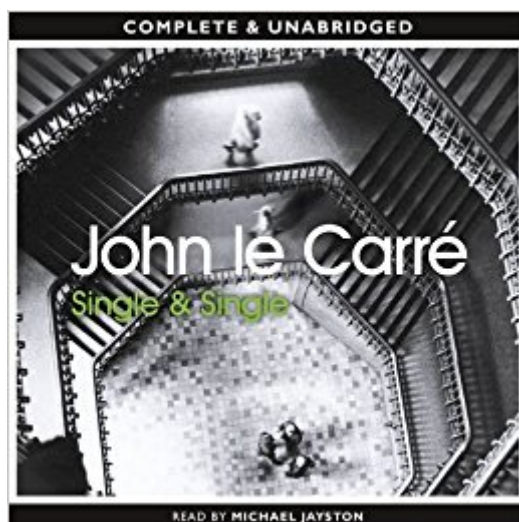


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Single & Single



Synopsis

From *Single & Single*'s "tour de force opening" (Kirkus Reviews), Le Carré masterfully establishes a sequence of events whose connections are mysterious, complex and compelling. He fashions a story of corrupt liaisons between criminal syndicates in the new Russian states and the legitimate world of Western finance. He also intimately portrays two families: one Russian, the other English; one trading illicit goods, the other laundering the profits; one betrayed by a son-in-law, the other betrayed-and redeemed-by a son. An enthralling, multilayered tale by an author at the height of his creative powers, *Single & Single* is Le Carré's finest novel in years. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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[Authors, A-Z > \(L \) > Le Carre, John](#) #11019 in [Books > Books on CD > General](#) #11696

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Customer Reviews

On a Turkish hillside, ex-Communist mobsters shatter the skull of a corrupt English lawyer. In a sleepy English village, the authorities ask a lonely children's magician how come £5,000,030 sterling just got anonymously deposited in his baby daughter's bank account. With machine-like logic and soulful literary magic, John Le Carré links these two events in *Single & Single*, a stay-up-all-night thriller. The magician is Oliver Single, the tormented son of Tiger Single, a rogue banker the Financial Times calls "the knight errant of Gorbachev's New East." In fact, Tiger is sinking his fangs into that crucial one-tenth of world trade free of pesky regulations--illegal drugs--and secretly selling donated disaster-relief blood. Mum's the word in Tiger's mob: as the lawyer's executioner notes, "Is not convenient to hear that American capitalists are bleeding poor nations literally." Oliver comes in from the cold to help spymaster Brock track Tiger down. That £30

sterling signified Judas's silver, but Oliver yearns to save Tiger's life, too. Le Carré wizardly juggles dozens of characters in a zigzag, globetrotting plot. You-are-there realism, narrative drive, pitch-perfect dialog--why can't movies be this good? Like lightning, le Carré's metaphors both dazzle and blazingly illuminate the world. Ex-spy le Carré was there when the Berlin Wall went up, and his spy craft is legendarily realistic. His female spy/love interest is less so--the opposite of a femme fatale, she might be termed a "deus sex machina." But the book's crucial father-son relationship is quite real, because, like the irresistible villain of *A Perfect Spy*, Tiger is based on le Carré's own con-man dad. The cold war is over, but le Carré is hot. And he will endure. --Tim Appelo --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Le Carré reads his new thriller with the voice of a master of the genre, gamely throwing himself into long passages of the dialogue-driven plot. He jumps right into the complex story, set in locations that shift back and forth from Turkey to England, with little set-up explanation. The sense of atmosphere is rich, the polished, descriptive scenes exquisite. However, perhaps due to the abridgment process, a listener is left playing catch-up throughout the tape, struggling to discern what's really going on with the characters. At heart, this is a story of a struggle between father and son, shadowy financier Tiger Single and children's magician Oliver Hawthorne. Tiger has deserted the family to consort with Russian mobsters, and Oliver, having betrayed his father once, now must fight to save his life. They're joined by a complex financial thread that provides the central framework for the international intrigue propelling the action. As audio, the listening experience is frustrating because the material sounds so wonderful, yet it's difficult to keep a grip on what's happening. Simultaneous release with the Scribner hardcover. (Mar.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's kind of hard to describe this book. It's supposed to be some kind of espionage novel, but set in the days after the end of all-out communism in Russia, when nearly everything begins to come under the control of various organized crime groups. We are most concerned here with the British firm of Single & Single, a big name in international finance. Apparently their main business is money laundering. And the Russian (in this case mostly Georgian) criminal organization they have become involved with has gotten the idea Single's has betrayed them, which leads to the opening scene of the book, the murder of one of Single's lawyers. From there the story is a little hard to follow. We are introduced to a harmless-seeming clown (literally "he does balloon animals at kids' birthday parties and the like") who eventually turns out to be

Oliver Single, son of Tiger Single, founder of Single & Single. There is a long segment of mostly flashbacks explaining his apparently rather brief career with the firm, which has led eventually to his confessing everything to Nathaniel Brock, a senior official for the British Customs office, which is in turn the eventual cause of his going into hiding as a clown. Brock's primary interest appears to be not so much in bringing down Single or messing directly in the Russian criminal organizations as in tracking down and weeding out corrupt British officials of all kinds who are facilitating all this. Eventually Oliver and Brock get together, and Brock tells Oliver what they know about the murder and that Tiger Single has disappeared. Apparently, he sends Oliver on a mission to find out the details of what has happened. The more Oliver discovers, the more concerned he becomes that his father is in danger. He finally decides to take off on his own to find his father, but is caught by the female agent Brock has paired him with for his investigations. Fortunately for Oliver, she slips off with him, and they make their way to the secret valley in Georgia where the crime family's hideout is. Although things appear to be mostly cleared up at the end, it seemed to me that there were still a lot of unresolved issues. Not sure how much of this is setting the stage for the next book (I believe there is at least one sequel to this one) and how much is just leaving you to wonder about what else is going on.

John le Carre established his well-deserved fame in the early 1960s on the basis of the espionage fiction that reflected his career in Britain's Security Service (MI5) and Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). Over the five decades since then, he has returned again and again to the world of spies. But to stay relevant in the years since the end of the Cold War, he has also ventured into other areas such as corporate crime, terrorism, and high-stakes finance. *Single & Single*, published in 1999, explores the dark recesses of international money-laundering. Enter the "Russian mob." In the 1990s, once the Berlin Wall was torn down and the Soviet Union fell apart, Russia entered into a period with the trappings of democracy. The change did not run deep, however. Effective control of Russian society shifted from a Communist hierarchy to criminal gangs widely known as "mafias." There was no "Russian mob" as such. (However, that term may apply to Coney Island and it might even be an apt description of Vladimir Putin and his cronies.) With connections to Boris Yeltsin's government, the most entrepreneurial of the mafias made their fortunes by snapping up formerly state-owned companies at bargain-basement rates through privatization. Le Carre writes about one such well-connected gang in *Single & Single*. The novel's title is the name of a wealthy and powerful London-based financial services firm. As we learn early in the story, the Single fortune is built on

money-laundering for Russian criminals. The firm's founder, Tiger Single, is ruthless. But his son, Oliver, gradually develops a conscience after he joins the company. Oliver's agreement to serve as an informant for Her Majesty's Customs Service is the linchpin on which the novel hangs. International criminals and corrupt financiers in a tale of betrayal The story opens with the brutal execution of Tiger's attorney on a field in Western Turkey. That murder reflects the Russian gang's mistaken belief that Tiger has been stealing from them. Meanwhile, Oliver's relationship has deepened with Brock, the veteran senior Customs agent who is handling him. To gather evidence against the Russians and his father, and to identify the corrupt British police officers who have sold out to Tiger, Oliver becomes deeply involved in dealings with the Russian gangsters and their families. The scene shifts from Turkey to England to Armenia, where the gangsters are based. The tale is fast-moving, suspenseful, and shocking. If there's a moral to this story, it's that it's dangerous to get involved with money-laundering for criminals. But some of us knew that already, right?

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