



# Octopussy & the Living Daylights

*Ian Fleming*

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## Octopussy & the Living Daylights Ian Fleming

Whether it is tracking down a wayward major who has taken a deadly secret with him to the Caribbean or identifying a top Russian agent secretly bidding for a Fabergé egg in a Sotheby's auction room, Bond always closes the case—with extreme prejudice.

This new Penguin edition comprises four stories, including Fleming's little-known story "007 in New York," showcasing Bond's taste for Manhattan's special pleasures—from martinis at the Plaza and dinner at the Grand Central Oyster Bar to the perfect anonymity of the Central Park Zoo for a secret rendezvous.

## Octopussy & the Living Daylights Details

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# From Reader Review Octopussy & the Living Daylights for online ebook

## El says

Again, paralyzed with options! Here we have Octopussy (the movie came out in 1983) *and* The Living Daylights which came out... later... with Timothy Dalton. But these are novellas, they're short, and apparently they were published together in this short story collection. (Though I beg to ask - can you have a "short story collection" when said collection includes only two stories? I feel like that's cheating.)

This is an exceptionally short book, even with both stories together. I think it clocks in somewhere just slightly over 100 pages, the print is large, and every so often there's a page dedicated to some pointillist drawings. I read the whole kit and caboodle in less than a half hour. It's just a fast read, I'm not a machine. (Or am I...?)

Octopussy the story is absolutely nothing like the movie. The movie involves some clowns and some acrobats and neither of those things make an appearance in the book. Which is just as well because clowns tend to make me cry. (Seeing Roger Moore dressed as a clown is no exception. That's just terrifying.) I understand the plot of the movie comes from some other story (or stories) that I haven't read yet, and seriously. It's hard enough keeping up here. This is the craziest project ever.

The real Octopussy story involves some underwater creatures, which I'm all about, even if it means going to Jamaica (ugh, it's humid there, right?) to see them. Bond is required to apprehend a World War II hero, Major Smythe. That's the story. Oh, that's not true. There are some flashbacks and, like I said, some underwater creatures, but it really is a short story. The best is the ending - very vivid, which goes back to what I was saying yesterday after reading For Your Eyes Only - Fleming really seems to blossom in his short stories in ways that he did not in his novels. I think, for example, in his novels he spends a considerable amount of time building up the relationship with whichever Bond girl happens to cross his path, whereas in the short stories there's no time for any of that. There are some women, but there's no time to woo them. They are there, they contribute, they do some stuff, and that's that. No time for objectification.

For those keeping track, the theme song is brought to you by Rita Coolidge. Meh. I would have liked it better if she had managed to find a way to bring "octopussy" into her lyrics. Oh well.

It's difficult for me to even discuss The Living Daylights because (guh!) I haven't (re)watched the movie yet, and this just throws off my entire life. I might revisit this review once we do reach that movie.

I should mention that these short stories are the last two Bond books Fleming wrote. There are like a gazillion other books written by other authors, and undoubtedly I will be reading them along this process as well. Not sure if that will be a good or bad thing, but it is what it is. This is *science*.

Next up... A View to a Kill which I've already read because it was in yesterday's For Your Eyes Only. And then after that is The Living Daylights, sigh. In light of this unfortunate and stupid setback I will probably try to get my paws on something else by or about Fleming, depending on what's available in the library. Don't worry, this project isn't over yet.

Next actual Bond book... License to Kill, a non-Fleming novel.

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## Tracy says

Tom Hiddleston really gave a fun reading to the material. He created distinct accents and personalities for each character. I liked his take on Dexter Smythe...you could tell he was having a lot of fun recording the stories. He reads at a slightly slower pace than I tend to like (I usually like narrators who don't pause and act out the characters' deliberations), but he injects a lot of personality in the readings and this collection is under 4 hours long.

I think each story in this collection highlights a different angle of James Bond. You get him through the perspective of a villain, running a suspenseful but nowhere near life-or-death mission, running a high-stress life-or-death mission, and debating where to eat and what sites to visit in New York.

These are great stories for readers who relish random, interesting factoids. Fleming discusses exotic, deadly fish and extravagant jewelry auctions with such finesse it is hard to imagine what he wasn't an expert in.

Out of the 4 stories, I enjoyed *The Living Daylights* the most. It really gives you a sense of the stress Bond goes through on some missions, as well as a mini-overview of his psyche (here he is tracking a sniper with his own sniper rifle, yet still manages to get distracted looking at a beautiful woman...). I haven't seen or read a ton of James Bond, but it is easy to see some of the seriousness and depth to the character in Fleming's writing that I think to movies tend to gloss over with camp (well the bad ones anyway).

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## Jay says

The final book in the original Bond series consists of three short stories. These were uneven. The least interesting as a story was the one about Bond eyeing bidders in an auction. This reads like Fleming was doing a kind of product placement story highlighting the action and intrigue of a fine arts auction. In another review I read this was originally published in an auction house magazine, so there you go.

I enjoyed the other two stories more. In *Octopussy*, Bond really plays a bit role – he's been asked to take care of some business while he's on vacation, so he efficiently interviews his target and leaves. You realize he's actually been judge and jury on this case and provides his target a choice. Quite interesting in that, and the Jamaican and maritime background and WWII backstory adds flavor. The final story, *The Living Daylights*, shows Bond doing 00- work, and here we see him cranky and human. This is quite refreshing; Bond acts as in some of the earlier novels but unlike all of the movies. I like a Bond who worries, gets pissed off, and blows off steam.

As this is the final Fleming Bond book in the series, and I've now read them all, I feel the need to reflect. When I was in Junior High, I wanted to read interesting and adult books, but the librarian (and fear of my Mom) would not allow me to check out Fleming's books. Instead, I started on Agatha Christie mysteries and Perry Rhodan sci-fi serials and read dozens of them. I didn't start reading Fleming until I was over 50. At this point, I can safely say that the most risqué parts of the books were, with few exceptions, the covers. Those early covers and the linkage to the movies with a continuously randy Bond were what my personal censors knew about the books. Much ado about not very much, I'm afraid. In their defense, I doubt I could have read those books with those covers in school without having them confiscated from the classroom, so I

was being protected from that trip to the principal's office. Also, I believe this is the first series of more than a few books I've completed in decades. Overall, I found the Bond books interesting in how they are not like the movies which are oh so familiar. And while at the movies were of a time, many of the books had a timeless quality where the action could have happened today.

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## **J'aime says**

This audio book includes the novella Octopussy as well as three other James Bond stories. I've seen many of the films, but until now had never "read" any of the Ian Fleming novels. During a recent road trip, I decided to start with this because I'm a fan of the reader. Hiddleston reads with a clear, strong voice, changing his cadence or accent as the characters change. I look forward to hearing him read other books.

It probably wasn't a good idea to start with the very last, posthumous collection of Bond adventures. OCTOPUSSY is very short, and is told almost entirely in flashback. But what I found most surprising is that James Bond has only a cameo in his own story! The book is told from the POV of Dexter Smythe, the "villain." It opens with him describing his villa and the lagoon he swims in - where the titular octopus lives. He then mentions a visit from James Bond and that sets him off on the sequence of events which led to Bond being in his home. The story was interesting but not especially suited to the audio format. However, it does inspire me to try other Bond books.

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS was my favorite story from this collection. It describes a brief mission that sets James Bond against another sniper, with surprising results. This story has a lot of tension that kept my attention through to the finish.

THE PROPERTY OF A LADY is a bit of cat and mouse where Bond must determine the identity of a bidder at a Sotheby's auction. This story has a lot of detail and would make a great piece for a Bond film - very enjoyable.

The last story, 007 IN NEW YORK, was my least favorite of the collection, not the least because it wasn't read by Tom Hiddleston. Lucy Fleming reads the story in a flat almost monotone that very nearly put me to sleep. On top of that, the story was boring. Most of it is a description of Bond's arrival in NYC, what he's seeing, where & what he intends to eat, what he'll do while waiting to fulfill his mission, etc. The ending was quite cheeky, and might have been fun if delivered by a more engaging reader.

Overall, though this collection is obviously not the best example of Fleming's Bond material, it was worth a listen to pass the time on a long drive. Recommended to Bond completists - newbies should start with something else.

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## **Tammie says**

2 1/2 stars

This is one that I had forgotten about reading. I don't even know how I ended up reading it in the first place, but this is the only James Bond story I've read and from this story I gather that Ian Flemming's James Bond is a bit different from the one in the movies. The short story Octopussy is very different from the movie of the same name. Instead you get an okay action thriller without all of cheesiness that is the movie. That's not a

bad thing, but I just thought it was a little dull.

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## **Carmen says**

*This was going to be dirty work and Bond, because he belonged to the Double-0 Section, had been chosen for it. Perversely, Bond wanted to force M to put it in black and white. This was going to be bad news, dirty news, and he didn't want to hear it from one of the Section officers, or even from the Chief of Staff. This was to be murder. All right. Let M bloody well say so.*

Four Bond short stories. None are very interesting.

### **1.) OCTOPUSSY**

This is a short story about a man, living in Jamaica, who stole some Nazi gold during the war. Now, decades later, Bond has come to collect. What the man has done is even worse, because in stealing the Nazi gold he murdered a man who "was like a father" to Bond. It is called "Octopussy" because the man has a rather tame octopus named Octopussy (or just Pussy). Told from the Major's point of view, it is interesting to get another view on Bond and see another aspect of his life and job. I thought that this was the strongest story, although there is very little Bond in it.

### **2.) THE PROPERTY OF A LADY**

A woman who is working for MI6 (but is really an agent from the KGB) receives her payment in a Faberge worth over 100,000 pounds. Nothing really happens in this story. Again, we are confronted by Fleming's belief that ugly people are prone to turn to evil because they feel slighted and inadequate.

### **3.) THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS**

Bond travels to Berlin in order to murder a sniper who is planning to kill a British agent. This is very rough for Bond because Bond is not an assassin. Actually, he has a huge problem with killing people in cold blood. Bond also shows mercy on a woman in this story.

### **4.) 007 IN NEW YORK**

Bond travels to New York in order to warn a British woman that her boyfriend is KGB. This story is pointless and, by the way, Bond hates NYC. The only thing worth mentioning is that it includes a recipe for Bond's scrambled eggs.

### **SCRAMBLED EGGS 'JAMES BOND'**

For four individualists:

12 fresh eggs  
Salt and pepper  
5-6 ounces of fresh butter

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat thoroughly with a fork and season well. In a small copper (or heavy-bottomed saucepan) melt four ounces of the butter. When melted, pour in the eggs and cook over a very low heat, whisking continuously with a small egg whisk.

While the eggs are slightly more moist than you would wish for eating, remove pan from heat, add rest of butter and continue whisking for half a minute, adding the while finely chopped chives or fine herbs. Serve

on hot buttered toast in individual copper dishes (for appearance only) with pink champagne (Taittinger) and low music.

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## **Ann-Marie says**

The other day I came across this audiobook of James Bond short stories narrated by Tom Hiddleston.

I was like, well hello there.

Had no idea that he did this! So I checked it out from my library, listened to it, and enjoyed it!

I've seen all the Bond films and have always thought about reading an Ian Fleming book someday. Discovering that Tom Hiddleston had narrated these short stories was all the push I needed, and icing on the cake. I was happy to see that two of the three he narrated happened to be a couple of my favorite Bond movies, "Octopussy" and "The Living Daylights".

First up, "Octopussy". At first I was a bit lost because I kept comparing it to the movie. My mistake, I know. I was all, what is this? Where's the female league of thieves and smugglers? Q? The circus? The Faberge egg? Louis Jourdan? Yeah, the movie was completely different from what Fleming had originally penned. I mean I figured there'd be some changes, that's what happens with most book-to-film adaptations. I just wasn't expecting *that big of a change*. But after I got over my initial surprise and pushed the movie out of my head, I settled right down into the story and got caught up in it.

Next was "The Property of a Lady", which actually turned out to be my favorite of the trio. The Faberge egg turned up in this one. I was like, aha! So this is where the Octopussy movie got that from. It was a fun short story and I really liked the tense atmosphere of it taking place in Sotheby's, an upscale art auction house in England. For some reason, whenever a story revolves around bidding on works of art (especially at a place like Sotheby's), it always fascinates me. I guess I like the poshness of it. Now having listened to this, the movie's auction scene kinda pales in comparison. It was more dramatic the way Fleming wrote it.

And then lastly, "The Living Daylights". The movie version of this seemed to have stuck pretty close to the plot, the beginning anyway. They changed it a bit and added on a whole lot more to the story, and I mean *a lot*. There wouldn't have been a movie if they didn't. It was interesting to see how the screenwriters expanded on what Fleming had written. What he wrote was good. I liked knowing what was going on in Bond's mind while on a mission to kill. But now I want to go back and watch the movie again to "finish" the story. I just really loved that storyline and how it played out. So I think the short story and movie go well together. Start with the book, end with the film. Works for me.

I liked Fleming's style of writing. It's not as action packed like the movies. It's more subtle, slow building with a certain calculated coolness, but there's still that sense of urgency and suspense. I'm thinking I'll have to check out his other stuff. As for Tom Hiddleston's narration, he did a great job and I enjoyed listening to him. I also liked his insightful interview at the end. He said that he loved "The Property of a Lady" too and its atmospheric writing. Good taste, good taste.

So all in all, these were entertaining spy short stories narrated by a talented actor. Seriously, Hiddleston

needs to narrate more of these!

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## **Michael says**

I really do enjoy the Bond short stories because in the absence of broad-reaching plots and numerous characters, Fleming gives us insight into the character that's difficult to convey on film.

Octopussy took me by the greatest surprise as it has nothing at all to do with the film bearing its name (although the film did happily borrow significant elements from *The Property of a Lady* and *Moonraker*), and indeed added more fuel for *Spectre* than anything. What we have here is a fairly dark tale that shows Bond's taste for a little revenge when the job gets too close to home. It's a combination of a classic World War II tale, Bond spy-work, and the *Telltale Heart*. Could it get better? Ironically mirroring the story, Bond is only a minor figure in this one, but his brief presence drives the events, proving the power a well-crafted character can have on a narrative. And once again, Fleming is out to prove that octopuses are nature's deadliest predators.

*The Property of a Lady* shows Bond hobnobbing with the London elite, as he does when he has to, but where he seldom feels at ease. This works as a good excuse to have him serve as an audience surrogate and have a world rarely seen explained to us without seeming condescending. I enjoyed seeing the original, simpler version of a scene I knew well from the *Octopussy* film. It also gave me a greater appreciation for the screenwriters who took an already intriguing sketch and fleshed it out into a much bigger story.

*The Living Daylights* is another instance of film taking a basic story and expanding it very successfully, all the while remaining true to the source material. Perhaps this story more than many others show Bond's true feelings towards some of the nasty assignments he has to endure and the way in which his vices play into his decisions. He's a real human character, not just a quip and a suit, and we get to see that here, flaws and all.

Then there's 007 in New York. Not much here to write about in terms of character development, although it is fun to watch Bond fantasize about his day in the Big Apple. Fleming's brand name-dropping account of the high life is on full display here, and I very much enjoy tidbits like these for the sort of snapshot of a time they provide. And two welcome surprises - the only mention of Bond's preferred Martini mix and a humorous ending! Who knew Fleming was capable?

I'm glad the series goes out with a bang instead of a whimper. Frankly I don't think I'd enjoy a full length novel with these sorts of stories, but at these lengths, they really work well. I really can't recommend the books enough to anyone who enjoys the film series. Much like the films, there are some that will leave you scratching your head and some that feel dated, but most of them are at least good, a handful are great, and if nothing else you will gain a bounty of insight into the stories and characters you think you already know so well.

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## **Roxana-M?lina Chiril? says**

So, when I think of James Bond, I think of this super-spy guy who solves his missions by killing enemies, while getting all the dangerous, beautiful women.

As such, this collection came as a bit of a surprise. Firstly, because it's 142 pages long (which is short) and contains three short stories and a *thing* (we'll come back to the thing a bit later). Secondly, because Bond falls in love with one single woman in the entire book, and she's on the other side - on the other side politically, and on the other side physically, since there's the empty space between East and West Berlin between them. He does have fun with a woman in bed, though - when he reads a book about her pulp-y adventures.

Anyway, despite the collection not being at all like I expected, the collection is okay. The first story, Octopussy, is the best in the bunch, I think - it's about WWII and James Bond does very little in it, but it's fun to hear the bad guy tell us all about how he committed a crime. The second story is about catching a high-level KGB person in London through very subtle means - which mostly consist of Bond attending an auction and noticing who the bad guy is (it's interesting, but lacks any action whatsoever). The third has 007 on a mission to save one of Britain's agents by eliminating a Soviet one.

And the fourth... thing... has Bond visiting New York and dropping all sorts of classy names of hotels and restaurants - a nod to Americans at that time, but prone to making us nod off today, as he describes the best foods to be had and where you can have them (no damns given, Bond!). By the time he's supposed to do his job, the short, short story (shorter than the others) ends, mercifully never even coming to the actual plot, but containing a recipe for James Bond scrambled eggs nonetheless.

All in all, enjoyable, but not amazing.

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## Supratim says

Reread this book after such a long time. This was my first brush with the iconic British spy in a book written by the creator, Ian Fleming. I had read a Bond novel by John Gardner earlier though.

The edition I have contains the following three stories

- Octopussy
- The Living Daylights
- The Property of a Lady

Some editions feature an additional story - 007 IN NEW YORK. I wish my edition included this one.

In these stories you will get to accompany Bond on his missions across the globe: Jamaica, West Berlin and London. Enter the world of espionage, spies, traitors and assassins.

The best part: there are no outlandish plots, larger-than-life villains hell bent on taking over the world, even the iconic cars and fancy gizmos are absent. The stories are realistic (or at least what readers and critiques of spy fiction claim to be realistic) and I found them enjoyable. But a little bit of sexism is there in one of the stories.

Now we come to the stories –

**Octopussy** : Here, surprisingly, Bond has limited presence and dons the role of cop rather than that of a spy. 007 deals with a ex-British army major who had committed a crime during his posting in post WW2 Germany. Interestingly, the character of **Hannes Oberhauser** was first introduced in this book. I recognized the name from the movie Spectre. But, the story around the character has been somewhat altered

in the movie.

I had watched Octopussy before reading the stories. But, the movie adaptation contains elements of this and The Property of a Lady and has built up on them. Octopussy has been condensed into a dialogue in the movie and while The Property of the Lady became a scene.

***The Property of a Lady*** : Bond is tasked with identifying a top ranking Soviet spy during the auction of a Faberge art in Sotheby's in London.

***The Living Daylights*** : Here Bond's mission is to facilitate the escape of a spy from East Berlin to West Berlin by taking care of a KGB sniper. In this story, the famous 007 would actually express his distaste at having to kill someone. The story would be part of the beginning scene in the movie adaption featuring Timothy Dalton as Bond.

The book also has some illustrations which use dots to create profiles of weapons, cars among others. I liked the designs.

Bond buffs and people interested in spy fiction would enjoy the book. The book is only 127 pages long and can be read in one sitting.

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## **Sandy says**

When English author Ian Fleming passed away on August 12, 1964, at the age of 56, he had not yet put the finishing touches on his final James Bond novel, "The Man With the Golden Gun." Oh, sure, he'd gotten a first draft down on paper--working at his Oracabessa, Jamaica winter home called Goldeneye, as usual--but the plethora of convincing detail that had been the hallmark of the previous dozen Bond books was sadly missing from the final product. And so, when the novel was ultimately released some eight months later, the world must have understandably believed that this unfleshed-out caper would be the author's final word regarding 007. Thus, what a surprise it must have been when, in June '66, the posthumous collection "Octopussy" was released. The collection consisted of two short stories--the title piece and "The Living Daylights"; a third story, "The Property of a Lady," was added for the book's paperback incarnation. The three stories serve as mere codas to a famous series; vignette glimpses of some of Bond's lesser cases. Still, all three are of interest, and display what has been called by Kingsley Amis "the Fleming effect" (the overwhelming, realistic detail previously referred to) in great abundance.

In the title story, "Octopussy," which initially appeared serially in the "Daily Express" paper in October '65, Bond himself is largely absent. We see him through the eyes of ex-Secret Service agent Major Dexter Smythe, a 54-year-old widower living in Jamaica, who is killing himself slowly via too much smoke and too much drink. His idyllic lazy life of boozing, playing bridge and snorkeling is interrupted one day by the advent of 007, who has come to give Smythe notice that a 17-year-old double crime that the major had committed at the tail end of WW2 (I don't want to reveal too much; let's just say that the crimes involve murder and Nazi gold) has finally caught up with him. The story has an interesting double flashback structure, and the section in which Smythe reflects on those crimes is a fascinating one. The reader doesn't learn much about Bond in this tale, although Fleming does humanize the agent a bit by having Bond reveal his personal reason for bringing Smythe to justice. And the major's ultimate fate, I might add, is a memorably, doubly grisly one. Much comment has been made over Smythe's resemblance to the author, who of course also lived on the north shore of Jamaica (the island was the setting for not only "Octopussy," but

also "Live and Let Die," "Doctor No," "For Your Eyes Only" and "The Man With the Golden Gun"), smoked and drank too much, was fond of snorkeling and bird-watching, and was roughly the same age as the major. Still, the author takes pains to show that Smythe is a pitiful, unsympathetic character, and decidedly quite the bastard. He is hardly a stand-in for the author. "Octopussy," obviously, has zero relation to the 1983 film starring Roger Moore, which instead dealt with a crazy Russian general's attempt to detonate an atomic bomb at a NATO air base. Except for the presence of an actual octopus in both the story and the film, they are wholly dissimilar.

Up next in the collection is "The Living Daylights," which first ran in the "Sunday Times" in February '62. Here, Bond is given a particularly nasty assignment by his superior, M: to kill the sniper who will be attempting to shoot a British agent; an agent who will soon be making a dash across the no-man's-land between East and West Berlin; the zone soon to be known as "Checkpoint Charlie." Thus, Bond, ensconced in a dumpy apartment, waits for three nights for Agent 272 to make his run, a .308 Winchester rifle trained on the darkened windows of the government building across the way. But Fleming pulls the rug out from beneath the reader and Bond himself, when the identity of Bond's sniper target is revealed. This is a fast-moving, suspenseful story, replete with wonderful detail regarding both weapons and Berlin, as well as a neat twist of an ending. We learn a good deal about 007 in this short story; for example, his taste in food (eggs, herring, schnapps, Lowenbrau) and the fact that he greatly dislikes killing (he even expresses a hope that his action at the story's end will get him booted out of the 00 section). Surprisingly, Bond briefly considers going to a whorehouse to kill some time in Berlin (one would have thought that unnecessary for him!), and has a good deal of difficulty falling asleep the night before his mission (in previous books, he'd fallen asleep with a mere shrug, seemingly impervious to worry). A more human Bond is the result, and it is nice to see. In all, a very winning tale, only bits of which survived in the 1987 film "The Living Daylights," mainly in the character of Kara Milovy, the unnamed cellist in Fleming's story.

The "Octopussy" collection concludes with "The Property of a Lady," which first appeared in "The Ivory Hammer" (a publication of Sotheby's auction house), of all places; it was later reprinted in "Playboy" magazine. Here, a known double agent in the British Secret Service, Maria Freudenstein, is about to be paid off by her Russian superiors. An enormously rare Faberge egg has been sent to her, which she is now having auctioned off at Sotheby's. Bond feels that the top Russian agent in London, identity unknown, will be present at the auction, attempting to artificially raise the bidding, and so 007 goes there to try to pick him/her out. Raymond Benson, writing in the invaluable reference book "The James Bond Bedside Companion," tells us that the story has "absolutely no suspense" and that there is "no climax in the narrative," but whether this is true or not, this reader managed to enjoy it. Fleming gives us a wealth of detail regarding the auction process and the egg itself (it's not just a green emerald egg, but "girdled by a fixed gold belt enameled opalescent oyster along a reserved path in champleve technique over a moire guillochage with painted Roman numerals in pale sepia enamel...."), and remarkably, incorporates a real-life person into his story. The Faberge expert in the story who helps Bond, a Mr. Kenneth Snowman, was a friend of Fleming's, as it turns out, was the actual chairman of Wartski's (the Faberge dealer that Bond visits), and did indeed write a book entitled "The Art of Carl Faberge"! Is there another Bond novel or story that utilizes a real-life personage in such a manner? Certainly none that I can think of offhand. Those eggs, of course, would also figure in the "Octopussy" film, as did an auction sequence, but in wholly different contexts, of course. In all, the story is a pleasant enough glimpse into a few comparatively humdrum days in the life of James Bond.

Bringing down the curtain on the world's most famous secret agent, Fleming's final collection, slim as it is, yet manages to entertain and impress. And thanks to authors such as Kingsley Amis, John Gardner, Benson himself, Sebastian Faulks, Jeffery Deaver and William Boyd, the literary exploits of Bond continue to this day. It would seem that "Octopussy" was hardly the final word on secret agent 007 after all....

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## **Brightness says**

3 stars for the short stories.

5 stars for Tom Hiddleston's narrations.

The short stories were good. Here we have Octopussy, The Property of a Lady, and The Living Daylights. All three have very different tones to them and all have a different version of Bond.

Octopussy was probably my favorite. Bond is actually only a minor character and the story really centers around Major Dexter Smythe, a retired WWII hero who is implicated in a murder that involved a stash of Nazi gold. Smythe is a very interesting character and the story is mostly told via his flashbacks of his involvement in the murder. And, of course, there is Smythe's famous Octopussy, his pet name for the giant Octopus living in the coral reef off of his bungalow who ends up having a surprising role to play in the story.

The Portrait of a Lady was only worthy of note for me because here Bond is a much more laid back character. He was very amusing in this piece and the stakes are not really that high as he mainly attends an auction in order to identify his target, who is then simply deported from London. Bond's inner thoughts during the whole auction proceedings gave me quite a few laughs.

The Living Daylights has a much more serious tone throughout and I actually loved Bond in this piece more than the other short stories and even the previous two books that I read in the series. There is a lot of depth and complexity to him here that I was surprised to find.

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## **Bill Lynas says**

Ian Fleming shows that the James Bond adventures work equally well in the short story format. While not perhaps on such an epic scale as other 007 tales all three episodes are written with Fleming's superb journalistic style.

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## **Mark says**

A short story collection which was released after the death of Ian Fleming.

'007 in New York': Is more a bit of tourist information than an actual short story. But it shows Flemings skill of description, but here it lacks his usual strength which makes boring stuff come alive.

'Octopussy': This story is not a 007 adventure but more a tale of WOII where a soldier steals from the Nazi's. But while doing that he makes a mistake which brings 007 on his doorstep. An impressive little tale well told. ( was mentioned in the movie "Octopussy")

'The Living Daylights': The best story in the book, It is abouts 007's license to kill. It happens in Berlin during the cold war and tells you a lot more about the thoughts and world of James Bond at work. (Featured in the movie "The Living Daylights")

'The Property of a Lady': Especially written for an auctionhouse, so that is what is the star in the movie. More a police story than a spy thriller. But still well written. (Featured in the movie Octopussy)

For somebody who likes Flemings writing I would say it is recommended reading.

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## **Darwin8u says**

A collection of four short stories. Two share titles with James Bond movies, but the substance is nothing like the subject matter of the stories. Will review more later.

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## **Clare says**

I was very surprised by this audiobook. I had as certain idea of what "James Bond" is... and this wasn't it.

I've read spy stories, and thrillers, and these stories were much more like THAT. These stories are from the '60s and were more introspective and character based than I expected from a "James Bond" novel. Somehow I expected something full of mindless action, car chases and meaningless sex. I bought it because I enjoy the sound of Tom Hiddleston's voice-- I'd listen to him read the phone book.

He was excellent. He changes the tone of voice, and intonations for each character. They are all unique. And, if you like interesting short tales of espionage, mystery and a little bit of angst about how it feels to be told you're going to kill someone tomorrow-- and really not being given a choice in that-- just that it's your duty. Here's the guy who's your support personnel (and who will report back how you behave, and if you do what you are suppose to) and who is ostensibly there only to give you your supplies and necessities. Well, you may find this very interesting indeed.

If you can't find this, I believe I purchased it through Amazon UK (or try your local library.)

Clare

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## **Zee says**

"Whether it is tracking down a wayward major who has taken a deadly secret with him to the Caribbean or identifying a top Russian agent secretly bidding for a Fabergé egg in a Sotheby's auction room, Bond always closes the case—with extreme prejudice."

Ahh, the world of international espionage. Thanks to Fleming, being a spy has never been so attractive. He single-handedly painted the otherwise secret world of Mi5 operatives in gold gilt. The genre itself became synonymous with the Christian Dior style of 1950's glamour thanks to titles like 'Diamonds are Forever', 'The Man with the Golden Gun' and 'Casino Royale'. Fleming wrote 14 Bond novels altogether, and is said to be his last. Unfortunately he didn't live long enough to see his beloved character hit the bigtime; but word has it most of what he wrote came from his own life as a jet-setting, suave intelligence officer.

This is my first taste of Bond, and the four short stories or 'scraps' as I came to see them, was a nice

introduction to Fleming's work. I say 'scraps' because some of these stories have a distinct 'unfinished' quality about them; as if they were fleeting scenarios penned-down in the heat of the moment. In a little over 100 pages we have 'Octopussy', 'The Property of a Lady', 'The Living Daylights' and '007 in New York'. Two of these titles were made into full-length films only because they were the only two that had half-decent endings and enough of a back-story to build a script around. 'The Property of a Lady' had a very good premise, but needed a stronger ending in my opinion. I would have loved it if the secret bidder was sitting right next to Bond and he was thwarted just this once. It would have made for a killer cliff-hanger ending. '007 in New York' was more of a thinly-disguised personal view of the city rather than a Bond story (and Fleming admits as much).

What I enjoyed about the stories were the flashbacks into the world 50 years ago. In 'Octopussy' I got a real flavour of the Caribbean with all its drug-running gangster culture. 'Property of a Lady' transported me to the elegant auction rooms of Sotheby's, when a rare Faberge egg would take you back £100'000 and 'The Living Daylights' of the days when Germany had an East and a West and a border like no-man's land that still reeked of the dregs of Hitler's threat.

Bond stories are not so much about the intrigue, the flashy cars (you get to read about one in this book), the women or the spoils of spydom. The real star of the show is the countries. I was more seduced by the scenery than the characters. Fleming has a gift for 'painting' the world around him and if you like that sort of thing then this is right up your street.

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## **James says**

A posthumous collection of the remaining Bond short stories: "Octopussy", "The Property of a Lady", "The Living Daylights" and "007 in New York". Having read this far it would be a shame not to complete the set...

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## **Joseph says**

James Bond started out as a literary character and soon turned into a movie franchise, becoming a "pop culture" icon in the process. I have watched a few Bond movies, discreetly enjoying them, without really becoming a fan. Perhaps that is why I was never really tempted to explore Fleming's originals. I now realise that this slim volume of four posthumously published short stories are quite atypical of the Bond oeuvre and possibly not the best introduction to Fleming's work. In "Octopussy", Bond is almost a marginal presence, with the real protagonist being the "villain", one Major Dexter Smythe. There is a good attempt at characterisation of Smythe, but I found the alternations between 1960s Jamaica and post-war Alps clunky, the ending contrived and the whole narrative style somewhat approximate. I liked the writing in "Property of a Lady" better, but this tale of an unusual auction (the only element from this whole collection reprised in the 1983 "Octopussy" movie) lacks the thrill and titillation one would associate with Bond. "007 in New York" is little more than a divertissement verging on self-parody, even including a recipe for "Scrambled Eggs James Bond". It was in *The Living Daylights* that I caught a glimpse of the author who has been described as "the best thriller writer since Buchan". Nominally a description of a sniping assignment Bond undertakes on the East-West Berlin border, it involves days of waiting for the prey. It could easily have become a boring story but, instead, Fleming manages to ratchet up the tension, giving us a taste of what his character must have felt in his vigils in a blacked-out apartment. It also shows us a Bond who battles with his conscience and who, behind a cool exterior, can also be romantic and chivalric. In other words, *The Living Daylight* is a

little gem, on the strength of which I'll be happy to give Bond another chance. Any suggestions welcome.

This Vintage edition includes an introduction by Sam Leith, who not only explains what he owes to Bond (his life, no less) but also delves into what these short stories tell about who Bond is (and who or what he's not).

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## **Liesl says**

Although I remain largely unimpressed by James Bond in the short story format, these selections are slightly better and more memorable than the ones featured in *For Your Eyes Only*. "Octopussy" is the sole standout, partly because of its unorthodox format of being told from villain Smythe's point of view and in flashback. "The Living Daylights" has an intriguing setup, but feels like a prologue to a much bigger story and ends before it really goes anywhere. As for the other two, meh. The best thing that this audiobook has going for it is narrator Tom Hiddleston, who does a divine reading.

## **SERIES IN REVIEW**

Although the James Bond series has not aged particularly well, it was still fun to experience the books doled out over the past 14 months, with audiobook serving as the perfect format. I have yet to make it through all of the Bond films, but after completing all of the books, I have renewed desire to accomplish this task. I'm not particularly interested in reading a continuation of the character by other authors as I would prefer to stick to creator Fleming's version.

**BEST BOOK:** *Casino Royale* gets the series off to a roaring start. *Thunderball* has a surprisingly progressive plot. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* features interesting character development for Bond.

**WORST BOOK:** *The Spy Who Loved Me*, hands down. A misguided aberration, and the end result is a dumpster fire.

**BEST VILLAIN:** Auric Goldfinger's plan for world domination is elaborate and admirable. Ernst Stavro Blofeld is so creative and engaging that he shows up in three separate books. I wanted more of Rosa Klebb, who displays a flair for the genius with her venom-laced blades hidden within her shoes. Honorable mention to the formidable giant squid in *Doctor No*.

**WORST VILLAIN:** Not to keep picking on *The Spy Who Loved Me*, but *Horror* and *Sluggsy* are little more than common mobsters. **BORING.** Guntram Shatterhand makes a disappointing finale for Blofeld and his garden of death plan is random and idiotic.

**BEST BOND GIRL:** Vesper Lynd, Solitaire, Tiffany Case, Domino and Mary Goodnight all have distinct personalities, interesting backstories and match up well intellectually with Bond.

**WORST BOND GIRL:** Kissy Suzuki, for taking advantage of Bond's amnesia to keep him around and keeping her pregnancy by Bond a secret. Not cool.

**BEST NARRATOR:** Nearly all are fantastic, but Damian Lewis and Jason Isaacs in particular stand out to me. Both do an incredible job tackling multiple accents.

**WORST NARRATOR:** Martin Jarvis adopts an unfortunate, stereotypical Asian inflection while narrating dialogue for the Japanese characters in *You Only Live Twice*.

**OTHER RANDOM THOUGHTS:** I would love a companion book or story from occasional sidekick Felix Leiter's point of view; he is a very entertaining character providing much needed levity, and I always enjoyed it when he popped up. I grew very weary of Bond threatening to spank the women he interacted with, which happens more times than you'd expect. Thankfully, this trend peters out during the last half of the series as he slowly becomes more grounded and human.

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