



The Bank of Fear

David Ignatius

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"Sizzling...engrossing all the way." —*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

Hit men stalk computer analyst Lina Alwen and financial investigator Sam Hoffman in pursuit of the knowledge the pair may have regarding a late Iraqi dictator's billions. From London to Switzerland, and from Baghdad to the mysterious corners of the just-budding Internet, this spy thriller covers the map to uncover a world of corruption.

The Bank of Fear Details

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Author : David Ignatius

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From Reader Review The Bank of Fear for online ebook

Diogenes says

Post 9-11 thriller of Arab intrigue, endemic corruption, greed and police-state abuse. There's a James Bond quality that heightens the thrills and promotes sardonic grins. The author's intimate knowledge of the Arab world and the major players brings a realism that makes the plot, fantastic at times, quite believable.

Sophie says

Thanks to goodreads First Reads program for the free copy of this novel.

The Bank of Fear is your pretty standard spy-thriller novel, set mostly in London, and centered on Middle Eastern players and politics. There's lots and lots of money, murder, secrets, the usual.

For being 450 pages, this was really a quick read. It was easy to get into - and keep going. I also appreciated the level of information given relating to Middle Eastern politics and the computer hacking as well; Ignatius reached what - to me, at least - was a good balance between explaining enough for someone with a very modest background in the Middle East, without being too detailed or expository for the genre.

My gripe about halfway through this book was that that two main characters who have gotten tangled up in this really dangerous affair have apparently never seen a spy movie. Ever. Even though Lina knows exactly how dangerous her boss is, and Sam purportedly knows everyone in the Arab financial world - and his father was CIA - they continue to call each other on their regular phone lines, and even meet at her apartment, even after they know they're being watched. Dumb.

Also, the character focus felt unbalanced. To start with, it seemed that Lina and Sam would be even-ish protagonists, but as the story went on, Lina became the main character, and Sam was only a supporting role when he was needed. It seemed like his role wasn't fully fleshed out.

Anyway, an enjoyable read, and I look forward to going back to some of Ignatius' other novels.

Katie Robinson says

I thought this was a great book. The story involved CIA, various foreign countries, and a ton of money. It was easy to follow. This is the first book that I have read from him and I'm looking forward to reading more.

Halina Repp says

I read this book easily in about 3 days. I like that David did not use complicated names for his characters so I didn't have to trip over them. Guess I kept wanting Sam to be a hero but he always fell short. Lina on the other hand came through to save the day. I enjoyed the twists and turns through the banking system and am a

sucker for a happy ending.

I would recommend this book to all my mystery loving friends.

Thanks for the book!

Chris says

This was a First Reads win on Goodreads, so thanks go out to Goodreads and to the publisher (Norton).

I had some serious mixed feelings here, and had to remember that 3-stars = "liked it".

And I'd say that I liked it more than, I didn't like it. There were some issues that I didn't care for along the way, but for the most part I enjoyed the experience.

It was a bit slow going early on. As I was introduced to the characters, I wasn't impressed. Book smart they might be, but they couldn't distribute an ounce of common sense to the lot of them. They were so stupid, it was unrealistic. Unrealistic that they could BE that dumb, and unrealistic that they didn't die from their stupidity. Especially the main character, Sam Hoffman. How a financial investigator could move along at his steady pace of gaffes and blunders made it difficult for me to suspend belief. And I read fantasy as my primary genre. Wizards ain't got nothing on this guy's ability to not only survive, but make money at his chosen profession.

The author is a Washington Post journalist that has won awards, and is seen as an "expert" in the study of the Middle-East. Really? I had a hard time believing in any of the Arab characters either. For the most part, their actions and plots were about as convincing as a *Left Behind* novel.

But all of that said, I did find myself enjoying the story once I pushed past the annoying flaws in plot and character. I wouldn't go as far as to say I cared about the characters, but once the story really got going, it had me hooked. You know, how reality television will do if you sit there watching it long enough; you know it's stupid, but pretty soon you can't take your eyes off it.

In fairness, as the plot really got churning, a lot of the ridiculous fell aside. Or I got used to it. Anyway, there were lots of twists and turns, and it kept a brisk pace all the way to the end. I was actually surprised with some of the resolution at the end (probably not a surprise, considering). After struggling to make much progress in the first third of the book, I breezed right on through the rest of it. For that, I can appreciate the experience.

But if I ever met Sam Hoffman in real life, I'd probably have to punch him in the face.

Mickey Hoffman says

This book doesn't read as well as it must have when published because technology and the country of Iraq are different. The book describes Saddam Hussein being killed in sort of a family coup. Meanwhile, the money he squirreled away all over the globe comes up for grabs. There's involvement with various foreign

governments and of course the CIA. The main character didn't ring true to me. I never could quite figure out what he wanted out of life, if anything. The female lead is quite interesting. The scenes of torture in the book are stomach-turning.

I would read other books by the same author, but ones published more recently.

Jak60 says

This is Ignatius-light; it is not a bad book, none of his are, it's just that the prose lacks the intensity and the plot does not have the complexity of his best novels.

In some way, Ignatius departs from his typical approach, in so far that the political context in which the story takes places is much more fictitious, more removed from the historical reality than in his other books - to the point that the character of Saddam Hussein, always referred to as "the Ruler" and never by his actual name, ends his life in a totally fictional way. More than that, the Saddam assassination is turned into a big conspiracy involving his family, the PLO, the Saudis; a nice bunch, but who was pulling all the strings of this plan were the Americans! Yes, the CIA had been manoeuvring the whole game across the entire middle east theatre since the 50'... this is so much over the top, and so much non-Ignatius! So the whole plot becomes a long shot, and I found more than one situation rather unrealistic.

Equally, the analysis of the political background is less deep and accurate than in others of his books, it just scratches the surface of the Iraqi situation but it does not really provide any particular insight.

Moreover, the characters also remain at rather superficial level, I did not manage to get really involved in any of them.

So, all in all, an ok book but definitely not the best Ignatius.

Lyda Van Den Bos says

Spannende thriller! Aanrader!

Susan says

I received Bank of Fear through GoodReads Giveaways and am glad I did. It is about an American in London, his involvement with an Iraqi girl, and their eventual entanglement with various powerful and wealthy Arab men. The story was first published in 1995. All that has transpired since (both in the Middle East and in technological changes) made the story even more interesting to me. I was not familiar with David Ignatius before. I found his writing easy and absorbing, and who doesn't like a young, strong, defiant female protagonist?

David Ketelsen says

This is a well written and very engaging book but definitely not one of Ignatius's best.

I enjoyed the financial skullduggery and peculiar romantic relationship between the two protagonists, Sam

Hoffman and Lina Alwen. Unfortunately the book was originally published in 1994 and the backdrop involves a thinly disguised Saddam Hussein and what he might do with his money after Desert Storm. As a result this book reads more as an alternative history book than a contemporary novel. It's a shame because Ignatius is normally such a skilled writer.

E Rommel says

This is great novel. I was thrilled with the wonderful way the characters were connected. A network of corrupt and ruthless characters engaged in money laundering. As a Nigerian, the book reminded me of our past military heads of states and political leaders who engages in brazen corruption and money laundering. Though, the book was an interesting read and the fact that I tried to bring the characters to life, I was not at home with the London settings, especially the activities of the Arabs in London. This made me adrift.

Josh Ioelu says

+ 1/2 a star

Cade says

This book is definitely in the David Ignatius mold, and I found it well worth reading. There is suspense and intrigue told in a way that seems realistic instead of like something out of a Hollywood blockbuster. Compared to other David Ignatius books I've read, this one has a lot more physical action and interpersonal conflict/violence. This tends to make the book more suspenseful. However, this is at least partially offset by the fact that the main characters are really just involved for their own sake. The protagonists have their lives on the line, but it is only over money. There are no major geopolitical risks, and the "fate of nations" never hangs in the balance.

Bill says

A reprint of a twenty year old hardcover. While the technology described is dated the story is timeless, well plotted, and confirms David Ignatius as one of the finest thriller writers on the Middle East. Also, empowering an Iraqi woman fighting against a male dominated vicious regime during the 1990s was a bold move by the author--one that pays off wonderfully when juxtaposed to the weak male protagonist. A good read!

Kim says

An American, Sam Hoffman works as a private financial investigator in London. His company provides information to wealthy businessmen and corporations. When a Filipino cook begs Sam to investigate his

employer--Nasir Hammoud. The cook claims that his employer killed his wife. An Iraqi computer specialist Lina Alwan, is befriended to aid in his investigation. There are many twists and turns in this story. Although the book did not receive many good reviews, I enjoyed the book. I did not realize this was the 3rd book in a trilogy and would have enjoyed the book more.
