Before Elvis and the Beatles, there was "Swoonatra." At concerts in the 1940s, bobby-soxed idolators screamed, sobbed, pledged their hearts — and other parts of their anatomy — to the skinny singer from Hoboken, N.J. And a bevy of Hollywood beauties, including Lana Turner and Ava Gardner, longed to be his mistress or his mate.

Sinatra was one of a kind: talented, ambitious and ruthless. As James Kaplan demonstrates in *Frank: The Voice*, Sinatra's heart was not made of stone but "was divided into many chambers." He was willing to step on or over anyone in his path; disentangle himself from deep emotional, artistic and professional bonds with bandleaders Harry James and Tommy Dorsey; and use anyone, even the Mafia, "until he grasped the brass ring. The master plan for himself was exactly that: for himself. Alone."

Even for those who know the outcome, *Frank* — a deliciously detailed, tough but not trashy account of Sinatra's rise, his fall from celebrity (amid criticism that he was a draft-dodging Communist sympathizer), and his Oscar-winning comeback in *From Here to Eternity* — manages to sustain the suspense. Subpoenaed to testify before the Kefauver Committee on Organized Crime about allegations that he had been a "bagman" for the mob, Sinatra was, according to Kaplan, petrified that a televised appearance would ruin his career. Although investigators ridiculed Sinatra's private claims that he hadn't known who Lucky Luciano, Meyer Lansky or Bugsy Siegel were, they concluded that in front of the cameras he "might raise a lot of hell without saying anything" — and let him off the hook.

At the same time, Kaplan refutes the notion, popularized in Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather*, that the Mafia forced a reluctant Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Pictures, to give Sinatra the role of Angelo Maggio in *From Here to Eternity* by placing a horse's head in his bed. What actually did it, he argues, was that Ava Gardner went to bat for him; that Cohn actually liked him; that Sinatra offered to do the picture for a fraction of his customary salary; and that director Fred Zinneman was willing to give him a shot.

*Frank* ends in 1954 with Sinatra's Academy Award. He's feeling vindicated, not humbled. Soon, "The Voice" will become "The Chairman of the Board." And do things his way for another four decades. Kaplan may well be preparing a chronicle of these years. But there's something about *Frank* — and about Frank — that might give him pause. Readers of Kaplan's book may well feel, for better and worse, that they've learned everything worth knowing about the subject.