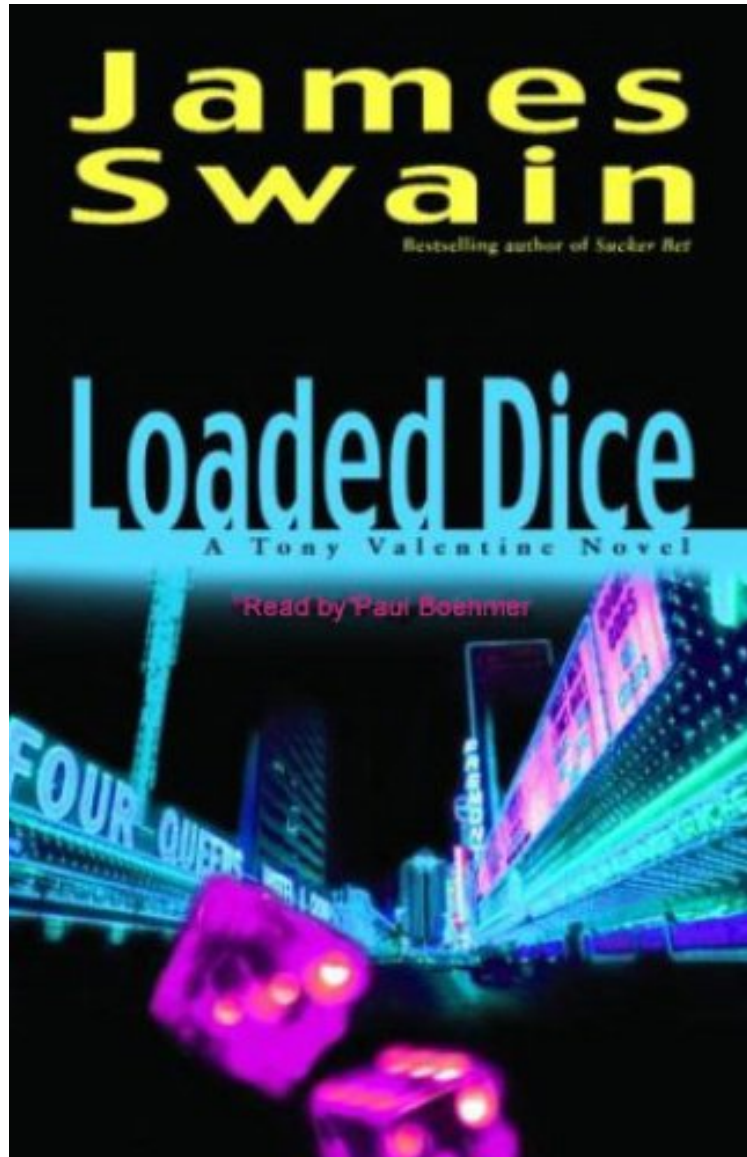


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## Loaded Dice

*James Swain*

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#106287 in Audible 2004-06-09 Format: Unabridged Original language: English Running time: 532 minutes | File size: 55.Mb

**James Swain : Loaded Dice** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Loaded Dice:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. FIRST-CLASS LAS VEGAS CASINO THRILLER By Possum-Bread Tony Valentine is probably the greatest detective when it comes to spotting gambling cheaters. A retired cop, Tony now works as a gaming consultant in Florida who is retained by casinos across the country to identify grifters

and the imaginative methods they use. In "Loaded Dice" he travels to Las Vegas to demonstrate a new computerized cheating device to casino execs and to locate his son who went missing while attending a class on card counting. Once in Vegas another casino owner, one of Valentine's friends, pleads for help to figure out how con artists are cheating at his blackjack tables before his casino goes under. Smack dab in the middle of the scam is a beautiful woman who reminds Tony of his late wife and attempts to lead him off the trail. In the meantime, Gerry is still missing and Valentine is frantically trying to find him and save his friend's casino from bankruptcy. There are lots of twists and turns in this thriller and the pages fly by quickly. James Swain's writing style is full of energy and draws the reader into the story. I am not a gambler, but I still found Swain's technique of describing the casino operations and the scams perpetrated by cheaters to be interesting and entertaining. Swain is great at giving his characters life and it's easy to start believing they really exist. The book is jam-packed with drama and suspense, but Swain still manages to add humor to his characters and makes it as fun as it is thrilling. And finally, he gives Valentine and his son Gerry emotional depth. There is an underlying theme of hope and forgiveness between them and of getting a second chance in life. "Loaded Dice" is a superbly upbeat and engaging novel. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone looking for a mystery or an action thriller. But I warn you... reading this novel will turn you into a James Swain fan!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By Michael Andriolo  
Another great book in the series. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Valentine Back in Vegas  
By Kara J. Jorges  
Retired cop turned casino consultant Tony Valentine is back in Vegas on a job, and searching for his screw-up son Gerry, when he spies a woman bearing a strong resemblance to his deceased wife getting ready to jump off her balcony. Tony races away from a meeting with three high-buck casino bosses and to the aid of Lucy Price, who's feeling suicidal after her \$25,000 winnings are stolen. Of course, this is all just part of a bigger scam happening at the Acropolis Casino next door, an old-style Vegas joint complete with statues of its owner's ex-wives out front. Nick Nicopolis and Valentine go back, so Valentine readily agrees to help catch the scammers, who are led once again by the legendary Frank Fontaine, who Valentine has tangled with before. Much more is at stake, however, when Gerry Valentine teams up with a couple guys from card counting school who are up to no good. Ripping off casinos is only a part of the evil schemes his new companions are up to, and soon Gerry is in so deep he has no one but the old man to turn to. While not as much fun as Swain's last effort, and relying a bit heavily on a cast of warmed-over characters from his first novel, this is nonetheless another entertaining tale in the Tony Valentine saga. We get a few more peeks into the characters, but I could have used a tad more, since Valentine's last novel was so good.

For ex-cop Tony Valentine, life in balmy Florida provides little RR. In fact, he's in demand now more than ever. Armed with a special grift sense, Valentine can spot card cheats and even bigger game whose sole purpose on earth is to relieve a casino of its cash. But when his son, who was going to card-counting school, goes missing, Valentine jets to Las Vegas. Once in town, he is pressed into service and lands inside a treacherous game with higher stakes than he has ever encountered before. There's a new casino in town, aptly named Sin, the largest on The Strip: three thousand guest rooms and a gambling floor as big as an airport terminal. The owners of Sin want Valentine to show them how the scams are done. But these powerful men harbor ulterior motives: They want to use their newfound skills to put a rival casino out of business. Sin's competition is the Acropolis, run by Valentine's longtime pal. Nick taps Tony to figure out how an amateur won \$50,000 at his blackjack tables. But the small job is full of landmines. For starters, the suspect bears a strong resemblance to his late wife. What's more, Valentine's son is still M.I.A. Upping the ante, a dead stripper is found with Valentine's calling card and her grief-stricken boyfriend is vowing revenge. Yet in a city where barracudas wear pinstripes, time seems motionless even while it flies, and reality and illusion shift depending on the neon light, a greater threat maneuvers through the streets: an all-new breed of criminal with an agenda propelled by fury that will shake not just Valentine, but the city of Las Vegas.

From Publishers Weekly  
Swain's fourth Tony Valentine novel (after 2003's Sucker Bet) starts out on a wacky, breezy note, but the horror of a threatened terrorist attack that develops in a subplot jars in a tale centered on the seedy world of gambling and more mundane crimes like (non-mass-) murder and robbery. Tony Valentine, a retired Atlantic City cop who helps gambling casinos catch swindlers, travels to Las Vegas to show three casino owners how blackjack players use a new high-tech device to cheat. He's also checking up on his feckless son Gerry, in town to learn about illegal card-counting so he can join Tony's business. But Tony's three clients have also hired Frank Fontaine, a world-class card sharp and Tony's longtime enemy, who has FBI connections to run a scam that will close a casino owned by Tony's friend Nick Nicopolis. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Gerry, two new foreign friends have links to al Qaeda. An expert on casino swindles, the author packs his books with mind-boggling cons and scams, how to do them and stop them, along with entertaining dialogue and vivid characters, notably the strong, sympathetic Tony. No doubt many readers will be attracted to the timely terrorist element, but those expecting another fast-paced gambling romp may be disappointed to see Tony sidetracked. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Booklist  
Swain's series starring freelance casino consultant Tony Valentine has quickly established itself as one of the freshest, most entertaining hard-boiled comedies to risk setting up camp in Elmore

Leonard country. In this fourth entry in the series, Valentine is in Las Vegas, on the trail of his wayward son, Gerry, who has gone AWOL from card-counting school. Mixing work with parental responsibility, Tony also agrees to help maverick casino owner Nick Nicocropolis (see Grift Sense, 2001) prevent two rival owners from putting him out of business. There's a slightly over-the-top terrorist angle, too, but if Swain is guilty of overstuffing his plot, he recovers nicely with another delicious helping of insider dope on how casinos work and how cheaters cheat. There's also plenty of snappy, Leonard-inspired banter and more charming cell-phone byplay between Tony and his devoted office manager, Mabel, the indefatigable Mrs. Money Penny of the series. Great fun with just the right amount of edge--sort of like a night at the blackjack table. Bill Ott Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Leaves us wanting more of this pulsing, buoyant book. Los Angeles Times Loaded Dice, like all Tony Valentine novels, is pure entertainment. San Jose Mercury News This smooth, funny series has got to be one of the finds of the decade. Kirkus s (starred review) The author packs his books with mind-boggling cons and scamshow to do them, how to stop them along with entertaining dialogue and vivid characters, [most] notably the strong, sympathetic Tony. Publishers Weekly From the Paperback edition.