH agent Le Chiffre at the gaming table.

The Two World Wars

- In 1914, a global war started from Europe, and led to a series of events, destruction, slaughter never before witnessed in the world. The War saw the Central Powers comprising of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey coming together against the Allies, mainly France, Great Britain Russia, Italy, Japan and in 1917, United States. In the year 1918, the war came to an end with the defeat of the Central Powers.
- The year 1945 marked the end of Second World War, which lasted for six years. The Allied forces led by the U.S, Soviet Union and France defeated the Axis powers led by Germany, Italy and Japan. The dropping of the atomic bombs on two cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States in 1945 caused Japan to surrender, thus bringing the Second World War to an end. With the defeat of Germany and Japan, and the devastation of Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union became the two greatest powers in the world.
- The emergence of the two superpowers, the United States and the USSR and their desire for the domination of the world through their ideologies led to the Cold War. They already had the knowledge that they possessed nuclear weapons, so a full-fledged war was unlikely. Most countries of Western Europe joined the US and the countries in Eastern Europe joined the Soviet Union, thus giving rise to the Western and Eastern Bloc.

The Two World Wars and the Flemings

- Ian Fleming was born to Valentine and Evelyn Fleming. Valentine Fleming, Ian's father was the MP for Henley and also a son of a Scottish financier and philanthropist. Later on, in the year 1914, after the outbreak of the First World War, Valentine was enlisted as captain in the Queen's own Oxfordshire Hussars. On 20th May, 1917, he was killed in action and the news reached the family when Ian was just going to be nine.
- In 1939, Rear Admiral John Godfrey was appointed as the Director of Naval Intelligence and that is when Ian was called to join the Special Branch of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a Lieutenant, a rank which he later on, bestowed on his hero James Bond. Rear Admiral John Godfrey is speculated to be the inspiration for the character M., head of MI6, in the novels of Ian Fleming.

The Cold War

- Fleming's novels are products of Cold War. During the Cold War, the two blocs, Eastern Bloc and Western Bloc were at war but without fighting each other. The Cold War referred to the competition, the tensions and confrontations between the United States and Soviet Union, backed by their respective allies. The Cuban Missile Crisis is seen as the starting point for what came to be known to the world as the Cold War.
- It was not merely a war for power but but also a war to establish their ideologies. The Western alliance led by the United States of America represented the ideology of liberal democracy and capitalism. The Eastern alliance led by the Soviet Union on the other hand, committed itself to the ideology of communism and socialism.

JAMES BOND

- Dedicated towards his service. In *Diamonds are Forever* Bond suggests his loyalty towards M, the head of the organisation he works for.

“Name begins with M. I’d have to divorce him before I tried marrying a woman”(Fleming, *Diamonds are Forever* 194)

- Mitigates the threat posed to the ideology of Britain or United States.
- The values of Bond or of the countries he is associated with, is better as compared to the villain’s country.
- Bond embodies all the possibilities of bringing back power for Britain, especially after the Second World War.
- An imagined nationhood is enforced through the figure of Bond.

James Bond in Popular Culture

- In 1957, *From Russia With Love* is serialised in the *Daily Express*.
- *Dr.No* , the first Bond film in 1962, contributed to the popularity of James Bond worldwide.
- American producers Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman produced as almost as twenty-six films of Bond series.
- *Denmark and Sweden* saw the *Daily Express* strip-cartoons of Bond published in comic-book form.
- Images of Bond used in advertisements, and commodity designs.
- Bond, used as a reference for other spy thrillers, for example novels of Len Deighton.
- The continuation of James Bond even after Fleming's death, for example Kingsley Amis' *Colonel Sun*.

About the Novel- *From Russia With Love*

- Published as his fifth novel in the year 1957.
- SMERSH(Soviet counter intelligence agency) details out a plan to assassinate James Bond.
- Tatiana Romanova and the Spektor decoding machine used as a bait by SMERSH.
- Colonel Rosa Klebb sends Donovan “Red” Grant, SMERSH executioner to assassinate Bond.
- Donovan “Red” Grant is killed; Tatiana is safe and Bond gets hold of the phoney Spektor too.
- Later on, in Paris, Rosa Klebb attacks Bond with a knife hidden in her shoe.
- Novel ends with Bond lying breathless, on the floor.

Characters to Remember

- **James Bond-** Officer in the Secret Service, MI6, also known by his code number 007
- **M-** Head of Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6
- **Donovan “Red” Grant-** Chief Executioner SMERSH
- **Colonel Rosa Klebb-** Head of Operations SMERSH
- **Tatiana Romanova-** Corporal for the Ministry of State Security (MGB) in Moscow
- **Darko Karim-**Head of British sub station in Istanbul

Themes

- Tensions of Cold War portrayed in the novel.
- Good Versus Evil.
- Declining power of the British in the wake of the end of Second World War.
- Heroic pursuits of James Bond against the Communist threats.
- James Bond's quasi-real status.
- Women in spy fiction and also the representation of women in Bond novels.

Few Points to Remember

- Ian Fleming had decided to kill his much loved hero in *From Russia With Love*, as he writes to Raymond Chandler that he is no longer able to write more about Bond.
- So, a perfect set up was required , and none other than his fifth novel offered that. The assassination of Bond by the agents of SMERSH, which would also bring down the prestige of a reputed organisation like MI6.
- *From Russia with Love* inspired by his trip to Turkey for The Sunday Times to report on Interpol Conference and his return to Britain in the Orient Express.
- In the 1960's James Bond is no longer primarily a Cold War hero. He is not only pitted against the Soviet Union, but also against SPECTRE, or an equivalent organisation of international criminals.
- President John F. Kennedy listed *From Russia With Love* among his best ten favourite books.

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