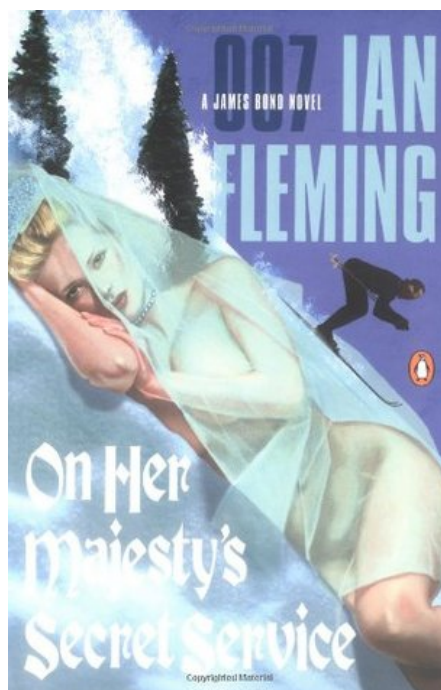




On Her Majesty's Secret Service

Ian Fleming

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A Lancia Spyder with its hood down tore past him, cut in cheekily across his bonnet and pulled away, the sexy boom of its twin exhausts echoing back at him. It was a girl driving, a girl with a shocking pink scarf tied round her hair. And if there was one thing that set James Bond really moving, it was being passed at speed by a pretty girl.

When Bond rescues a beautiful, reckless girl from self-destruction, he finds himself with a lead on one of the most dangerous men in the world—Ernst Stavro Blofeld, the head of SPECTRE. In the snow-bound fastness of his Alpine base, Blofeld is conducting research that could threaten the safety of the world. To thwart the evil genius, Bond must get himself and the vital information he has gathered out of the base and keep away from SPECTRE's agents.

On Her Majesty's Secret Service Details

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From Reader Review On Her Majesty's Secret Service for online ebook

Carmen says

All he remembered, before sleep took him, was that she had said when it was all over, "That was heaven, James. Will you please come back when you wake up. I must have it once more." Then she had turned over on her side away from him and, without answering his last endearments, had gone to sleep - but not before he had heard that she was crying.

What the hell? All cats are grey in the dark.

True or false?

ALL CATS ARE GREY IN THE DARK

James Bond is driving through France, where he goes every year. Why? To visit Vesper Lynd's grave. He really loved her, for all his ugly words about her. I know he really loved her because she was the woman he was thinking of when he thought he was dead in *Goldfinger*. Fleming is not really one to play up the mushy stuff, but it's through these little tidbits that James's true feelings become clear.

As he drives to visit Vesper, he is crafting in his mind his letter of resignation to M. He is planning on resigning from the Secret Service. James is passed on the road by a woman driving very fast. Women who drive fast make Bond excited.

She loses him, but luckily when he arrives he finds they are staying in the same hotel. He asks around and finds out that she is La Comtesse Teresa di Vincenzo. Bond is disappointed to hear it - he thinks she is quite out of his league.

They run into each other at the casino, and Teresa suffers quite an embarrassing loss that she is unable to cover. Bond steps in like a man and casually covers the 20 million francs she owes. Then he proceeds to lose his remaining 20 million at the table, and goes to join her at the bar. The woman seems a bit sad and lifeless, so James needles her about their little race, claiming that he could have beaten her. This makes her suddenly come to life, as she argues she would have won.

The gambit succeeded. Vivacity came into her face and voice. "Oh, yes, I'd have beaten you anyway. I'd have passed you in the villages. Besides" - there was an edge of bitterness in her voice - "I would always be able to beat you. You want to stay alive."

James is starting to get the picture. Then, she hits him with this:

"My name is Tracy...Teresa was a saint. I am not a saint. ... I am not interested in conversation. And you have earned your reward."

She rose abruptly. So did Bond, confused. "...There if you wish, you can make the most expensive piece of love of your life. It will have cost you forty million francs. I hope it will be worth it."

She instructs James to meet her in her room. There, things get even weirder. James sits on the edge of the bed, intending to ask her some questions and get to know her a bit. Tracy quickly shuts that down.

"I said 'no conversation.' Take off those clothes. Make love to me. You are handsome and strong. I want to remember what it can be like. Do anything you like. And tell me what you like and what you would like from me. Be rough with me. Treat me like the lowest whore in creation. Forget everything else. No questions. Take

me."

Bond obeys, and an hour later, leaves her crying in bed (it's implied that this is because she's screwed up in the head and going through some issues, not because Bond physically hurt her or anything. Just clearing that up). He is confused, intrigued, and fascinated by this woman. He complies with her request to come back for round two, which he hopefully rates as 'a bit more affectionate' than round one. He is desperately looking for some sign of feeling from the woman. But after this second round of sex, instead of planning a fun day of eating and swimming and gambling together like Bond wants to do, the woman has a bit of a freak-out. She yells at him and curses at him, and orders him to get out of her room. She says he's lousy in bed. Bond can see she's obviously trying to drive him away and wound him, and he's very worried about her. She's obviously going through some heavy stuff.

It's because of this that he decides to play 'spy' and follow her when she goes to the beach. He's convinced she's suicidal and wants to watch over her and prevent her from killing herself if he can. But just when he catches up to her on the beach, they are both kidnapped.

And this is only the first four chapters out of a 27-chapter book!

...

HAPPINESS WITHOUT A SHADOW

Well, this is famous for being the most touching, most heartbreaking Bond book in the series. Just mentioning the title to a certain friend of mine makes her little face fall. "That book is so sad," she says in a grim voice. "So sad." And it is. This is only the second time we've seen Bond really in love with a woman - not since Vesper Lynd in *Casino Royale* has James ever had these kinds of feelings for a woman. And it's surprising.

(view spoiler)

Bond refuses the money but agrees to keep seeing Tracy. And at first I thought he was just doing it out of a sense of pity or obligation, but it is not so. We don't know this because he declares his feelings, or says he loves Tracy, or anything like that. We know it because there James has a new secretary named Mary Goodnight, and James does not want/try/consider having sex with her. That's it. That's the key. I love how Fleming does this. It's subtle, it's very Bond. When the reader (who by now has read 10 books in the series before this) is astonished at this "proclamation of love" as if Bond had actually said something romantic. "I'm not going to have sex with my secretary," Bond tells us, and we react as we would if a more mainstream-type leading man got on his knee and proposed marriage to the heroine. This is Fleming's intended effect and it's very good.

ANYWAY. Meanwhile lots of stuff is going on with Blofeld and *SPECTRE* and stuff. I won't go into details except to say Blofeld's plot and methods in this book are extremely laughable and not really something I can take seriously. (view spoiler)

Lots of skiing in this book, and it takes place during Christmas. :)

Bond does something dishonorable in this book, and it's quite unlike him. And that is having sex with a woman and romancing her just so that he can get information from her, even though he has no real romantic interest in her. I know, I know, you think James Bond sleeps with anyone in a skirt - but the reason you think that is because of the movies. In the books he's still a womanizer, but he only has sex with women that he has a certain feeling towards. No, not lust! Jeez. But a kind of respect, or admiration, or something. This is the first book where we see him coldly seducing a woman he has no feelings for (I'm not talking about Tracy here) - and he hates himself for doing it, too. Again, this is one of the things I like about Bond - book Bond.

He isn't the kind of callous bastard portrayed in the pre-Craig movies, instead he is quite a three-dimensional character - obviously flawed, but also thoughtful and introspective, with a certain code of honor that doesn't seem to exist in the films where he treats women as disposable objects.

ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

A lot of issues are raised in this book, and that is what makes it so good. Bond expands on his ideas on money and sneers at being a titled gentleman. Bond is seriously considering retiring from the Secret Service. Bond is seriously considering settling down with one woman. He is tired of all his affairs and he is sick of being so alone.

I wonder at the fact that Bond seems so attracted to a woman who (for the first half of the book or so) seems to be mired in a deep depression and has a lion's share of problems. Bond often talks about wanting a woman who is 'unburdened,' but like many of the things Bond says, his words belie the truth. He falls for Tracy, and falls hard. She, herself, is smitten with him. Seeing scenes of them interacting together, you can't believe how cute and sweet they are together. Bond planning his life with her. She says some cute things which I won't reveal here because they would be spoilers. It's very touching and warms your heart.

(view spoiler)

This is one of the better Bond books. I still prefer *Doctor No* to this, but this is right up there with *Diamonds Are Forever*, *Thunderball*, and *Moonraker* in Bond books I actually enjoyed.

The reasons this didn't get five stars are:

- 1.) Stupid villain plot and methods. Not a very compelling villain, either.
- 2.) Completely unnecessary 'woman falls in love with her rapist/women love rape secretly' comment that just takes me out of my whole happiness of Bond. The comment is from Bond's friend (view spoiler) Bond is friends with a lot of rapists, but never rapes anyone himself. At least in the books. I get angrier with his film-self.

Bond kills more men than normal in this book and, of course, falls in love. This is one of the more intense Bond novels.

Ian Fleming's writing is still amazing. Here's one I liked:

Bond's right hand flashed out and the face of the Rolex disintegrated against the man's jaw.

In short, a pretty amazing entry. Could have used a stronger villain and a better evil villain plot, but the rest is superb. You will be tearing up at this one, even though you can't believe you're getting emotional over James Bond.

MOVIE: 1969: George Lazenby

Ugh. The book is 10x better than the film. I have NO IDEA why they keep making film Bond such a bastard. He doesn't generally practice violence against women in the books unless it's absolutely and I mean absolutely necessary. In this movie, he's slapping Tracy in the face repeatedly!!! This is (view spoiler) He would never pull this shit in the books. Is book Bond racist? Yes. Sexist? Yes. A woman-beater? No. Why would you even add this to his character? Did people actually think this made him better or more exciting somehow?!?! Well, it disgusts me. Tracy's also punched in the face so hard by her father in this film that she falls unconscious. And people wonder why I can't relax and enjoy Bond films!

Juli says

Because I recently listened to Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (Ian Fleming's only children's book) on audio, I decided to listen to some classic Fleming while I was at it. James Bond. I love love love this series! Years ago (how many I shall not admit to) I actually got in trouble for having this paperback at school. James Bond and the Secret Service was considered inappropriate reading material to have at school. Other classmates were carrying around Stephen King and other authors whose books included more sex and bad language than anything included in the James Bond books, but his bed hopping behavior from the movies made the principal assume that the books were filled with nudity and sexual escapades. The stories are actually action-packed, fascinating tales of espionage, larger-than-life criminals, and nefarious, evil plans that need to be averted. Wonderful books! I read the books at home after that incident and never again took Britain's 007 agent to school with me. As part of my goal to spend more time this year reading books I love and want to read I'm revisiting James Bond.

I chose this particular Bond novel to read (#11 in the series) because it is my favorite Bond movie and because it was the book I was restricted from reading at school. Plus, the audiobook is narrated by David Tennant. Every audiobook I have listened to with Tennant as narrator has been excellent -- and this one is no exception. Tennant's performance is excellent! He reads at a nice even speed with proper emotion and excitement during action sequences. I have hearing loss but was easily able to hear and understand Tennant's narration. The audiobook (from Blackstone Publishing) is just over 8 hours long.

The basics: Bond is up against Blofeld, a criminal mastermind who is planning to decimate Britain financially by contaminating and destroying the nation's food supply. Bond infiltrates his compound in Switzerland, learns that Blofeld will be using brainwashed young women to do his dirty work. He escapes narrowly and gathers a small group of mafioso to help him rout out Blofeld and stop his evil plan. Great action sequences.....drop dead gorgeous women.....bigger-than-life criminals. This book has it all. This is the book where Bond gets married.....he wishes to share his life with Teresa di Vincenzo (called Tracey). But, alas, his happy ever after is not to be.

Great book. I enjoyed it just as much as I did years ago when I first read it. Some fault these books for sexism. I don't feel that way. James Bond is an international spy and a man's man. He kills people who deserve killing. And he spends time with beautiful women in beautiful places. He uses people as becomes necessary to do his job. And sometimes this involves using sex to get information he needs, or just for enjoyment. If that offends, then perhaps spy novels are not a good choice of genre. Obviously it does not offend too many people as Bond movies have been popular since the 1960s, and the movies add in much more bed hopping and scantily clad Bond Girls than exist in the actual books.

I enjoyed re-visiting this book so much that I'm adding the rest of this series to my TBR plans for this year. The series has been continued by other authors following Ian Fleming's death. I'm interested in finding out if the new books are just as good as Fleming's. Can't wait to find out!

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4.5* of five

Again a reminder that this is a review of the 1969 film, not Fleming's novel. I found I wasn't able to get past the outdated attitudes in the novels. I think because books are important to me, enduring documents of their times, and films are slight and insubstantial entertainments, I judge films much less harshly. After all, I take

them so much less seriously.

This is only a 4.5-star experience because Lazenby's only outing as Bond was stylish and cool. It earned bad reviews for Lazenby, which endears him and his performance to me. Film critics in general are so full of hot air and bullshit that I love reading bad reviews so I can go and enjoy the panned product. I liked *Heaven's Gate*, for example, and I'd've never gone to see it if the critics hadn't howled their lungs out about its crappiness.

Anyway, Blofeld the recurring villain is played by Telly Savalas in this film. It's the absolute worst Blofeld I've seen. He got no pointy objects hurled at him, however. Hmmm.

Diana Rigg is The Girl. Okay, whatevs. The fact that her "father" is played by an Italian actor pretending to be Spanish and she's as British as shepherd's pie (and about as attractive, but then I'm pretty much immune to female aesthetic appeal), well it's a Bond film so one goes with it.

Joanna Lumley plays one of Blofeld's Angels of Death. The camp factor of this film just went up 2500%. It's also a little sobering to realize that Lumley was a comely youff when the film was made, and is now a grandmother. Tempus do fugit, eh what?

So that rating...is it purely contrarian? No. The film is very well made. The plot, while ridiculous, lacks gaping holes, unlike other entries in the series. The cinematography is as lovely as the series' standard, the script as witty as the best entries in the series, and Lazenby is very very very nice to look at. I also think he turned in a fine performance, and it's only butthurt Connery diehards who can't see that. This role isn't one for a Dramatical Genius to play, it's one for a film star to play. Lazenby COULD have been a long-run Bond. I think it's a shame he wasn't.

Pleasant way to pass a few hours, nice to look at, oh and the song! The song is sung by LOUIS ARMSTRONG!!!! Oh be still my heart. "All the Time in the World." I liked it. It's not up there with "Live and Let Die" or "Goldfinger" but it's a damn good song *qua* song.

notgettingenough says

What I want to know is does James Bond have to go through airport security?

Geneva airport, our plane is boarding. We have just got to the top of the security check queue which is so long today that they have extended it into the airport pathway. That, after a ten minute wait in the fast track of Easy Jet luggage checkin. And today, of all days, is the first time our Easy Jet flight has been on time for years. That'd be right.

But we were okay now, through the thing where you might beep but don't. Hand on my luggage when a voice says:

‘Is that your luggage ma’am?’

And you look up and say ‘yes’ to the female security guards who ask you to ‘come this way’.

‘Do you know why we are going to search your bags, ma’am?’

I give a seriously stressed out answer because I’m seriously stressed out.

‘So that I miss my plane?’

‘It’s because you have a large knife in your bags, ma’am.’

Do they think I’m a complete idiot? What sort of dickwit would pack a knife in their carry on luggage? Manny comes over and I tell him when he asks, ‘They are looking for the large knife we packed this morning.’ Spoken with all the sarcasm I could muster, which was quite a lot.

Losing it in Switzerland isn’t a great idea. Losing it in airports isn’t a great plan either. Swiss airports? Don’t even think about it. But our plane was boarding. They couldn’t find the knife. They are inclined, in fact to believe me and turn to look at the X-ray dude who has put me in this position. He stares at me and shakes his head in a way that says ‘Think you are getting away with this? Forget it.’

Rest here:

<https://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress...>

Jen says

Let me preface this by saying that I read the James Bond books because of the adventures, not for the "love". Because the "love" in these stories is apparently the male fantasy. Why anyone would want a woman to act like these women do is beyond me. And sorry to say Ian Fleming has no idea what women are really like. He can't honestly believe that most women have rape fantasies. Being man-handled--yes--but raped? I don't freakin' think so.

I know, I know. Why do I read these books when they irritate me so? Because there aren't a lot of adventure books out there that appeal to me. It sucks.

F.R. says

I guess if you write a number of books concerning the same character it’s almost inevitable that you’d get bored. Arthur Conan-Doyle did it, as did Agatha Christie – and here is Ian Fleming doing the same. ‘The Spy Who Loved Me’ was a not overly successful attempt to fiddle around with the Bond formula; however ‘On Her Majesty’s Secret Service’ is an altogether more convincing step in a different direction. Whereas the previous book tore everything up to give a very different kind of Bond tale, this novel merely tweaks things to give - a still recognisable, but - far more affecting James Bond adventure.

This is of course the book where James Bond gets married. And I found myself convinced that in Tracey, Commander Bond had found someone he would want to settle down with. I don’t really see it as a traditional love story – it’s far too sharp and sudden for that – but I can see these characters as two lonely wanderers who want a more secure life and see in each other someone who would make that possible. Bond is getting on, he’s meeting men younger than he is (the splendidly named Sable Basilisk for one), the ‘beatnik problem’ is becoming a concern for the department (*those damn kids!*) and he’s thinking idly of having children and security. In Tracy he sees someone who will be there for him, who will entertain him, care for him and give him what he wants – while still letting him live his same dangerous and crazy life. And she sees someone who will keep her calm and (she thinks) make her safe. Given Bond’s more carefree and casual existence with women in previous books, this is a huge leap. And Fleming is very clever in having all

roads lead back to Tracey in both the plot and in Bond's psyche.

I wonder how much thought Fleming gave to actually keeping this couple together forever.

(Interestingly, it's the first book to be written after Bond had been immortalised on celluloid, and it's on film that the 'Bond formula' would be really set in stone. [Even if, as memory serves, this book was actually filmed rather faithfully.] 007 is given a Scottish parent to suit Connery's lilt, while the fictional Bond encounters the original screen Bond girl Ursula Andress.)

Unlike the previous book this is a gentle pushing of the envelope. Bond, despite his imminent betrothal, remains much the same character as before – still cruel, obsessed by the job and a hot blooded male when the right moment arrives. His consumerism is again unharnessed, with watches, skis and "*Pinaud Elixir, the prince of shampoos*" all rhapsodised over. There is no danger of scaring off the regular reader here, even if it wouldn't be best place to start if you'd never read a Bond novel before. It isn't perfect by any means – descriptions of card playing, car racing and alpine sports all go on far too long – but it's the Bond novel which aims to be emotionally affecting and largely succeeds.

Mike (the Paladin) says

[Now, for the rest of us.... I know I commented that I didn't care for soap opera, that usually means too heavy a dependence in a story on personal "touchy feely" emotionally soaked storyline. This however gives us James' personal life without "soaping" it up.

James is ready to resign in th

El says

This is that one Bond movie that featured George Lazenby, some guy no one had heard of before and has never heard of since. My childhood memory of the movie was that this was a real snooze and I've always (possibly unfairly) blamed Lazenby for that. Sean Connery was never boring, was my reasoning. (Also not true.)

In any case, because my childhood memories can be somewhat persuasive (in spite of being highly illogical or unreliable), I wasn't particularly looking forward to seeing this one again.

I was pleasantly surprised!

The movie really isn't as bad as my memory told me, and more surprisingly was that Lazenby wasn't nearly as bad as I thought I remembered. Wtf, Memory? This is probably the first of the Bond movies to have a somewhat surreal tone to it (Lazenby wears a kilt at one point and hypnosis to cure allergic reactions to things like... chickens... is a predominant feature to the story).

And, I'm sorry, can I just say? Telly Savalas as Blofeld. Who came up with that one? Brilliant, I say. Just brilliant.

As far as the book - again with the surprises! The movie actually is very close to the original book which might be the first I've encountered in this experience. There weren't any scenes in the book that I wished had

been included in the movie. The movie certainly embellished on some things, but as usual the movie tones down some of Bond's more disturbing behaviors, like seducing a woman just by putting his hand on her breast. (I'd argue that if there's ever any hypnosis going on, it's being done by Bond. No one can have women drop their drawers as quickly and easily as these Bond girls without *some* brainwashing.)

Bond himself is actually somewhat chill in this book. He calls his future wife a "goose" at one point, and he sleeps with some women in her absence. But compared to some of the books that I've read before this one, I'd have to say this one is almost normal.

This could be attributed to the fact that there's an actual love story here between Bond and the Countess Teresa "Tracy" Draco, daughter of the head of the Unione Corse. (Another surprise! Corsicans!) Things don't end up all fluffy as one would hope for Bond, however, and honestly that whole relationship felt a bit contrived, at least in the novel. We meet Tracy in the beginning, she shows up in the end, and in the middle there's this whole non-Tracy stuff going on and her appearances felt someone forced. At least in the movie this could be edited differently.

So, Corsica and Switzerland, exactly two of the same places we just visited last fall - not long enough yet for the descriptions of Corsican violence and the loveliness of the Alps to not make me feel homesick for those places. I'm not going to say that those are the reasons that I liked this book (and maybe even the movie) more than the others I've read so far, but they're probably contributing factors.

Next up... Diamonds Are Forever.

Judy says

I don't know what came over me but I decided to read all of Ian Fleming's James Bond books as well as see, or see again, all of the movies. The part of my autobiography I am currently working on involves the Cold War years and its effect on my life as a young adult, so I thought reading these books and watching the movies would give me the flavor of that from a spy's perspective. Though there were more literary authors writing spy fiction during the Cold War (John le Carre, Graham Greene, etc), I think it was the glamorous James Bond who captured our imagination in the United States and the movies just inflamed us more.

I made a list of the books. They span 13 years with as many books. The releases of the movies were in a completely different order. For example, Fleming's first book, *Casino Royale*, was published in 1953 but the movie came out in 1967. The first movie was Dr No in 1962 though that book was published in 1958.

I started with *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* because it was published in 1963 and that is the year I am reading right now. I don't know yet how I will coordinate the reading and movie watching.

In any case, it was an entertaining read and I knocked it off in one day. There is a beautiful, sexy girl (of course), Bond's old enemy Blofeld from earlier books, the head of the French mafia (the girl's father), a Swiss hideout, lots of skiing, and even genealogy is involved. Bond seems to have found the love of his life but a spy is never in control of his heart's desire.

The skill of Ian Fleming lies in this: you know Bond won't die and you know it won't work out with the girl but he makes you worry desperately for Bond's life and believe that the romance will have a happy ending. Every other spy fiction writer creates his own variation of this, but after reading just one book, I don't think any of them does it better than Ian Fleming.

Darwin8u says

"When the odds are hopeless, when all seems to be lost, then is the time to be calm, to make a show of authority – at least of indifference"

? Ian Fleming, On Her Majesty's Secret Service

One of my favorite Bond novels so far. It contains most of the things that draws people to Bond novels and movies (action, intrigue, charm, violence) and tones down some of the more obnoxious parts too (sexism, racism, etc). The character of Bond is fascinating in this novel as his normal cycle with women is warped a bit. The movie sticks pretty close to the narrative on this one, which is probably due to the fact that it was already a pretty well-developed story.

umberto says

Those having read Ian Fleming's "On Her Majesty's Secret Service", I think, had to encounter its 2-chapter tough lengthy pages on Bond's escape by skiing, I knew their description was from the author's expertise. However, it was not easy to visualize along his seeming stream of consciousness, especially to those who had never skied or trekked on snowy mountains; therefore, reading Chapter 16 'Downhill Only' and Chapter 17 'Bloody Snow' more or less hopelessly relied on imagination, in other words, those with their direct experience would definitely enjoy reading them more.

Vishy says

After watching the James Bond movie 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' last week, I thought I will read the book and compare. Finished reading it today. The basic story goes like this - Bond is driving through some exotic mountain road in Europe. A beautiful woman driving a fast car passes him. Bond tries to catch up with her but he can't. Later he discovers that she is trying to commit suicide. He saves her. But she doesn't thank him. She seems to be a troubled soul. Then Bond is kidnapped by some bad guys. It turns out that the kidnapper is a godfather style head of mafia. He is also the beautiful woman Tracy's father. He asks Bond to marry her. Bond says he will think about it. Meanwhile Bond is in search of his nemesis, the villain Ernst Stavro Blofeld, who wants world domination. Bond ends up in the Alps in a research clinic, where Blofeld seems to be the research doctor. There are many beautiful young women in the clinic. They are all attracted to Bond. And then blah, blah, blah. You have read the book or watch the movie to find out more.

So how does the book compare to the movie? One of my friends says that Bond movies are better than the books. I had mixed opinions on that, but with the evidence of this book, I have to agree. The movie stays faithful to the book mostly, but in many cases the scenes are rearranged in the movie to create a better dramatic effect. For example, in the first scene, the movie improves upon the book. Also, I loved the movie Tracy more than the book Tracy. It helped that Diana Rigg delivered a charming, brilliant performance as Tracy. Also the skiing scenes are breathtaking and spectacular in the movie. And so is the avalanche scene - amazingly spectacular. To be fair to the book, the skiing scenes are pretty well described there - they are very informative. The relationship between Money Penny and Bond is beautifully depicted in the movie.

Moneypenny is missing in the novel. The things where the book scores over the movie are these - in the book, Bond feels like a real person. He is not the cool, stylish Bond of the movie. For example, in the book, when Bond tries to escape from the bad guys by skiing down the Alpine slope, he is not sure whether it is going to work, because he hasn't done skiing in a long time and he is not great at it. In the movie, Bond just puts on his skis and starts skiing down the Alpine slope like he owns the place and it feels like we are watching a gold medallist in the winter Olympics in action here. The movie also has other flaws - Blofeld starts as an interesting villain and ends up becoming a cartoon villain. In spite of its flaws, I liked the movie more - the scenes are more dramatic and the scriptwriters have taken liberty with the book in mostly the right ways.

I thought Ian Fleming's prose was good, but it is passable at best. If I compare Fleming with his Scottish contemporary Alistair MacLean, I feel MacLean was better. MacLean wrote better first pages - his first pages were literary, humorous and spectacular - his prose was gorgeous, he told better stories and the drama and suspense and surprises in his books were better. MacLean's 'When Eight Bells Toll' is better than any Bond novel. I have read it at least ten times. If you like spy novels, I will recommend highly that you read that. Fleming's Bond novels are predictable with passable prose. His formula of the handsome British spy who drives fast cars, drinks martinis, gambles in casinos, charms beautiful women, gets chased by bad guys by cars and boats and planes through exotic locales like Europe and Florida and the Bahamas and how he always wins in the end with the beautiful woman in tow - this must have been irresistible to the readers and movie makers of his time. It is formulaic, predictable, escapist, but it is the kind of reading you might enjoy on the beach on a hot summer day.

Some of the things (mostly useless) that I learnt from the book :

- (1) "worry is a dividend paid to disaster before it is due"
- (2) Bond uses Pinaud Elixir, the prince among shampoos
- (3) "since Victorian days it has been assumed that ladies do not gamble"
- (4) "It was true that this Blofeld had held up Britain and America to ransom by his illegal possession of atomic weapons. But this could not be considered a crime under the laws of Switzerland, and particularly not having regard to Article 47B of the banking laws."
- (5) Bond's father was Scot and his mother was Swiss! (Take that, English folks!)
- (6) 'The World is Not Enough' is the motto engraved in the Bond family's coat of arms. This Bond family might be related to our James Bond, Spy.
- (7) Types of British accents - "the broad vowels of Lancashire, the lilt of Wales, the burr of Scotland, the adenoids of refined Cockney"
- (8) There are three kinds of peaks in Switzerland - the piz, the alp and the berg. Piz is the smallest, alp is the middle one, berg is the tallest. Sometimes alp and berg are used interchangeably.
- (9) Ursula Andress, who played Honey Rider in the first Bond movie 'Dr.No', makes an appearance in this story.
- (10) "What did one do when the avalanche hit? There was only one rule. Get your hands to your boots and grip your ankles. Then, if you were buried, there was some hope of undoing your skis, being able, perhaps, to burrow your way to the surface..."
- (11) Bond's boss M is an amateur painter as this passage shows - "M had one of the stock bachelor's hobbies. He painted in water-colour. He painted only the wild orchids of England, in the meticulous and uninspired fashion of the naturalists of the nineteenth century."
- (12) "there is plenty of evidence for the medical efficacy of hypnosis. There are well-authenticated cases of the successful treatment by these means of such stubborn disabilities as...homosexual tendencies." Well, if you are a gender scholar or activist, you can start kicking Ian Fleming now. Ian, you might be dead for fifty years, but you are in trouble now, buddy :)
- (13) Bond's words of wisdom - "Too much money is the worst curse you can lay on anyone's head. I have enough. Tracy has enough. It will be fun saving up to buy something we want but can't quite afford. That is the only kind of money to have - not quite enough."

Well, it is time for me to take a break from escapist summer reading. When the sun gets hotter in May, and nearly melts my brain, I might get back to my next Bond novel. For now, it is time to get back to 'The Power of the Dog' by Thomas Savage, the dark, bleak, depressing kind of book that I read on a normal day. Normal service resumed :)

Have you read 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' or watched the movie version? What do you think about it?

Howard Olsen says

One of the great Bond books, this is the one famous for ending with Bond being married to Tracy, one of his conquests (it's also famous as the only Bond film starring the immortal George Lazenby). It also has a typically epic adventure as Bond travels to the Swiss Alps to stop Blofeld from attacking British agriculture with biological weapons.

Of all the Bond books, this is probably the one that works best as a piece of literature. We learn a lot about Bond's character: what motivates him to be an agent, what motivates him in his pursuit of women, his sense of honor, and his roguishness. The story begins with his drafting of a resignation letter, but once he is on the trail of Blofeld, we can sense his excitement and sense of duty (Bond's ski-bound escape from Blofeld's mountain is one Fleming's best adventure writing).

You could even say this book has a theme: that of "family." Bond doesn't just get married. He also acquires a hearty father-in-law (from a Corsican crime family). Bond also develops a touching relationship with Tracy, whom he comes to love, even after treating her dismissively after their initial night together. Bond's relationship with father-figure M is also explored, as is the effect on family life that a career in the Secret Service can have. Appropriately, Bond's cover for infiltrating Blofeld's organization is as a geneologist and expert in heraldry.

The relationships within the book are also well developed; I don't think there's another Bond book that delves so much into the relationship between Bond and M, for example. But everyone with whom Bond interacts - from the casino employees at Royale to Blofeld's henchmen to the women Bond encounters in Switzerland - all have fully formed interactions with Bond.

This is not to say this is a perfect book. For one thing, it gives every indication of being two books that were combined into one. Tracy disappears from the middle section of the book and has little to do with the Blofeld plot until she appears out of nowhere to rescue Bond (babeus ex machina). I don't think it would have required too much effort for Fleming to place Tracy on Blofeld's mountain (or at least the periphery); but, then again, that would mean Bond would not have been able to seduce one of Blofeld's women so...it's a wash I guess.

If you are a Bond fan, casual or serious, this is one of the essential ones. Even if you are not a Bond fan, and have perhaps been put off by the dated racism and sexism in some of his other books, there's nothing to worry about here. This is really a great book and one I can't recommend highly enough.

Mark says

This book written by Ian Fleming is the 2nd installment of the Blofeld trilogy, the 1st being "Thunderball" and the 3rd being "You Only Live twice". Ernst Stavro Blofeld is the leader of SPECTRE the criminal

organisation that has targeted the NATO and Great Britain on two occasions. The first attempt was stopped by 007 and the second attempt is written about in this novel OHMSS.

James Bond in the beginning of this novel is thinking about his future with the secret service after spending too much time chasing Blofeld and never getting anywhere or even close to the man or his organisation. He is thinking about his resignation from Her Majesty's secret service when he meets a mysterious young lady who triggers him into a protective hero. With her attempt at suicide James Bond starts a chain of events that will end the book in a personal drama for James Bond 007 and sets the mood for the third book.

This book is easily my favorite one as written by Fleming, it shows more insight in the major characters created by Fleming, namely M & 007. It is also a very well written thriller about biological warfare.

The movie while having the one time 007 actor George Lazenby is a very faithful but enlarged version of the Fleming book. Both are well worth your time.

Just read it; You have all the time in the world.

And the book always leaves me in the end with a small tear in my eye.

Daniel says

"On Her Majesty's Secret Service" was my first James Bond book, and it was exactly what I had wanted it to be: fast-paced, reasonably well-written, and enjoyable overall. Bond, as a character, was a bit more introspective than I had expected he'd be, and while the book was a touch misogynistic, it wasn't as terribly so as I had feared going in. While the book met my expectations, it never really went beyond them, thus the three-star rating. I'll probably read more Bond books, as this one was fun, but can't see myself becoming a huge Ian Fleming fan.

Benjamin Thomas says

This Bond title is probably best known for the movie version because it is the only one to star George Lazenby. While the movie is not often listed among the best-of-Bond lists, the novel itself is one of the better Bond novels. That's a little strange, because unlike most Bond movies, this one mirrors the novel quite closely.

After the events of Thunderball, James Bond is questioning his future with the Secret Service and has, in fact, mentally prepared a letter of resignation. His future plans are considerably altered through the characters he meets and the hunt for the villain, Ernst Blofeld, who has embarked on a massive biological warfare scheme. The novel is largely known as the most emotional of the Bond novels for there is true romance and love here as well as a horribly tragic ending which will leave Bond in a state of depression at the beginning of the next book, *You Only Live Twice*. Bond does succeed in his mission to stop Blofeld's scheme but one can't help but feel he has lost far more than he has won this time around.

Only three more books to go in the series (covering 4 stories) and I look forward to each of them.

Sandy says

Ian Fleming's 11th James Bond book, "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," was written, as was the author's wont, while on vacation at his Goldeneye retreat on the north shore of Jamaica, at Oracabessa, in the winter of 1962...coincidentally, not far from where filming for the original 007 movie, "Dr. No," was taking place at that same time. "OHMSS" is the middle segment of what has come to be known as "the Blofeld trilogy," which began with 1961's "Thunderball" (in which Bond and Blofeld do not meet) and concluded with 1964's "You Only Live Twice." (1962's "The Spy Who Loved Me," which followed "Thunderball," was practically a peaceful interlude by comparison!) I hadn't read "OHMSS" in over 40 years, but had fond memories of it being one of the best of the author's 14-book series, and a recent rereading has served to demonstrate how accurate my memories have been. This is one of the most suspenseful of the Bond outings, although not the most action packed, and features what is undoubtedly the most emotionally devastating wrap-up of all Bond novels. Ultimately released in April '63, and thus approaching its golden anniversary as I write these words, the book seems dated not one bit (unlike, for example, certain references in "Thunderball") and still retains its ability to thrill.

In the book--for those who might not be aware, at this late date--Bond meets a suicidal young woman named Tracy di Vincenzo while at the gaming tables in (the fictitious French town of) Royale-les-Eaux, whose casino had been spotlighted in the first 007 novel, 1953's "Casino Royale." Tracy's father is no less a figure than Marc-Ange Draco, the head of the Union Corse, the Corsican equivalent of the Mafia, who gives Bond a lead as to the whereabouts of his old nemesis, Ernst Stavro Blofeld. It seems that Blofeld has been applying at the U.K.'s College of Arms for confirmation that he is the heir to the hereditary title Count de Bleuville, and so off Bond goes, disguised as a bookish College of Arms researcher, to Blofeld's lair atop (the again fictitious) Piz Gloria, high in the Swiss Alps. And once there, he uncovers a fiendish plot involving biological warfare and "ten gorgeous girls"....

As mentioned above, "OHMSS" is not as action intensive as some of the other 007 titles but does yet feature two outstanding set pieces. In the first, Bond makes a dangerous nighttime escape via skis from Blofeld's lair, narrowly avoiding being engulfed by an avalanche; in the second, Bond pursues Blofeld down a treacherous run on skeleton bobs. Otherwise, this is more of a novel of suspense, as our undercover superspy investigates the master criminal's setup. The novel lets us see a 007 who is on the verge of quitting the Service; a more emotional Bond, who decides that he is ready for marriage and "fed up with all these untidy, casual affairs that leave [him] with a bad conscience"! The book introduces us to Bond's new secretary, Mary Goodnight; shows us a side of Bond's chief, M, that we had not seen before; and even, amidst the suspense and thrills, features some nice bits of humor. For example, in one scene, Irma Bunt (Blofeld's hideous "secretary") points out the many celebrities visiting Piz Gloria, including Ursula Andress (the female lead in "Dr. No," mind warpingly enough)! Also, how amusing it is when Blofeld's birthday is revealed to be May 28, 1908...the same as the author's! The novel also features what has come to be known as the "Fleming sweep"--a rapid pace that carries the reader along from chapter to chapter, and the utilization of an abundance of detail to engender a sense of absolute realism--to a marked degree; indeed, the amount of detail in the book is simply staggering. This reader encountered a good 285 references that sent him scurrying for help to the atlas, German and French dictionaries, and the assorted Interwebs for assistance; still, the result was a fuller, deeper appreciation of a page-turner that most folks would deem unputdownable. Good as Fleming is, though (and make no mistake...he is a terrific writer), a close reading will reveal some inadvertent boo-boos. For example, during Bond's southerly helicopter flight to Piz Gloria, the mountains known as the Silvretta Group are said to be "away to starboard," although a map check reveals that they should be toward Bond's left. That helicopter is said to be a "bright orange Alouette," although Bond later describes it as being yellow. One of the 10 girls says that Bond was discussing the possibility of Irma Bunt being a duchess "at lunch today," whereas that conversation had actually transpired at dinner the previous evening. Finally, Fleming gets the name of a genealogy book wrong; it should be "Burke's Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies," not "Baronetage." Of course, this is mere nitpicking. "OHMSS" is, quite simply, a

tremendous addition to the Bond canon, and one whose ending should leave most readers both shaken AND stirred, if not teary eyed.

A brief word on the 1969 filmization, a picture that has been belittled and disparaged ever since its initial release. It is a wonderfully faithful adaptation, and the small changes that the filmmakers incorporated (e.g., the suspenseful safecracking scene, the courtship interlude, Tracy's presence during the avalanche) all serve the film very well. George Lazenby, in his only go at being Bond, is just fine, despite what the naysayers would have you believe; Diana Rigg is, naturally, the classiest of all the "Bond girls"; and Telly Savalas makes for an imposing Blofeld (if hardly the Blofeld described in Fleming's book). Easily the best of the non-Connery Bond films, "OHMSS" boasts some tremendous action sequences, thrilling theme music and a lovely contribution from Louis Armstrong. And, of course, it boasts the only tear-jerking finale of all 22 (to date) Bond pictures. The film was largely shot at one of the world's first revolving restaurants, which was just being constructed at the time, atop the Schilthorn (2,974 meters high), near Murren, Switzerland, in the area known as the Oberland. The restaurant, later christened the Piz Gloria, is still very much in operation today. Boy, would I love to go!

Douglas Engle says

So I'm going to start out by saying that I was dead wrong about this book, and that I'm not beyond admitting it. Well, maybe that's too much. I was right, for the reasons I cited, but when I gave the book a chance after those reasons came to light, I found that Fleming had really kicked over into another gear to write this book. I couldn't put it down after that, and I grew as a person and a reader. Here's the original review:

[[As I'm winding my way closer to finishing the original Bond novels, I am frustrated. The repetition of circumstances, tropes, poor decisions, and scant to negligible character growth, have all begun to weigh heavily on my experience. I said as much in my recent review of *Quantum of Solace*. So I force myself to go back to my first few reviews, to redefine what it was that compelled me to enjoy and seek to read this series.

1) The character: Bond is amazing. As a concept, and as an execution, Fleming's Bond is a masterpiece. Pick up any of his novels and you get a brilliantly written anti-hero, fallible, duple, sometimes downright stupid, a well full of bad luck, but yet daring, suave, definitely enviable, magnetic! Sadly, it is perhaps because he was so masterfully wrought initially that he has suffered from stagnation. From book to book we get glimpses of his feelings about the world, his job, the women, but they're fleeting, incomplete, and get lost in the hubbub of the missions, rarely to be reflected past the first 30 or so pages of each book. In fact, Bond rarely has a credible human reaction to anything. It's all...

2) Tropes! Originally these were fun. They were unique, and new. Despite having seen the films, seeing these predicaments work themselves out in print was an entirely new gamut of fun. Then they became only palatable. Then they became worn. And too often, the sheer credulity they demanded of the audience was vastly disproportionate to the eventual solution and payoff they returned. Fleming could have done well with a bit more procedural here, a little less fancy, just to keep a balance.

3) The action. Or should I say, the tension. In the first few novels, Fleming was able to tell his stories, tropes and all, with a degree of finesse, keeping the reader keyed into Bond's travails, hopeful for his well return. Now that the series is familiar to me, I don't feel that any more. It feels like reading by rote. The tension is now not tied to the stories, but to the conventions of the stories. I anticipate not what Bond will find around the next corner, but on what page he will be artlessly captured, tortured, and somehow, miraculously set free. And what I do is try to extract every bit of enjoyment I can from Fleming's excellent prose prior to that moment, and throw the book across the room after I find it.

This particular installment began excellently. Bond was experiencing and relating that experience very humanly. There was some intrigue. He was captured!... ah but there was something different about this time. Then there was a girl, and then the plot went somewhere else. I was rubbing my chin and thinking, "Ah, yes, this is a return to form, yes, certainly" but on precisely page 87 (of the 2012 Thomas and Mercer Edition) we learn that Bond has, once again, Bond has let himself be led deep into the bowels of his foe's machine and gotten himself willingly locked in a hotel room with no doorknob JUST LIKE HE DID IN DR NO (if I remember correctly, this situation is almost identical- THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR THIS DEGREE OF REDUNDANCY). So I chucked it. I might pick it up again just to finish it out, because apparently Bond finds a wife in this one, and the exposition was good enough to warrant the effort in finishing it out.]]

After Bond gets himself trapped (again) in the hotel room, something amazing happens. Fleming actually begins to write a procedural investigation, and ensures that Bond not only plays a real and believable cover character, but a real, believable, and human real character. And as Bond makes sensible decisions(!), and as he delves deeper into this tale, it all comes together magnificently and tells a very plausible story of espionage and terrorism. I have to say Bravo, and I've picked up Thunderball, which I also tossed recently, so I can finish it, and the next book- and I'm excited again. I really am.

Brian says

- * The eleventh Bond book.
- * Second appearance of Blofeld.
- * Strangely enough, if I were going to read only one of Fleming's Bond books, this probably wouldn't be it, yet it is my favorite in the complete series. No, it's really not so odd: after seeing Bond tortured by love in so many other novels, it's a pleasure to see him finally find a future in it.
- * But there's also plenty of action, a worthy adversary, great detail, humor, and pathos. Because of Tracy, though, it all works best on top of a solid foundation of the other books.
- * The sixth Bond movie (George Lazenby).
- * Reasonably faithful adaptation. Lazenby is a good Bond (and it's remarkable how well he handles the final scene, which is the diciest of them all).
- * With a brand new actor playing the role and it's longer running time (it was the longest Bond film to date and held the record until Daniel Craig's "Casino Royale" beat it out decades later), it's regrettable that the producers still chose to make it about Movie Bond (toned down a bit, it's true) rather than Book Bond. Movie Bond is a superman who is never really hurt and never truly threatened--that's why he can crack his stupid jokes after supposedly facing mortal danger. It's also why it's hard to generate any meaningful suspense, or indeed any sympathy for the character. Though still one of the very best Bond movies, it's the all-too-frequent appearances of Movie Bond that prevent this from rising above its franchise into the wider world of great movies.
- * Diana Rigg, though, blows all other Bond girls to date right out of the water.
- * And it contains, of course, the best song ever played in a Bond film: "We Have All the Time in the World"

by Louis Armstrong.

James says

I think this one is my favourite of the Bond novels. Espionage, romance, action etc. Bond is still on the hunt for Blofeld and SPECTRE, but instead he finds Tracy and even love and marriage. Bond is at his most human in this novel.
