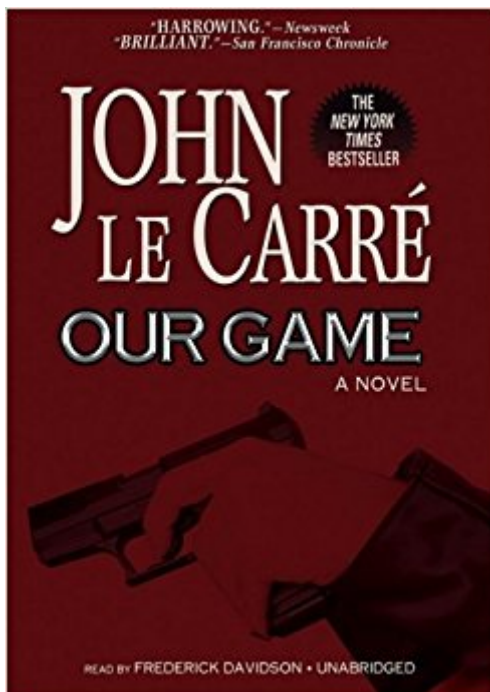


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# Our Game



## Synopsis

With the Cold War fought and won, British spymaster Tim Cranmer accepts early retirement to rural England and a new life with his alluring young mistress, Emma. But when both Emma and Cranmer's star double agent and lifelong rival Larry Pettifer disappear, Cranmer is suddenly on the run. In a frantic journey across Europe and into the lawless, battered landscapes of Moscow and southern Russia, he searches for his brilliant protege while desperately eluding his former colleagues, in order to save whatever of his life he has left...

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Le Carre continues to stay ahead of the news, and his latest novel set in the post-Soviet world is smashingly up-to-date, involving nothing less than a desperate breakaway attempt by Chechnya and the murky international dealings that accompany it. His narrator is Tim Cranmer, former secret agent turned winemaker in rural Somerset. Tim's great espionage success was the recruiting of brilliant gadfly Larry Pettifer, who ended up not only stealing Tim's beautiful mistress, the enigmatic Emma, but also disappearing, apparently with a fortune lifted from Russian banks to aid the rebels through shady arms deals. Now the police are looking for Larry, the "Office" is convinced Cranmer must be in on his schemes, and, using all his old spycraft, he sets out to find Larry and Emma. To warn them? To win Emma back? To find out what really happened? To redeem what he increasingly sees as his own shabby, evasive life? The author creates a brilliantly complex character in Tim Cranmer; but such is his skill as a narrator—as always, le Carre's dialogue and scene-setting are incomparable—that it is impossible not to empathize strongly with him, and as a

result to feel profound ambivalence about Emma and Larry and their many betrayals. The surprising and bitter ending seems to resolve nothing, leaving only a harsh taste of the Western betrayal of ideals of freedom. Le Carre is moving into much tougher territory than his old smooth, sophisticated spy yarns, and readers must become accustomed to increasing ambiguities. Our Game entirely lacks the dazzling action sequences and intricate plotting of *The Night Manager*, but it cuts even more deeply into the dour contemporary world. 350,000 first printing; BOMC main selection; Random House audio book. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

YA? Another tautly written, well-researched spy novel from LeCarre. The Cold War is over. The Russians are our friends. Consequently, spy handler Tim "Timbo" Cranmer and his specially groomed double agent, Larry Pettifer, are put out to pasture. Tim, a somewhat stolid and unimaginative civil-servant type, has removed himself and his much younger mistress, Emma, to his late uncle's vineyard in Somerset, while the idealistic Larry is uncomfortably ensconced as a professor at Bath University. Then Larry and Emma disappear. They have apparently run off together. They have also apparently relieved the Russians of more than 30 million pounds. The British police, guessing at Tim's previous occupation, and the Russians, knowing it, suspect Tim's active participation in, or at least knowledge of, the scheme. All parties concerned attempt to force him to reveal the whereabouts of the fugitives, which he honestly does not know. He does, however, still possess some of the skills of his former profession, and in a suspenseful journey through England, France, and finally Russia, he tracks down his friends while eluding his followers. In the process, readers learn much about the dissident Russian regions and some pre-and post-Stalinist history. An engrossing, exciting spy story. ?Susan H. Woodcock, King's Park Library, Burke, VA Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

At the peak of his game, nobody writing espionage novels can match John le Carre. However, like anyone, he can't always operate with all cylinders firing. The proof of that lies in *Our Game*, first published in 1995. Though the novel is worth reading for what it reveals about life inside Britain's intelligence establishment, it falls far short of most of his other works, especially 1963's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, his first novel and still probably his best known. *Our Game* is slow to get off the ground and proves tedious for extended periods before the final chapters, when the most dramatic

action takes place. The narrator, Timothy (Tim) Cranmer, is a retired senior officer in what is either MI5 (the UK's domestic Security Service) or MI6 (Secret intelligence Service). It's hard to tell which, because the same agency appears to operate both inside and outside British borders. (Le Carre worked for both in the 1950s and 60s, before he turned to writing fiction.) In the context of this book, the distinction doesn't seem to mean much. The novel is about what in the U.S. we might call "inside baseball." A central character who talks too much Cranmer is content to make wine at the vineyard he inherited from a wealthy uncle, where he lives with his much younger mistress, Emma, a free spirited musician and composer. The peaceful world they inhabit is upended when Cranmer's star double agent, Dr. Lawrence Pettifer, disappears from his post at Bath University and is nowhere to be found. Though Cranmer narrates the story and plays a central role within it, it's Pettifer who sucks up the reader's attention. A brilliant and charming man, Pettifer who is frighteningly articulate, witty, compulsively talkative, and quick on the draw, even in the most stressful circumstances. Perhaps there are Britons who talk like this. I've never met one.

British espionage at the end of the Cold War

The novel unfolds in a series of flashbacks interspersed with present-tense narrative. The action takes place in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the USSR. It quickly becomes apparent that Cranmer is suspected both by his former employers and by the British police of colluding with Pettifer in an elaborate scheme to embezzle a huge sum of money from the Russian embassy. Though neither the police nor the intelligence agency is aware of it, Emma has also disappeared, probably with Pettifer and Cranmer's pursuit of the truth about what happened is motivated more by his obsessive love for her than by his concern for his long-time agent, with whom he has had what might be termed a love-hate relationship.

About John le Carre

It's well known that John le Carre is the pen name of David Cornwell, son of a notorious con man. Wikipedia cites a biographer of the author to this effect:

"His father, Ronnie, made and lost his fortune a number of times due to elaborate confidence tricks and schemes which landed him in prison on at least one occasion. This was one of the factors that led to le Carré's fascination with secrets.

• He has written nearly two dozen novels, all but two of them about British espionage in the Cold War era.

I've read almost every Le Carre novel. This is an older one I'd missed. It's interesting in that it depicts what could happen in the real world, and probably already has. But like the real world, this

book has no grand climax, only a foreseeable, tragic and sad ending. Interesting in that it appears very possible someone could subvert an institutional mission to support a private agenda, and with ease. But it moves slowly, and with a little thought, no outstanding reveal. You can pass on this one.

There are no bad books by David Cromwell, known to the world through the prolific list of novels signed with his nom de plume, John le Carré. He's the master. Development of characters, interweaving of plot line, the atmosphere of the component elements, are invariably flawless, made more dramatic, perhaps heart-breaking, in the inevitability of events. He documented the Cold War and populated it with indelible personalities. Since the fall of the Soviet Union he has documented the post-Cold War. It's not pretty. What awaits us down the line? We'll just have to look for le Carré's next novel to find out.

Le Carre's somewhat obsessive theme in so much of his writing is betrayal. This theme, like Horace Rumpole's "golden thread," perhaps arises from the very nature of espionage, but Le Carre focuses here on personal betrayal. In this novel the betrayal is of the main character himself, a new and insightful treatment of the theme. Yes, his Emma betrays him by taking off with his charismatic "joe" Larry, and Larry betrays him by seducing her ("You stole my life. I stole your woman.") But Cranmer (historical significance in his name?) comes to see that he has lived a life that is not a life at all. He has betrayed himself. In the end, he redeems himself. A beautifully written and complex novel by a mature talent.

Interesting concept, but takes a very long time to pay off.....and then it's with a flutter not a boom. Not Le Carre's best by a long shot. I struggled to get through the book.

This book is a great read and another amazing story by an amazing author. There were parts that drag but otherwise a wonderful book. Thus shouldn't be your first Le Carre but add it to your list and read it

What begins with interesting, well defined, characters and relationships devolves into a fairly incomprehensible fever dream of difficult to follow actions and long passages of minimal consequence with a cast of poorly defined, free-floating villains. Not up to Le Carre's usually well written espionage dramas.

I am missing George Smiley. This book is a lot like the last season of Moonlighting. All sorts of crazy things happen and none of it very interesting. I skipped many pages because they were just dull. I only gave it three stars because, well it's le Carre.

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