

= Solo (Boyd novel) =

Solo is a James Bond continuation novel written by William Boyd . It was published in the UK by Jonathan Cape on 26 September 2013 in hardback , e @-@ book and audio editions , and in the US by HarperCollins on 8 October 2013 .

The plot centres on Bond 's mission to the civil war in the fictional country of Zanzarim ? a thinly veiled version of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War ? where he meets the local MI6 contact , Efua Blessing Ogilvy @-@ Grant , and a Rhodesian mercenary , Kobus Breed . After being shot by Ogilvy @-@ Grant , Bond tracks both people to Washington on a revenge mission , finally establishing that Breed is drug trafficking heroin into the US .

Boyd closely based his version of the Bond character on Fleming 's , and eschewed any of the film versions . The novel is set in 1969 ? six years after Fleming 's last work was set ? and Bond is 45 years old . Boyd was raised in Nigeria and used his experiences during the civil war to provide the location for the novel . He has been a Bond fan since his youth and , in preparation for writing the novel he read all the Bond stories in chronological order . It took 18 months to write the novel , with some friction between Boyd and the Fleming estate over the portrayal of Bond .

Solo received mixed reviews , with a number of critics pointing to the convoluted and unstimulating plot . Other critics saw the book as being equal with , or superior to , Fleming 's stronger novels . The book sold well , appearing in the top ten @-@ selling book lists in the UK .

= = Plot = =

After celebrating his 45th birthday alone at The Dorchester , Bond is sent to Zanzarim to bring a speedy end to the civil war in the country which has seen the delta region of the country split to form the Democratic Republic of Dahum . Before leaving for Africa , Bond visits Gabriel Adeka ? the rebel leader 's brother ? who runs AfriKIN , a London @-@ based charity who send aid to Dahumni children ; Gabriel tells Bond that he is not in contact with his brother Solomon , as the pair have fallen out .

On his arrival in Zanzarim , Bond is aided by a local agent who introduces herself as Efua Blessing Ogilvy @-@ Grant . The two travel from the capital city to the rebel enclave , but are attacked shortly before reaching their destination and taken captive by Kobus Breed , a mercenary assisting the rebels . The group are attacked on their return journey and Ogilvy @-@ Grant goes missing in the confusion , while Bond escapes .

Bond proceeds to the enclave , where he is met by Breed , who accepts Bond 's cover as a journalist . Bond meets Solomon Adeka and realises that the leader will shortly die of cancer : his mission to kill Adeka is needless . Bond sees supply flights of arms and equipment coming into the country , all funded by billionaire Hulbert Linck ; the aeroplanes all show the AfriKIN name on the fuselage . When Adeka dies a few days later , Bond tries to leave the country on one of the supply flights , but is confronted by Breed and Blessing , who both shoot him and leave him to die .

Bond is saved by a journalist he befriended and returns to the UK , where he spends time in a military hospital . After discharging himself , he decides to go on a revenge mission against Breed and Ogilvy @-@ Grant . Discovering AfriKIN has relocated to Washington DC , Bond travels to the US and tracks down both of them at the AfriKIN offices . While conducting surveillance against the company , Bond is briefly detained by Brigham Leiter ? nephew of Felix ? of the CIA , who explains Ogilvy @-@ Grant also works for the CIA .

Bond meets Ogilvy @-@ Grant , who assures him that she shot to wound him in order that Breed would not shoot them both . The following day Bond watches a mercy flight bringing in maimed and injured Zanzarimi children ; he dines alone and returns to his hotel to find that Breed has killed Ogilvy @-@ Grant .

Bond attacks the house where Breed is staying with the children , and incapacitates the mercenary , leaving him for dead . He establishes that the children are being used as drug mules to smuggle raw heroin into the country and locates Solomon Adeka , who had not been killed in Africa , but been turned into a heroin addict in order to control him . Adeka 's older brother had been killed in

London , ensuring Solomon became chief of the tribe whose lands held massive amounts of oil : as he was an addict , these rights were signed away in favour of Hulbert Linck . Linck was killed by the CIA during the raid on the house .

= = Characters and themes = =

The central character of the novel is James Bond , the fictional MI6 agent created by Ian Fleming . The author , William Boyd modelled his version of the character on Fleming 's version , which Boyd identified as being very different from the version seen in the films . Solo is set in 1969 ? six years after Fleming 's last work was set ? and the novel begins with Bond celebrating his 45th birthday . Boyd altered aspects of the character , making him " an older , wiser Bond " ; while having coffee on the King 's Road , Bond 's " advancing age lends an undertone of poignancy to his almost detached observation of the bra @-@ less , mini @-@ skirted cavalcade " . Boyd 's version of Bond is " more impulsive , less emotionally guarded , and also more sadistic " than Fleming 's , and he has the facility for extreme violence : Bond 's " casual sexism has gone , to be replaced by a flaring lust that teeters on the edge of being out of control , and has to be reined in " .

The primary antagonist of the novel is Kobus Breed , a mercenary with a disfigured face and a permanently weeping eye who had previously served with the Rhodesian Light Infantry in Matabeleland ; Olen Steinhauer , writing in The New York Times thinks the scarred villain to be " an obligatory nod toward the requirements of the Bond formula " . Some writers are unimpressed with Breed ; Robert Crampton of The Sunday Times thinks that the character " feels more like a henchman than a proper power @-@ crazed villain . He has menace , but no ambition . You wait for the evil genius to turn up ? but he never does " , while David Sexton in the London Evening Standard thinks the character " lacks charisma " , and David Connnett in the Sunday Express considers him " a colourless character in comparison with factual and fictional counterparts " . The journalist Geoffrey Wansell in the Daily Mail disagreed and Breed , along with a second villain , millionaire Hulbert Linck , were as strong as some of Fleming 's villains ; Steinhauer also thought that the novel 's villains were realistic , " motivated by simple greed yet clever enough to be legitimately dangerous " . There are two main female characters in Solo ? a horror film actress , Bryce Fitzjohn and the local MI6 contact Efua Blessing Ogilvy @-@ Grant ; rather like many of Fleming 's female characters , both are " determined females who are not to be patronised by Bond " .

The main theme of the novel is revenge . Bond is stopped from leaving Zanzarim by Breed and subsequently shot and badly wounded by Ogilvy @-@ Grant ; he tracks down the pair to Washington and attempts to get his revenge from the pair . According to the Sunday Business Post , " this is where the author comes into his own , along with our hero , and it 's all taken up a notch . " Associated with the revenge is treachery : it is a subject that recurred through Fleming 's works , and Boyd uses it to provide a motive for Bond 's mission of revenge .

= = Background = =

On 31 March 2012 Boyd announced at the Oxford Literary Festival that he was working on a novel set in Africa . Boyd had lived in Nigeria ? " where his mother was a teacher and his father a doctor " ? during the Nigerian Civil War , which " had a profound effect on him . " On 11 April 2012 the Fleming estate announced that Boyd would write a Bond novel to follow Jeffery Deaver 's 2011 novel Carte Blanche . The civil war , over the attempted secession by Biafra from Nigeria , was the location for Solo , although Boyd renamed this as the fictional Zanzarim .

On 15 April 2013 Boyd announced the book 's title at the London Book Fair . The announcement was part of the " Author of the Day " event at the English Pen Literary Café . Selected press were invited to the event and were given a brief opportunity to question Boyd about the book 's title . Boyd believes the short title is " strikingly apt " for the novel . He remarked that " titles are very important " to him , and that as soon as he " wrote down Solo on a sheet of paper I saw its potential . Not only did it fit the theme of the novel perfectly , it 's also a great punchy word , instantly and internationally

comprehensible , graphically alluring and , as an extra bonus , it 's strangely Bondian in the sense that we might be subliminally aware of the ' 00 ' of ' 007 ' lurking just behind those juxtaposed O 's of SOLO " .

For background Boyd read all the Bond stories in chronological order ; and had researched Fleming and the literary Bond 's background . Boyd was a child when his father introduced him to Fleming 's works . As a result , Boyd found himself also becoming fascinated with Ian Fleming . He told reporters that he was interested in Bond as a human being . " Bond is not just a superhero . He has flaws , he has weaknesses , he makes mistakes That was Fleming 's genius . " The novel is set in 1969 when Bond is 45 ; Boyd intentionally picked the year , further adding that " there are no gimmicks , it 's a real spy story . " Boyd criticised how the filmmakers have portrayed Bond onscreen as a " cartoon character " ; he also believes that Bond should be " troubled and a massive boozier . " The novel reflects Boyd 's view , where Bond " drinks enough to float a boat . He drinks so much you wonder that he ever has the time or inclination to do anything else " .

The writing process took 18 months and Boyd was required to run synopses and drafts through the Fleming estate , a process he described as " benevolent surveillance " . The process was not always smooth , and the author had a number of arguments with the estate over the portrayal of Bond : " they were concerned about Bond being seen as an assassin , but I would argue Bond is sent on an assassination mission in at least four Fleming books " , with further issues over Bond 's relationship with M.

Boyd described writing the book as " tremendous fun " and a " once in a lifetime challenge " , but admitted that he had to take it " really , really seriously . " After completing the writing process , Boyd commented that he did not " attempt to write as pastiche Fleming novel ... it 's my own voice ; I 'm dealing with things and subjects I am interested in ... it is very much my novel ; it just features these characters invented by Fleming .

= = Release and reception = =

Solo was launched on 25 September 2013 at the Dorchester Hotel . Seven copies of the book were signed by Boyd , were collected by seven Jensen Interceptors and were then flown by British Airways to Amsterdam , Edinburgh , Zurich , Los Angeles , Delhi , Cape Town and Sydney . The book was released into the shops on 26 September 2013 ; the hardcover book was published by Jonathan Cape and was 336 pages long and cost £ 18 @. @ 99 . An e @-@ book edition was also released , as was an audio book , narrated by Dominic West . The hardcover edition was released in the US by HarperCollins on 8 October 2013 for \$ 26 @. @ 99 .

The jacket was designed by Suzanne Dean , the creative director at Random House . The book 's dust jacket featured die @-@ cut bullet holes , while the hardcover binding featured " burn marks " under the holes . Dean commented that she took inspiration from the 1960s in her design , and was influenced by the graphic designers Saul Bass , Paul Rand and Alvin Lustig .

= = = Reviews = = =

The novel sold nearly 9 @, @ 000 copies in its first week , although that was 48 % down on Deaver 's 2011 novel Carte Blanche , and even further behind Sebastian Faulks 's 2008 book Devil May Care . By 10 October the London Evening Standard listed the books as number one on the London 's Bestsellers list , and in the two weeks of 5 and 12 October 2013 was shown as number 3 in the UK fiction best sellers list , dropping to fourth place on 19 October 2013 .

Solo received mixed reviews . A number of reviewers , including Robert McCrum in The Guardian , David Mills in The Sunday Times and Olen Steinhauer in The New York Times , all considered the book to be equal with , or superior to , Fleming 's stronger novels . Steinhauer considered that it was Boyd 's description of the Zanzarim civil war that gave the novel its " greatest power " , but he also thought there was a " neat metafictional trick " by connecting Bond 's wartime experiences with 30 Assault Unit ? a British Commando unit developed by Fleming . The connection was also picked up by Geoffrey Wansell , reviewing for the Daily Mail , who saw the tribute paid to Fleming as a "

masterstroke " , in a novel that he thought " brings back the real Bond , triumphantly " . Writing in The Guardian , Richard Williams saw Boyd using some similar phrasing of Fleming 's , while also including " gestures of independence " with his own ideas . The result , Williams considers , is a story that " entertains far more than it exasperates " .

Much of the criticism about the novel focuses on the plot ; Jon Stock , writing in The Daily Telegraph , thought that although Boyd used details in the same way Fleming did that would appeal to Bond aficionados , the book was based on " a curiously unstimulating plot " , which was also " convoluted " . The National 's Nick Leech also noted the use of details , but considered that this led to " a pedantic , meandering narrative " which led to " an underwhelming finale " . Writing in the London Evening Standard , David Sexton agreed , calling the book a " rather inattentive novel " , that was a " lame outing " in the Bond canon . David Connett was another who saw flaws in the novel , calling it " anaemic stuff " , although it was " far superior to the last effort to breathe life into a Bond novel by Jeffery Deaver " .

= = Adaptations = =

On 30 September 2013 Solo was the chosen work for Book at Bedtime on BBC Radio 4 . The work was read by Paterson Joseph ; the book was adapted by Libby Spurrier and was broadcast in ten episodes .