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# Catch Me If You Can: The True Story Of A Real Fake



*Par Frank Abagnale, Stan Redding  
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**Description :** Description du produitFrank W. Abagnale was one of the most daring con men, forgers, and imposters in history. By the age of 21, Abagnale had copiloted a Pan Am jet, masqueraded as a hospital supervisor, practiced law without a license, passed as a college professor, and cashed over \$2.5 million in forged checks.

Prsentation de l'diteurI stole every nickel and blew it on fine threads, luxurious lodgings, fantastic foxes and other sensual goodies. I partied in every capital in Europe and basked on all the world's most famous

beaches'. Frank W Abagnale, alias Frank Williams, Robert Conrad, Frank Adams and Ringo Monjo, was one of the most daring con men, forgers, imposters and escape artists in history. In his brief but notorious career, Abagnale donned a pilot's uniform and co-piloted a Pan Am jet, masqueraded as a member of hospital management, practised law without a licence, passed himself off as a college sociology professor, and cashed over \$2.5 million in forged checks all before he was twenty-one. Known by the police of twenty-six foreign countries and all fifty states as 'The Skywayman', Abagnale lived a sumptuous life on the run - until the law caught up with him. Now recognised as the nation's leading authority on financial foul play, Abagnale is a charming rogue whose hilarious, stranger-than-fiction international escapades and ingenious escapes - including one from an aeroplane - make CATCH ME IF YOU CAN an irresistible tale of deceit..com

When this true-crime story first appeared in 1980, it made the New York Times bestseller list within weeks. Two decades later, it's being rereleased in conjunction with a film version produced by DreamWorks. In the space of five years, Frank Abagnale passed \$2.5 million in fraudulent checks in every state and 26 foreign countries. He did it by pioneering implausible and brazen scams, such as impersonating a Pan Am pilot (puddle jumping around the world in the cockpit, even taking over the controls). He also played the role of a pediatrician and faked his way into the position of temporary resident supervisor at a hospital in Georgia. Posing as a lawyer, he conned his way into a position in a state attorney general's office, and he taught a semester of college-level sociology with a purloined degree from Columbia University. The kicker is, he was actually a teenage high school dropout. Now an authority on counterfeiting and secure documents, Abagnale tells of his years of impersonations, swindles, and felonies with humor and the kind of confidence that enabled him to pull off his poseur performances. "Modesty is not one of my virtues. At the time, virtue was not one of my virtues," he writes. In fact, he did it all for his overactive libido--he needed money and status to woo the girls. He also loved a challenge and the ego boost that came with playing important men. What's not disclosed in this highly engaging tale is that Abagnale was released from prison after five years on the condition that he help the government write fraud-prevention programs. So, if you're planning to pick up some tips from this highly detailed manifesto on paperhanging, be warned: this master has already foiled you. --Lesley Reed Extrait

1THE FLEDGLING MAN'S ALTER EGO is nothing more than his favorite image of himself. The mirror in my room in the Windsor Hotel in Paris reflected my favorite image of me--a darkly handsome young airline pilot, smooth-skinned, bull-shouldered and immaculately groomed. Modesty is not one of my virtues. At the time, virtue was not one of my virtues. Satisfied with my appearance, I picked up my bag, left the room and two minutes later was standing in front of the cashier's cage. "Good morning, Captain," said the cashier in warm tones. The markings on my uniform identified me as a first officer, a co-pilot, but the French are like that. They tend to overestimate everything save their women, wine and art. I signed the hotel bill she slid across the counter, started to turn away, then wheeled back, taking a payroll check from the inside pocket of my jacket. "Oh, can you cash this for me? Your Paris night life nearly wiped me out and it'll be another week before I'm home." I smiled ruefully. She picked up the Pan American World Airways check and looked at the amount. "I'm sure we can, Captain, but I must get the manager to approve a check this large," she said. She stepped into an office behind her and was back in a moment, displaying a pleased smile. She handed me the check to endorse. "I assume you want American dollars?" she asked, and without waiting for my reply counted out \$786.73 in Yankee currency and coin. I pushed back two \$50 bills. "I would appreciate it if you would take care of the necessary people, since I was so careless," I said, smiling. She beamed. "Of course, Captain. You are very kind," she said. "Have a safe flight and please come back to see us." I took a cab to Orly, instructing the driver to let me off at the TWA entrance. I by-passed the TWA ticket counter in the lobby and presented my FAA license and Pan Am ID card to the TWA operations officer. He checked his manifest. "Okay, First Officer Frank Williams, deadheading to Rome. Gotcha. Fill this out, please." He handed me the familiar pink form for nonrevenue passengers and I penned in the pertinent data. I picked up my bag and walked to the customs gate marked "crew members only." I started to heft my bag to the counter top but the inspector, a wizened old man with a wispy mustache, recognized me and waved me through. A young boy fell in beside me as I walked to the plane, gazing with unabashed admiration at my uniform with its burnished gold stripes and other adornments. "You the pilot?" he asked. He was English from his accent. "Nah, just a passenger like you," I replied. "I fly for Pan Am." "You fly 707s?" I shook my head. "Used to," I said. "Right now I'm on DC-8s." I like kids. This one reminded me of myself a few years past. An attractive blond stewardess met me as I stepped aboard and helped me to stow my gear in the crew's luggage bin. "We've got a full load this trip, Mr. Williams," she said. "You beat out two other guys for the jump seat. I'll be serving the cabin." "Just milk

for me," I said. "And don't worry about that if you get busy. Hitchhikers aren't entitled to anything more than the ride." I ducked into the cabin. The pilot, co-pilot and flight engineer were making their pre-takeoff equipment and instrument check but they paused courteously at my entrance. "Hi, Frank Williams, Pan Am, and don't let me interrupt you," I said. "Gary Giles," said the pilot, sticking out his hand. He nodded toward the other two men. "Bill Austin, number two, and Jim Wright. Good to have you with us." I shook hands with the other two airmen and dropped into the jump seat, leaving them to their work. We were airborne within twenty minutes. Giles took the 707 up to 30,000 feet, checked his instruments, cleared with the Orly tower and then uncoiled himself from his seat. He appraised me with casual thoroughness and then indicated his chair. "Why don't you fly this bird for a while, Frank," he said. "I'll go back and mingle with the paying passengers." His offer was a courtesy gesture sometimes accorded a deadheading pilot from a competing airline. I dropped my cap on the cabin floor and slid into the command seat, very much aware that I had been handed custody of 140 lives, my own included. Austin, who had taken the controls when Giles vacated his seat, surrendered them to me. "You got it, Captain," he said, grinning. I promptly put the giant jet on automatic pilot and hoped to hell the gadget worked, because I couldn't fly a kite. I wasn't a Pan Am pilot or any other kind of pilot. I was an impostor, one of the most wanted criminals on four continents, and at the moment I was doing my thing, putting a super hype on some nice people. I WAS A MILLIONAIRE twice over and half again before I was twenty-one. I stole every nickel of it and blew the bulk of the bundle on fine threads, gourmet foods, luxurious lodgings, fantastic foxes, fine wheels and other sensual goodies. I partied in every capital in Europe, basked on all the famous beaches and good-timed it in South America, the South Seas, the Orient and the more palatable portions of Africa. It wasn't altogether a relaxing life. I didn't exactly keep my finger on the panic button, but I put a lot of mileage on my running shoes. I made a lot of exits through side doors, down fire escapes or over rooftops. I abandoned more wardrobes in the course of five years than most men acquire in a lifetime. I was slipperier than a buttered escargot. Oddly enough, I never felt like a criminal. I was one, of course, and I was aware of the fact. I've been described by authorities and news reporters as one of this century's clever-est bum-check passers, flimflam artists and crooks, a con man of Academy Award caliber. I was a swindler and poseur of astonishing ability. I sometimes astonished myself with some of my impersonations and shenanigans, but I never at any time deluded myself. I was always aware that I was Frank Abagnale, Jr., that I was a check swindler and a faker, and if and when I were caught I wasn't going to win any Oscars. I was going to jail. I was right, too. I did time in a French poky, served a stint in a Swedish slammer and cleansed myself of all my American sins in the Petersburg, Virginia, federal jug. While in the last prison, I voluntarily subjected myself to a psychological evaluation by a University of Virginia criminologist-psychiatrist. He spent two years giving me various written and oral tests, using truth-serum injections and polygraph examinations on various occasions. The shrink concluded that I had a very low criminal threshold. In other words, I had no business being a crook in the first place. One of the New York cops who'd worked hardest to catch me read the report and snorted. "This head doctor's gotta be kiddin' us," he scoffed. "This phony rips off several hundred banks, hustles half the hotels in the world for everything but the sheets, screws every airline in the skies, including most of their stewardesses, passes enough bad checks to paper the walls of the Pentagon, runs his own goddamned colleges and universities, makes half the cops in twenty countries look like dumb asses while he's stealing over \$2 million, and he has a low criminal threshold? What the hell would he have done if he'd had a high criminal threshold, looted Fort Knox?" The detective confronted me with the paper. We had become amiable adversaries. "You conned this shrink, didn't you, Frank?" I told him I'd answered every question asked me as truthfully as possible, that I'd completed every test given me as honestly as I could. I didn't convince him. "Nah," he said. "You can fool these feds, but you can't fool me. You conned this couch turkey." He shook his head. "You'd con your own father, Frank." I already had. My father was the mark for the first score I ever made. Dad possessed the one trait necessary in the perfect pigeon, blind trust, and I plucked him for \$3,400. I was only fifteen at the time. I was born and spent my first sixteen years in New York's Bronxville. I was the third of four children and my dad's namesake. If I wanted to lay down a baby con, I could say I was the product of a broken home, for Mom and Dad separated when I was twelve. But I'd only be bum-rapping my parents. The person most hurt by the separation and subsequent divorce was Dad. He was really hung up on Mom. My mother, Paulette Abagnale, is a French-Algerian beauty whom Dad met and married during his World War II army service in Oran. Mom was only fifteen at the time, and Dad was twenty-eight, and while the difference in ages didn't seem to matter at the time, I've always felt it had an influence on the breakup of their marriage. Dad opened his own business in New York City after his

discharge from the army, a stationery store at Fortieth and Madison Avenue called Gramercy's. He was very successful. We lived in a big, luxurious home and if we weren't fabulously wealthy, we were certainly affluent. My brothers, my sister and I never wanted for anything during our early years. A kid is often the last to know when there's serious trouble between his parents. I know that's true in my case and I don't think my siblings were any more aware than I. We thought Mom was content to be a housewife and mother and she was, up to a point. But Dad was more than just a successful businessman. He was also very active in politics, one of the Republican wheels in the Bronx precincts. He was a member and past president of the New York Athletic Club, and he spent a lot of his time at the club with both business and political cronies. Dad was also an avid salt-water fisherman. He was always flying off to Puerto Rico, Kingston, Be...