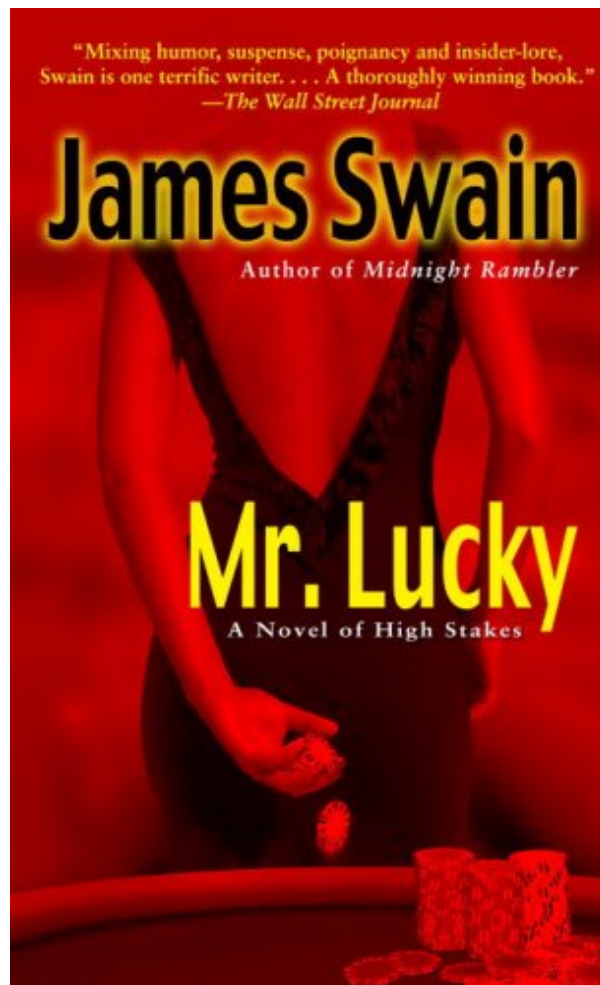


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(TONY VALENTINE NOVELS (PAPERBACK))  
BY JAMES SWAIN**



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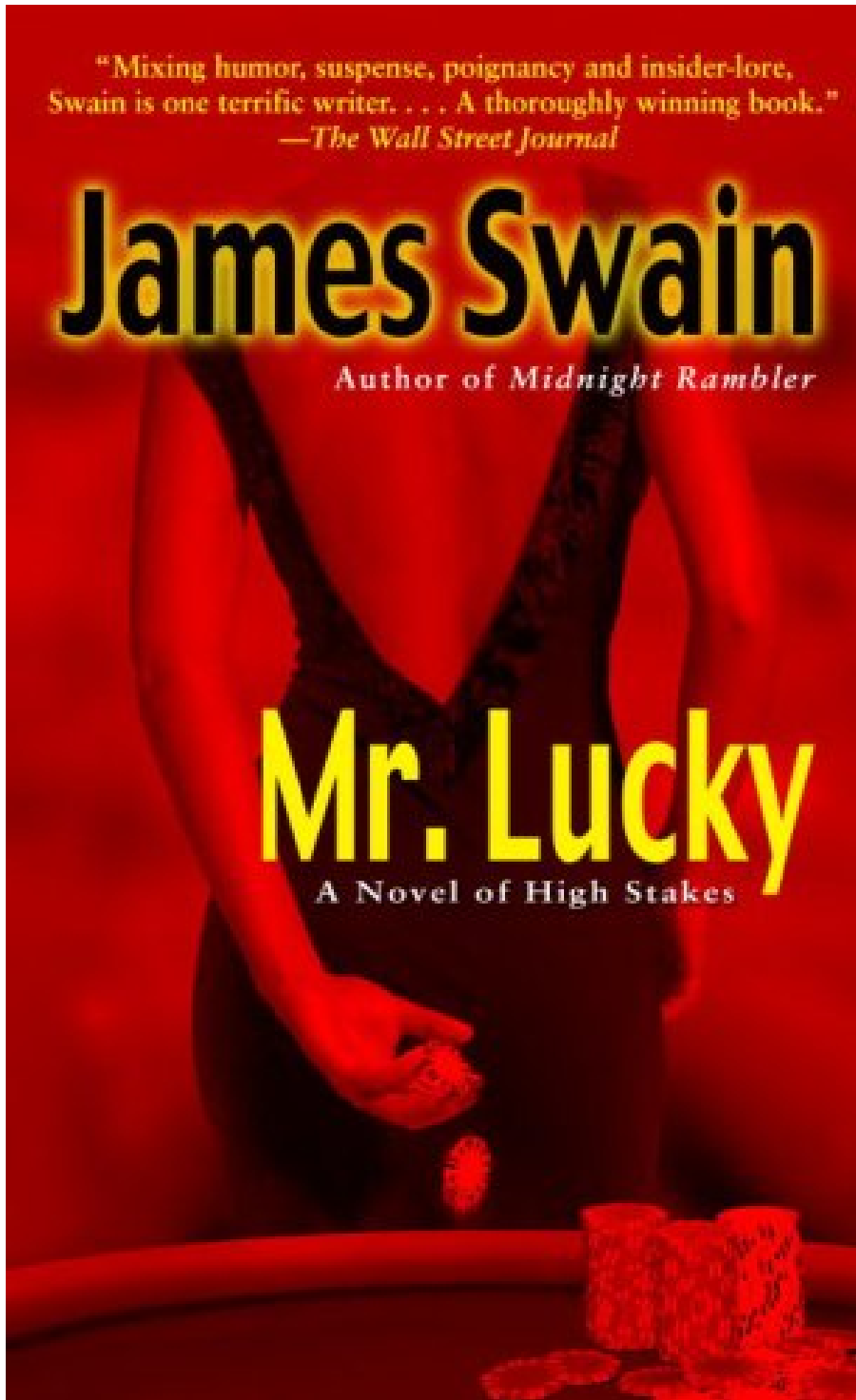
"Mixing humor, suspense, poignancy and insider-lore,  
Swain is one terrific writer. . . . A thoroughly winning book."  
—*The Wall Street Journal*

# James Swain

*Author of Midnight Rambler*

## Mr. Lucky

A Novel of High Stakes



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Tony Valentine made his living and his name as a cop in Atlantic City—and is now known worldwide for his ability to spot the kinds of scams, grifts, and rip-offs that cost casinos billions every year. A man with a biting wit who drives a '92 Honda, Tony is low-profile, old-school, and has seen it all—until he meets the luckiest man on earth.

Ricky Smith was once a small-town loser. Then he went to Las Vegas, jumped out the window of a burning hotel, lived to tell the tale, and tore up the Strip on an incredible winning streak. Ricky didn't just win at one slot machine or table game. He won at blackjack, roulette, and craps, and then beat the pants off the world's greatest poker player. Tony knows that goofy, loudmouthed Ricky Smith—or anyone else, for that matter—couldn't possibly be that fortunate. But when “Mr. Lucky” returns home to the little town of Slippery Rock, North Carolina, he keeps on winning everything from a horse race to a \$50,000 lottery.

Hired by a desperate casino, Tony starts to pry into Ricky's past, his friends, and the strange little town that is benefiting from Ricky's fame and fortune. Unfortunately for Tony, his cover is blown when he is forced to reveal a trick he has up his own sleeve: a pocket Glock he can shoot with laser-like precision. Suddenly, two men are dead, the cops are on Tony's tail, and the investigation explodes in violence—putting the lives of Tony's son and his young family in danger.

For years, Tony's son Gerry has dueled with his own criminal impulses. Now, the Ricky Smith case has lured Gerry through the gates of temptation and into a murderous confrontation with the Dixie Mafia. With Tony stuck on the slippery slope of Slippery Rock and Gerry fighting for his life, the Valentines are finding out just how bad good luck can get.

Against a neon-tinted backdrop of adrenaline rushes, hard crashes, big money, and high-wire tension, the inimitable James Swain has set his best Tony Valentine novel yet: a funny, furious ride with an astounding array of crooks, marks, and one killer scam.

- Sales Rank: #1110397 in Books
- Brand: Ballantine Books
- Published on: 2007-08-28
- Released on: 2007-08-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.90" h x 1.10" w x 4.15" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 432 pages

## Features

- Great product!

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Bet on It!

By Gary Griffiths

James Swain's "Mr. Lucky" is a cleverly written, highly entertaining mystery that grabs attention from the first page and doesn't let go. Ricky Smith is the perpetual loser who uncannily strikes it rich, not just once but repeatedly, cleaning up in Vegas at Black Jack, craps, roulette, and even poker, taking a Vegas casino for a cool one-million in a single crazy night. But Smith's luck doesn't stop, as he picks a \$50-grand scratch-off sweepstakes ticket and wins the annual charity raffle in hometown Slippery Rock, North Carolina. Suspecting they've been swindled, the casino hires Tony Valentine, former Atlantic City casino cop and expert in gambling scams and cons. Swain, who in real life is in fact an authority in the ways casinos can be swindled, spins a fascinating story that is as revealing as it is fun. Swain's prose is refreshing free of self-importance, breezing through the pages with an unencumbered confidence and dark humor that is easy to take. Put your feet up, sit back and enjoy Swain's guided tour through Vegas casinos and Mississippi river boat gambling barges, of hookers and Carolina hillbillies and redneck thugs, while the cagey Tony Valentine unravels "Mr. Lucky's" sudden streak of good fortune. Fiction at its finest, this was my first James Swain/Tony Valentine novel - it surely won't be my last.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

This is a Winner!!

By John R. Linnell

This was my first experience with Mr. Swain's writing and his central character, Tony Valentine. It won't be my last. In fact I have already ordered all of his previous novels and if that isn't an indication of how talented this writer is as a story teller, than I don't know what is. Mr. Lucky is a book you read just for it's sheer entertainment value. Ricky Smith, a loser all of his life, has just won \$20,000 gambling in Las Vegas. He has brought a georgeous babe up to his room to celebrate. She has her own ideas of celebration and tries to slip him a Mickey which he catches her at. In the midst of throwing her out of his room, he discovers the hotel on the Vegas strip is on fire. There is no escape for Ricky except to jump from his balcony. His luck continues and he survives the fall and then goes on one of the most remarkable gambling streaks that has ever been seen in Las Vegas. It is almost too good to be true, which is exactly what the casino owners in Vegas believe and his million or so dollars in winnings are held up pending an investigation. Enter Tony Valentine, owner of Grift Sense, a gambling consulting company and one of the most knowledgeable men on the face of the earth concerning scams that people try to perpetrate on casinos. Tony sets out to try and explain how such a streak of luck is a con and while he is doing it, Ricky continues his streak winning a lottery drawing and picking three winners in a horse race to show his luck is still holding.

Checking Ricky out takes Tony to Slippery Rock, NC, Ricky's sleepy home town and it takes his son on a trip to Mississippi where Ricky has bested one of the top poker players in the world in a game of Texas Hold 'Em. Their investigations follow their own courses as they probe deeper into how one man can be so lucky and that is all you really need to know right now, except to say that you will get an education concerning the darker side of the gambling industry and be totally engrossed in the story and it's many characters until at last the truth is discovered.



I bought this book on a hunch that I would like it based on the reviews I had seen. That was a lucky on my part and you can get it on it too. It's a winner!!

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Best of Series

By Charles J. Marr

In series novels there comes a time when the writer either makes or breaks. This novel is IT and if you have been following the Tony Valentine series and are considering this book - BUY IT. This is fast paced, action, wit, and just enough of the "Gizmo" (dishonest gambling) to keep you reading all night.

The dual plot (Tony and Jerry) is well developed and could be a little more interrelated, but Jerry finally becomes more than a cardboard cut out. In this novel he is in contact with his father learning the family casino detective trade by way of trial and error and with some long distance help from dad while Tony is concerned with the main plot. Enough is said in other reviews concerning the role of "Mr. Lucky" and it is a shame to tell much, but the implications of big cheating is big money and bigger schemes and Swain plays this well.

The added attraction in this novel is the consideration, not in any preaching fashion, but reflectively of the moral and ethical implications of actions: is it proper to simply cut an addicted gambler loose, what is the role of the community in developing a gambling culture, what harm comes to innocents? And in a modern society, how does all this lead to violence? Swain does not preach, but like Tony he knows cause and effect. Come to think of it, logical analysis is very much in the center of his writing.

See all 55 customer reviews...

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