



## **Seven Days In May**

*Fletcher Knebel , Charles W. Bailey II*

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"Gentleman Jim" Scott was a brilliant magnetic general. Like a lot of people, he believed the President was ruining the country. Unlike anyone else, he had the power to do something about it, something unprecedented and terrifying. Colonel "Jiggs" Casey was the marine who accidentally stumbled onto the plot. At first he refused to believe it; then he risked his life and career to inform the President. Jordan Lyman was President of the United States. By the time he was finally able to convince himself of the appalling truth, he had only seven days left to stop a brilliant, seemingly irresistible military plot to seize control of the government of the United States.

Seven Days in May is a political thriller novel written by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey II and published in 1962. It was made into a motion picture in 1964, with a screenplay by Rod Serling, directed by John Frankenheimer, and starring Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas.

The story is said to have been influenced by the right-wing anti-Communist political activities of General Edwin A. Walker after he resigned from the military. The author, Knebel, got the idea for the book after interviewing then-Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay.

## **Seven Days In May Details**

Date : Published January 1st 1962 by Harper & Row (NY)

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Author : Fletcher Knebel , Charles W. Bailey II

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## From Reader Review Seven Days In May for online ebook

### **Ed says**

Published in 1962, SEVEN DAYS IN MAY is a novel of its era. The dire threat of nuclear annihilation at the height of the Cold War permeates the story (I won't summarize the plot here). And yet SEVEN DAYS could also well be ripped from today's headlines. Moreover it gets bonus points for the shout out of my hometown: Warrenton, VA. The suspense is well-paced and not the overheated melodrama many thrillers now use. The U.S. President snagged in a frightening web of betrayal and conspiracy finds out how lonely it really is at the top. He's perhaps the most intriguing character. Sure, the patches of dialogue sound a bit corny, but the prose is robust. Everybody smoking (the president prefers a pipe) anywhere they please is amusing. A movie was made from the novel, and I believe I've seen parts. Definitely check out SEVEN DAYS if you liked WEST WING (I did) on TV.

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### **Donald McEntee says**

An interesting story, well-told. Believable detail, very little cardboard, not too preachy.

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### **Bob Mayer says**

I was giving a keynote at the Santa Barbara Writers Conference a few years back and brought this book and movie up. I asked how many people in the audience of 500 had read it or watched the movie.

Zero.

I was stunned.

If you don't think it could happen, think again.

This is a classic book and the movie was very well done. Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas. The way Douglas uncovers the plot from just a few clues, and then his heroism in going to the President is classic.

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### **C. Scott says**

A really propulsive page turner and a fine thriller. I couldn't resist reading this after just finishing "How to Stage a Military Coup." It was kismet! I must say, knowing what I know after reading that book: poor operational security really sabotaged the joint chiefs' coup d'etat here.

The word is that Kennedy read this book and encouraged his producer friends in Hollywood to make it into a movie because he was slightly paranoid that such a thing might actually come to pass. Of course in this book the intelligence agencies don't have anything to do with the putsch. There's the rub. No wonder JFK never saw that bullet in Dealey Plaza coming.

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### **Trevor Filoramo says**

Among the greatest pieces of political fiction ever written. It's a must a read of the genre and dare I say something all folks in the U.S ought to read.

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### **Joe Keefhaver says**

I first read this book when I was in high school, and that was a long time ago! If you can find a copy of this 1962 novel about a military plot to overthrow the U.S. President, I would encourage everyone to read it. It's a real thriller, one that I had a hard time putting down.

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### **Carolyn Wyatt says**

Reading this book, which was originally published in the 1960s, was interesting in the context of today's political landscape. It was written in a time when people treated the president with integrity and respect, instead of treating him and speaking to him like he's a vagabond on welfare.

The book was good and well-written but I had a selfish reaction to it. I was constantly comparing the world of the 1960s (the book is set in 1974, but that was the future at the time) to the world of today. People in the press were different, mostly because of the difference in the news cycle; people in the government were different and were shown to have respect for each other and their offices; and when one of the characters is found to be having an affair, there is actual debate over whether to destroy the man by publicizing it. That would certainly not happen today in our world of exotic mistresses and wide stances.

I did enjoy the book, even though it's not really my favorite genre. There's just so much to learn about our current lives by looking into the past couple of generations.

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### **Will says**

An engaging thriller, and much more credible than the likes THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. But I can't help being irked by the assumption (much more rife then) that it is the evilrightwingers under the bed we need to be afraid of.

Note: A scheduled ad for the movie version was to have the splash line "IMPEACH, HELL! THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO GET RID OF HIM." The MPAA Advertising Code, then administered by my father, squelched this. Fortunately for the studio, as it was to be run on November 23rd, 1963

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### **Flint says**

Six word book review: You thought your week was stressful?

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### **Bettie? says**

Well, you see, a certain charismatic narcissistic military general feels that he could make a better leader so he steals from a govt fund, and with this secret force tucked far into the desert, feels that he could mount a military coup.

I can see just why Rachel Maddow recommended this on her show last week, what with the shadow govt op-ed in NYT, and the archaic language and gothic terminology leading us to think\* that it was penned by an elderly military sort with pseudo-evangelical ties, deeply goppered, and with no regrets for any of the foul things that have been achieved during the co-conspirator in chief's tenure so far.

\*Or someone in the White House is trying to frame someone else. I do remember the house witch was bragging about how she can, and does, send trumpy tweets, even inserting spelling errors. She also intimated that she studies then mimics the style of others.

TRMS also recommended *Night of Camp David* by this same author.

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### **Russell says**

The movie is a long-time favorite, but I had never read the book until now. The screenplay follows the book closely (Fletcher Knebel is listed as co-author of the script), and so the same tight, tense progression of events you see in the film is also there in the novel. One of the few books I truly found hard to put down!

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### **Rosa says**

2 1/2 stars. After the months I put into reading this, it was disappointing. No real twists, very middle-of-the-road politically, and I was let down by the treachery of the Russians. The movie looks better—it's the only part of Frankenheimer's "paranoid trilogy" I have yet to see. I can't wait. But the book was a letdown.

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### **Donald Kirch says**

Look at the news...this book IS prophetic! This will happen. It's only a matter of...WHEN.

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### **Jeffrey Keeten says**

**He's not the enemy. Scott, the Joint Chiefs, even the very emotional, very illogical lunatic fringe: they're not the enemy. The enemy's an age - a nuclear age. It happens to have killed man's faith in his**

**ability to influence what happens to him. And out of this comes a sickness, and out of sickness a frustration, a feeling of impotence, helplessness, weakness. And from this, this desperation, we look for a champion in red, white, and blue. Every now and then a man on a white horse rides by, and we appoint him to be our personal god for the duration. For some men it was a Senator McCarthy, for others it was a General Walker, and now it's a General Scott.**

Democratic presidents have found themselves caught between the enemy abroad and the right wing elements at home.

Most recently we saw General Stanley A. McChrystal be arrogantly critical of the current administration while he was commanding operations in Afghanistan. I understand in their world they become **GODS**. They are controlling the fates of thousands of men and millions of dollars of equipment. They feel like the fate of their nation is resting on their shoulders and their shoulders alone. It is not that big of a leap for them to feel that they know what is best for their nation and that the civilian commander, their boss, really isn't qualified to be making the big decisions to keep the nation safe.

### **Did I say something wrong?**

President John F. Kennedy read this book and thought it was a real possibility that the scenario discussed in this book could happen. The book came out in 1962 and a year later Kennedy was shot and killed in Dallas. The poignant part of the book is the fact that the writers assumed that Kennedy would serve out two terms. They set the book in 1974 and LBJ is only referred to **ONCE** in the whole book.

Kennedy had his own run in with a general when Edwin Walker was critical of Eleanor Roosevelt and President Truman in print. Walker was recalled to Washington and he was relieved of his command by the President. Walker was not finished with his place in history. In April of 1963 a bullet hit a casement window near where he was sitting in his house. Marina Oswald later testified that her husband, Lee Harvey Oswald, had targeted Walker for his outspoken conservative views and that he left a letter stating his intentions to her in case he was caught. I haven't researched that event enough to have an opinion on whether Oswald actually pulled the trigger that sent that bullet in Walker's direction.

Speaking of President Truman he had his own famous showdown with a very popular general. Douglas "I have returned." MacArthur disagreed publicly with Truman's policies regarding China and was relieved of his command.

### **General Douglas MacArthur**

In the book *Seven Days in May* Democratic President Jordan Lyman has signed a treaty with the Soviets for nuclear disarmament that proves to be very unpopular with his constituency. His approval rating falls to a dismal 29%. The dissension from the military is contentious, but as in all command decisions once the decisions is made the military is supposed to put aside their personal feelings and follow the directives of their civilian commander in chief.

Colonel Martin "Jiggs" Casey, from his position in the Pentagon starts to unravel some inconsistencies in what he knows and what he should know. As he puts together the pieces of what has been hidden from him he discovers that the constitution is under threat and a potential cabal is in the wind for a military coup. His boss General James Scott, a dynamic powerful figure not only in the military, but also with the Republican party is at the center of the conspiracy. Jiggs Casey is in an impossible situation with information that requires him to go outside his command structure; and yet, he possess no solid proof to prove his claims.

### **Kirk Douglas plays Jiggs Casey and Burt Lancaster plays James Scott in the movie released in 1964**

There are so many interesting scenes in the book, but as President Lyman becomes more and more convinced that Casey is correct in his assumptions of the facts, he mentally shuffles through his friends and allies and discovers how small a group of men he can actually trust in his own administration. He dispatches this ragtag batch of trustworthy friends around the world to find the proof he needs to head off this very real threat to his administration. The cat and mouse of the book is deftly handled by Knebel and Bailey. I felt the tension as missteps lead the administration to the brink of disaster.

This book is not only well written, but is an important commentary on the state of the nation in 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis proved the metal of President Kennedy despite the detractors that felt he was soft on Russian excursions. The right wing seems to insist that Democratic presidents are weak on defense and yet President Wilson managed WW1, FDR was a powerful figure in the defense of the nation in WW2, and President Truman made the tough decision, right or wrong, to drop the bombs that ended WW2. I believe that the current president proved his ability to make tough decisions when he gave the order to shoot the Somalian pirates and when he made the decision for the excursion into Pakistan to get Osama Bin Laden. We are all vulnerable to extremists domestic and foreign. The president is elected by the people and any time any faction decides to circumvent the constitution for political reasons we are in danger of never regaining what so many have fought so hard to protect. Our national fears show up in our literature and are as important, in my opinion more important, to understanding our past as nonfiction historical books. Highly Recommended!! Thanks JIM for the recommendation.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>  
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

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### **Christian says**

Just finished reading "Seven Days in May," a political thriller written in 1962 about an attempt to overthrow a President who many see as weak and mentally unstable and whose dealings with Russia threaten to push the US to the brink of nuclear war. Ya know, fiction.

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