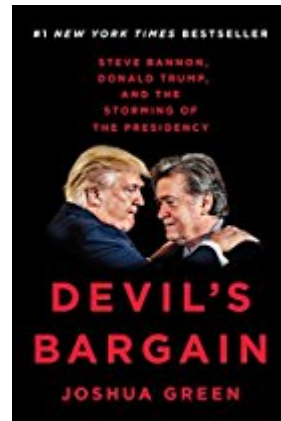


Ebook Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency

By Joshua Green



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The instant #1 New York Times bestseller. From the reporter who was there at the very beginning comes the revealing inside story of the partnership between Steve Bannon and Donald Trump—the key to understanding the rise of the alt-right, the fall of Hillary Clinton, and the hidden forces that drove the greatest upset in American political history. Based on dozens of interviews conducted over six years, Green spins the master narrative of the 2016 campaign from its origins in the far fringes of right-wing politics and reality television to its culmination inside Trump’s penthouse on election night. The shocking elevation of Bannon to head Trump’s flagging presidential campaign on August 17, 2016, hit political Washington like a thunderclap and seemed to signal the meltdown of the Republican Party. Bannon was a bomb-throwing pugilist who’d never run a campaign and was despised by Democrats and Republicans alike. Yet Bannon’s hard-edged ethno-nationalism and his elaborate, years-long plot to destroy Hillary Clinton paved the way for Trump’s unlikely victory. Trump became the avatar of a dark but powerful worldview that dominated the airwaves and spoke to voters whom others couldn’t see. Trump’s campaign was the final phase of a populist insurgency that had been building up in America for years, and Bannon, its inscrutable mastermind, believed it was the culmination of a hard-right global uprising that would change the world. Any study of Trump’s rise to the presidency is unavoidably a study of Bannon. Devil’s Bargain is a tour-de-force telling of the remarkable confluence of circumstances that decided the election, many of them orchestrated by Bannon and his allies, who really did plot a vast, right-wing conspiracy to stop Clinton. To understand Trump’s extraordinary rise and Clinton’s fall, you have to weave Trump’s story together with Bannon’s, or else it doesn’t make sense.

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Review "The first deeply insightful political narrative of the Trump era" —David Leonhardt, The New York Times "Indispensable." —Jeffrey Toobin, The New Yorker "Deeply reported and compulsively readable...Green is consistently interesting on the subject of Trump. But the real value of Devil's Bargain is the story it tells about Bannon, some of which has been previously reported (not least by Green himself) but never so well synthesized or explained as it is here." —Bret Stephens, The New York Times "Mr. Green is a talented reporter and a gifted storyteller. The anecdotes he records from the chaotic 2016 Trump campaign are both well chosen (they're there for thematic reasons, not as gratuitous gossip) and brilliantly told." —Wall Street Journal "You won't be able to put it down. I certainly couldn't, surrendering a weekend I should have rightly spent with the kids. I spent it instead with a 63-year-old nationalist whom Time magazine all but called the shadow President of the United States . . . Addictive." —Newsweek "Tremendous." —GQ "Vividly pulls back the curtain on the symbiotic relationship between two of America's most polarizing figures. . . . Green is nothing but prescient." —The Guardian About the Author "The first deeply insightful political narrative of the Trump era" - David Leonhardt, The New York Times "Deeply reported and compulsively readable...Green is consistently interesting on the subject of Trump. But the real value of Devil's Bargain is the story it tells about Bannon, some of which has been previously reported (not least by Green himself) but never so well synthesized or explained as it is here." —Bret Stephens, The New York Times "Mr. Green is a talented reporter and a gifted storyteller. The anecdotes he records from the chaotic 2016 Trump campaign are both well chosen (they're there for thematic reasons, not as gratuitous gossip) and brilliantly told." —Wall Street Journal "You won't be able to put it down. I certainly couldn't, surrendering a weekend I should have rightly spent with the kids. I spent it instead with a 63-year-old nationalist whom Time magazine all but called the shadow President of the United States . . . Addictive." —Newsweek "Vividly pulls back the curtain on the symbiotic relationship between two of America's most polarizing figures. . . . Green is nothing but prescient." —The Guardian Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. F***ing unbelievable, Steve Bannon thought, shaking his head in disgust as the "Breaking News" alert raced across the television screens in the Trump Tower war room. It was 7:22 p.m. on Election Night, the polls hadn't even closed, and yet here was CNN's Jim Acosta breathlessly touting a damning quote he'd pried out of an anonymous senior Trump adviser: "It will take a miracle for us to win." Bannon didn't have to guess at the culprit. He simply assumed it was Kellyanne Conway, Trump's campaign manager, and how the hell would she know? Conway was a pollster by trade, but she tested messaging, not horse race, and the campaign had cut her off weeks earlier because Trump preferred to see her spinning on TV. If Bannon cared to—and right now, he did not—he could have watched Acosta's full report and looked for the Tell. That's what always gave her away. Because Conway was the only woman on Trump's senior staff, reporters avoided using gender pronouns when quoting her anonymously, lest an errant "she" slip out and reveal their source. Instead, they employed the awkward but gender-neutral "this adviser" or "this person," and by the third or fourth reference what they were doing became pretty obvious. That was the Tell. Some of Trump's advisers had long ago caught on and joked about it. Sure enough, Acosta cited "a senior adviser from Donald Trump's inner circle," followed by a trifecta of "this adviser"s, with nary a "he" or a "she" to be heard. Even before he'd finished talking, CNN—Trump's obsession and bête noire—had billboarded the "take a miracle" quote in a banner that stretched across the screen. But Bannon had already

moved on. He could never fathom why people like Conway worked so hard to win goodwill from reporters (most of whom, he thought, were idiots with no earthly idea what was really going on) or why they cared so much about appearances. It took only a glance to see that Bannon himself cared not a whit for appearances—at least not his own. This was, in fact, one of his defining traits. He had spent most of his life donning the uniform of the various institutions to which he belonged: the cadet's uniform at Benedictine High School, the all-male Roman Catholic military school he and his brothers attended in Richmond, Virginia; the naval officer's starched whites during his eight-year stint aboard destroyers in the Pacific and the Persian Gulf; and the banker's expensive suits, a uniform of their own, which he'd worn during his tenure at Goldman Sachs. But once he made real money and cashed out, Bannon gleefully threw off the strictures of the working stiff and adopted a singular personal style: rumpled oxfords layered over multiple polo shirts, ratty cargo shorts, and flip-flops—a sartorial middle finger to the whole wide world. Even now, at sixty-three, having left a right-wing media empire a few months earlier to become Trump's chief campaign strategist, Bannon made only the tiniest concession to the Trump world's boardroom ethos by swapping the cargo shorts for cargo pants and tossing a blazer over his many layers of shirting. Although it was Election Night and television satellite trucks stretched for blocks around Trump Tower, Bannon hadn't bothered with a shave or a haircut, and he had a half dozen pens clipped to his shirt placket, like some bizarre military epaulet. "Steve needs to be introduced to soap and water," said Roger Stone, Trump's longtime political adviser. He looked for all the world like someone preparing to spend the night on a park bench. But Trump needed him. Practically alone among his advisers, Bannon had had an unshakable faith that the billionaire reality-TV star could prevail—and a plan to get him there. "It's gonna be ugly," Bannon would tell anyone who would listen during the closing weeks of the campaign. "But there's a path." *** In the days after the election, the world wondered: How could this happen? Many people still wonder. No shortage of scapegoats and malefactors were offered up by way of explanation: James Comey, the Russians, the media, "fake news," sexism—the list went on and on. Yet none was entirely satisfying, or big enough to encompass the scale of the shock, or capable of unwinding the sense of dislocation so many people felt when they awoke to the realization that something so seemingly unlikely—so utterly extreme—as Trump's election could happen in plain view of everyone, without anyone really seeing it coming. It was like the opening scene of a Hollywood thriller, the sudden jolt that makes you sit upright in your seat, and after which some remarkable, winding backstory is gradually revealed. But the revelation never arrived. Even now, there's a sense that some vital piece of the puzzle is missing. That piece is Steve Bannon. From Machiavelli to Karl Rove, politics has a rich history of the genius figure whose plots and intrigues on behalf of a ruler make him the hidden hand behind the throne, the wily strategist secretly guiding the nation's affairs. So familiar has this story become that it's a trope of American political journalism: if you're a presidential candidate without a brilliant strategist, the media will often take it upon themselves to anoint one you never knew you had. The strategists, aware of this narrative compulsion, openly jockey to win the position. Although he's been cast in the role, Bannon is no such figure— or in any event, he doesn't fit the typical mold any more than Trump fit the mold of "typical presidential candidate." What Bannon is instead is a brilliant ideologue from the outer fringe of American politics—and an opportunistic businessman—whose unlikely path happened to intersect with Trump's at precisely the right moment in history. For years, Bannon had been searching for a vessel for his populist-nationalist ideas, trying out and eventually discarding Tea Party politicians such as Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann. At the same time, he was building an elaborate machine designed to destroy the great enemy whose march to the White House posed the biggest threat to those ideas and to everyone whose beliefs hewed to the right of center: Hillary Clinton. In 1998, when Clinton first posited a "vast right-wing conspiracy" bent on ruining her and her husband, she was widely ridiculed. But she wasn't wrong. By the time she launched her 2016 campaign, Bannon was sitting at the nexus of a far-flung group of conspirators whose scope and reach Clinton and her campaign didn't fathom until far too late. At first, Bannon didn't understand that he'd found the figure he'd been looking for. Trump

wasn't a serious candidate and would never deign to let some Rove figure govern his behavior—that much was clear from the outset. But Bannon soon discovered that Trump's great personal force could knock down barriers that impeded other politicians. And Trump, for his part, seemed to recognize that Bannon alone could focus and channel his uncanny political intuition with striking success. Bannon didn't make Trump president the way Rove did George W. Bush—but Trump wouldn't be president if it weren't for Bannon. Together, their power and reach gave them strength and influence far beyond what either could have achieved on his own. Any study of Trump's rise to the presidency is therefore unavoidably a study of Bannon, too. It's a story Trump won't like, because he isn't always the central character. And because, contrary to his blustery assertions, his victory wasn't a landslide, didn't owe solely to the force of his personality or his business savvy, and happened only due to a remarkable confluence of circumstances. This confluence occurred in large part because Bannon had built a trap that snapped shut on Clinton, and the success of this, too, was an incredible long shot. In fact, the whole saga of Bannon is every bit as strange and unlikely as that of Trump. He's like an organism that could have grown and blossomed only under a precise and exacting set of conditions—a black orchid. This book is the backstory of how those conditions came to be—it's the part of the movie you haven't seen. To understand Trump's extraordinary rise, you have to go all the way back and begin with Steve Bannon, or else it doesn't make sense.

Customer Reviews Most helpful customer reviews 214 of 224 people found the following review helpful. I love that, while the author obviously doesn't share Bannon's ... By Buckeye lifer Couldn't put it down. I love that, while the author obviously doesn't share Bannon's worldview, to put it mildly, the book isn't polemical -- it gets out of the way of the story. And what a story. My goodness. I suspect that if you hate Trump you'll be horrified and entertained, and if you love Trump you'll be delighted and entertained, and that's very high praise. I didn't know that the wall wasn't Trump's idea; that's sort of ironic. 135 of 145 people found the following review helpful. A Timely and Credible Book - By Loyd Eskildson I dislike politically-focused books written by authors with a slant. This is not one of those. Instead, it is balanced and quite timely. Green characterizes Bannon as a brilliant ideologue from the outer-fringe of American politics, and an opportunistic businessman with a great distaste for Hillary. Green contends that DJT's being embarrassed at the 2011 White House Correspondent's Dinner by President Obama and Seth Meyers was the catalyst that put Trump on the path to the White House. Obama zeroed in on the birth-certificate controversy that Trump had endorsed, produced a copy several days prior to the dinner, and then joking proposed to also release a movie of his birth (a Disney jungle tiger cartoon film). Soon afterwards Trump met with a few long-time Clinton haters - one of whom was David Bossie. Bossie asked Bannon to provide informal counsel on a potential Trump presidential bid. Bannon didn't think Trump would run, but this didn't stop Bannon from imparting his hostility to illegal immigration and Hillary. Bannon had been a Naval officer during Carter's disastrous effort to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran. That disgusted Bannon, who went from being a Democrat like the rest of his family, to becoming a hard right Republican, avid Reagan fan, and Islamaphobe. He also realized that it would take forever for him to gain major influence as a Naval officer --> resigned to attend Harvard Business School, then join Goldman Sach's. Trump thought of running for New York governor in 2014, vs. Cuomo. Kellyann Conway put together a paper suggesting he'd do well, contrary to what the poll data actually showed. Meanwhile, Trump learned from his appearances that anti-immigration provided a strong position. At the time, Bannon was chairman of Breitbart news (lots of Clinton stories, also immigration - including the child migrant crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2014, killing any chance of immigration reform at the time, ISIS, race riots, and 'the collapse of traditional values - drawing about 21 million viewers/month), an alt-right site that would help clear out Trump's 16 Republican competitors. He'd taken that role after the site's founder (Andrew Breitbart, a former Matt Drudge apprentice) unexpectedly died in 2012. Bannon's biggest success to-date had been acquiring a stake in the 'Seinfeld' show. One of Bannon's biggest contribution to the Trump campaign was pitching the 'Clinton Cash' revelations (he'd helped nurture the book's writing) to the mainstream media. Bannon

then encouraged Trump to visit the U.S.-Mexico border, created a mutinous frenzy among house conservatives that led to Boehner's resignation, paid trackers to follow Anthony Weiner's Twitter account and eventually intercepted a crotch shot Weiner inadvertently had made public. In 2012 he became founding chairman of Government Accountability Institute, a nonpartisan research organization staffed with lawyers, data scientists, and forensic investigators that helped bring about the 'Clinton Cash' uproar. The focus is on providing rigorous, fact-based indictments against major politicians, then partnering with mainstream media outlets conservatives typically despise to disseminate those findings to the broadest audience. Bannon had previously learned that building stories on facts motivated professional investigative reporters, even though they might have been personally liberal. Their access to the liberal New York Times and Washington Post was seen as invaluable by Bannon. Prior conservative efforts to impugn Hillary (eg. House Oversight Chairman Dan Burton's portrayal of Vince Foster's 1993 suicide as a murder) were seen as killing conservatives' credibility and influence. GAI published an e-book 'Bush Bucks: How Public Service and Corporations Helped Make Jeb Rich' oo- Florida land deals, corporate board sinecures, and a seven-figure salary with Lehman Brothers. (He'd raked in nearly \$30 million in the eight years after leaving the governor's mansion.) In 1990. Bannon and a couple of Goldman colleagues launched Bannon & Co., an investment bank specializing in media. They used VHSs cassette sales and TV ratings to value intellectual property. Then, while serving as the go-between Westinghouse (seeking to unload Castle Rock Entertainment) and Ted Turner, Bannon took an ownership stake in five shows, including Seinfeld. . Hillary added to her problems by refusing to list foreign donors, or release her Wall Street speeches. Various people had been attacking the Clinton's for years, with limited success - Bannon's secret was sticking to what could be documented, and avoiding unnamed sources. Turns out that the set of characters donating to the Clinton Foundation was nothing one would want publicized. When Trump ran into the problem with his off-color comments about women, Bannon countered by having Bill Clinton's former rape accusers sit on the stage with Trump during a rally. Green ends by posing his sense of why Trump has had so many problems as President: 1)Trump assumed that Congress needed him; in fact, they have their own constituencies. 2)He ran against Republicans in general, Wall Street, and Paul Ryan - then adopted their agendas. 3)His 'agenda' is constantly changing. 126 of 137 people found the following review helpful. Epic tale of Trump's shocking win. By sam jacobson I could not put this down--the characters, the humor, the intensity. If you still don't understand how Trump became president against all odds , simply read this book. You may not like the folks you meet in Joshua Green's epic, but you will not soon forget them . See all 276 customer reviews...

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