

Live and Let Die

by Ian Fleming

(Adapted book. Intermediate level)

Chapter 1. An Interview with M

One morning, James Bond was called to the office of his boss, M, head of the British Secret Service. Miss Money Penny, M's private secretary, gave Bond a warm smile when he arrived.

'007 is here now, Sir,' she said into the intercom on her desk.

'Send him in,' came the reply.

Bond knocked and walked into M's office. M was sitting behind a large leather-topped desk. A reading light made a pool of light across the desk. The rest of the room was darkened by the London fog outside the windows.

'Good morning, 007,' said M. 'Sit down.'

Bond sat in the chair which faced M across the desk.

'Have you ever seen one of these?' M took a gold coin from his pocket and pushed it halfway across the desk towards Bond.

Bond picked it up and turned it over in his hand. 'No,' he said. 'But it's worth about five hundred pounds, perhaps

'Fifteen hundred,' said M. 'It's an English coin, of course. A Rose Noble of Edward the Fourth.' He took more gold coins from his pocket and dropped them on the desk in front of Bond - Spanish, French and Dutch coins. 'They're worth a lot of money just as gold, but much more to people who collect coins. If you take a look, you'll notice that they were all made before 1650. Bloody Morgan, the pirate, was Governor and Commander in Chief of Jamaica from 1675 to 1688. These coins are almost certainly part of Morgan's treasure.

'Nearly a thousand of them have come into the United States in the last few months. And they continue to come in, finding their way to banks and coin collectors' shops. But the FBI has a problem. If they

admit that they know about the coins, the coins will stop coming into the country. They'll be melted down into gold bars and will be lost. They don't want that to happen.

'At the moment, someone is using a network of people - people who are working as porters, sleeping car attendants on trains or truck drivers - to spread the coins all across the United States. Quite innocent people, like Zachary Smith...'

M opened a thick file which had TOP SECRET written on it and took out a single piece of paper. He began to read: 'Zachary Smith, 35. Works as train attendant. Address 90b West 126th Street, in Harlem, New York City. On 21st November, he sold four sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gold coins to Fein Jewels in Lennox Avenue for one hundred dollars. When interviewed later, Smith said they had been sold to him in a Harlem bar for twenty dollars each. The seller was a black man he had never seen before. He told Smith that the coins were each worth fifty dollars. But Smith wanted cash immediately, so he was happy to sell them to Fein Jewels for twenty-five dollars each.'

M put the paper back into the file. 'All the sales have been in Harlem or Florida.'

'And you think they're part of Bloody Morgan's treasure,' said Bond.

'That's almost certain, because of the dates on the coins,' agreed M. 'But Bloody Morgan's treasure is not in America, it's in Jamaica. A boat, the Secatur, has been regularly sailing from a small island on the north coast of Jamaica, through the Florida Keys and into the Gulf of Mexico. This yacht sails to St Petersburg, near Tampa, on the west coast of Florida. The FBI has discovered that the boat and the island belong to a man called "Mr Big". He's a black gangster who lives in Harlem. Have you heard about him?'

'No,' said Bond.

'We suspect that this Jamaican treasure is being used to get money for Russian spies in America,' said M quietly. 'Why? We think

Mr Big is a Russian agent and a member of SMERSH.’ M pointed to the file in front of him. ‘You’ll find out more in here.’

‘I’d like to meet him,’ said Bond. ‘I’d like to meet any member of SMERSH.’

M handed him the thick file. ‘It’s a joint CIA and FBI job. Be ready to start in a week.’

Chapter 2. New York

A pleasant-looking man met Bond at Idlewild Airport in New York. ‘My name’s Halloran,’ he said. ‘I’m pleased to meet you, Mr Bond. Would you follow me?’

Outside the airport building, a large black Buick car was waiting. Halloran and Bond climbed into it and the driver took them towards the centre of Manhattan. After a time, they stopped outside the best hotel in New York, the St Regis, at the corner of 5th Avenue and 55th Street. A middle-aged man in a dark blue coat and a black hat came out to meet them.

Halloran said, ‘Mr Bond, this is my boss, Captain Dexter. Can I leave him with you now, Captain?’

‘Sure,’ said Dexter. ‘Ask for his bags to be sent up to Room 2100. Top floor. I’ll go with Mr Bond and see that he has everything he wants.’

Bond turned to say goodbye to Halloran. Across 55th Street was a black Chevrolet car. Bond saw it suddenly move out into the busy traffic. The driver was a black woman wearing a chauffeur’s uniform. For a moment, Bond also saw the passenger in the back seat of the car. Just before the car rushed away, the huge grey-black face turned slowly and looked back at Bond through the back window. Was this the face of Mr Big?

Bond followed Captain Dexter inside the hotel and into the lift. They got out at the twenty-first floor and walked to Room 2100. Dexter unlocked the door.

The room was an expensive-looking sitting room with comfortable chairs, light grey walls and a long sideboard. This low cupboard had several bottles of drink and glasses on it. The January sunshine shone through a wide window.

At that moment, the bedroom door opened and a tall, thin young man with blond hair came into the room. He had a wide smile on his face. Bond stared at him in surprise.

‘Felix Leiter!’ said Bond. ‘What are you doing here?’ He shook the other man’s hand warmly. ‘Are you on this job?’ Leiter smiled. ‘The CIA thought we did well on that casino job, James, so yes, here I am. I’m the link between the CIA and our friends of the FBI.’ He nodded his head towards Captain Dexter, who did not look especially pleased about it. ‘It’s the FBI’s case here in America, but the CIA is interested in the Jamaican part of the job. You’re here to look after the Jamaican side of things for the British. Sit down and let’s have a drink. Lunch is on its way.’

They sat down and Leiter gave Bond a large glass. As Bond started to drink his martini, Captain Dexter said, ‘Now, Mr Bond, tell us what you know about this case.’

Chapter 3. A Mysterious Parcel

The morning after his arrival in New York, Bond woke up in his bedroom at the St Regis.

Dexter had given him plenty of information about Mr Big. He was 45 years old, had been bom in Haiti and was half black and half French. The gangster had got his name because of his large size and because of the initials of his full name: Buonaparte Ignace Gallia - B-I-G. After moving to America, he had various different jobs. Then he was forced to

join the American armed forces during the Second World War. Because of his excellent French, he worked for the American Secret Service in France, where he worked closely with a Russian spy who was doing a similar job. After the war he disappeared for five years, probably to Moscow. He returned to Harlem in 1950 and bought several nightclubs. The FBI suspected that he was working as a Russian spy, but they could never be totally sure.

He soon became a man to fear. People who went against him were murdered or mysteriously disappeared, never to be seen again. Those who did not listen to his instructions had their homes burnt down or their families threatened. Naturally, all this helped to make Mr Big a very powerful man. Very soon he had large criminal organizations working for him, with his own spies everywhere. They were all ready at a moment's notice to report back to him what they had seen.

Bond had questioned Dexter and Leiter very closely about Mr Big's connections to SMERSH. He was now almost certain that Mr Big was a member. But the porters, the truck drivers and all the other men who passed on information to him had no idea that they were giving it to a Russian spy. Fear of death and cruelty was enough to stop them asking questions.

Bond picked up the telephone and asked for breakfast to be sent to his room. Then he collected the newspapers and parcels that had been put quietly on his hall table earlier that morning.

Yesterday afternoon, a man had come and measured him for two dark blue suits. Another man had brought some uncomfortable white shirts with long points to the collars. He had also had to accept six unusually bright and patterned ties, some dark socks with large patterns on them, a plain grey hat, and two pairs of hand-made, black casual shoes. To hold all of these things, there was a light-weight American suitcase.

He was allowed to keep his own Beretta .25 gun and shoulder holster. His other things were going to be collected at midday. They would be sent on to Jamaica to wait for him.

It was all part of the Americanization of Bond, ordered by the FBI. His dark hair was now shorter and he had been told that he was from Boston, New England, and was visiting New York during his holidays. He had been reminded to ask for the 'check' rather than the 'bill' in restaurants and to say 'cab' instead of 'taxi'.

Bond had a shower and dressed. Later, in a white shirt and blue trousers, he opened the door for the waiter. The man brought in Bond's breakfast, together with a brown parcel about a foot square. Bond told the waiter to put the parcel on the sideboard. Something else from Leiter, he guessed. It was only after he had finished eating that he heard the very soft ticking noise. It was coming from the sideboard. Tick-tock ... tick'tock ... tick-tock...

Bond immediately dived to the floor behind an armchair. He waited nervously.

Crack! The parcel exploded and fell to the floor.

Bond looked over the back of the armchair. The glasses and bottles on the sideboard were broken, and there was a black mark from smoke on the wall behind them. He got up slowly and went straight to the window and opened it. Then he picked up the phone and called Dexter. Soon after, there was a knock on the door.

'Who is it?' Bond called.

'Dexter.'

Dexter came in, followed by a young man with a black box under his arm. The young man at once went down on his knees beside what was left of the parcel. He opened his box and put on some special gloves to protect his hands. Then he began to collect small bits of metal and glass from the carpet. Also lying on the carpet was a small metal tube. From it, the young man took out a piece of paper. Bond and Dexter read it:

The heart of the clock has stopped ticking. The beats of your heart are numbered. I know that number and I have started to count.

The message was signed: 1234567...?

‘Mr Big,’ said Bond.

‘But how did he know you were here?’ asked Dexter.

Bond told him about the black Chevrolet car outside the hotel.

‘But the point is,’ said Bond, ‘how did he know what I was here for? It shows he’s got spies everywhere, including in Washington and in the CIA.’

Chapter 4. The Whisper

Bond spent the morning on 5th Avenue and on Broadway, looking in shop windows and watching the passing crowds. He had lunch at a restaurant on Lexington Avenue, then took a taxi to the police headquarters in the centre of New York. He had arranged to meet Leiter and Dexter there at two thirty.

A Lieutenant Binswanger of Homicide showed them Mr Big’s police record and the reports about the Secatur yacht. The boat had often sailed into St Petersburg over the last six months. It always stopped at the jetty of the ‘Ourobouros Worm and Bait Shippers’ - a company whose main business was to sell live bait to fishing clubs in Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. It also sold seashells, coral and aquarium fish.

According to the manager of Ourobouros, the Secatur did big business with his company and brought in shells and tropical fish from Jamaica. These were bought and then stored in the Ourobouros warehouse. Later, the shells and fish were sold to shops up and down the coast.

As they were leaving his office, Lieutenant Binswanger said, ‘More gold has been coming in recently. About a hundred coins a week

in Harlem and New York alone. Do you want us to do anything about it?’

The boss says not yet,’ Dexter told him.

When Bond, Dexter and Leiter were out on the pavement, Dexter said, ‘I had some instructions from Washington this morning. I’ve got to look after the Harlem side of the case, and you two have been asked to go down to St Petersburg tomorrow. Leiter’s got to find out what he can there, then move on to Jamaica with you, Mr Bond. Is there anything else I can do for you?’

‘If you don’t mind, Leiter and I would like to go to Harlem this evening and have a look round,’ said Bond.

Dexter thought for a moment. ‘OK,’ he said. ‘But don’t get hurt. There’s no one to help you up there. And don’t make trouble for us with Mr Big. Until we’re ready to get him, we say “live and let live”.’

Bond smiled. ‘In my job, when I meet a man like Mr Big, I have another saying. It’s “live and let die”.’

‘Maybe,’ said Dexter. ‘But you take my orders while you’re here, Mr Bond.’ He waved his hand to stop a passing taxi. The yellow car stopped, Dexter got in and then Bond and Letter watched the car drive away.

‘Well, what about going to Harlem tonight, Felix?’ asked Bond.

‘Sure,’ said Leiter. ‘I’ll meet you in the King Cole Bar of the St Regis at six thirty.’

* * *

Up in Harlem, at the big telephone switchboard, ‘The Whisper’ was half asleep. All his telephone lines were quiet. Suddenly, a light shone on the board - an important light. ‘Yes, Boss,’ he said softly into his headset.

‘Tell all spies to watch for three men,’ said a slow, deep voice. A description of Leiter, Bond and Dexter followed. ‘They may be coming in this evening or tomorrow. Tell them to watch carefully on 1st to 8th,

and the other avenues. The nightclubs, too. Call me when you know where they are.’

‘Yes, Boss,’ said The Whisper, breathing fast. Soon after, he was whispering quickly and softly late into the evening.

* * *

At six o’clock, Bond had a cold shower and dressed carefully. He wore a white shirt and put his leather shoulder holster on top of it. Next he put his Beretta into the holster. He looked at the casual shoes the FBI had given him. Then he reached under the bed and pulled out a pair of his own shoes and put them on. Under the leather, the toecaps were made of steel.

At twenty-five past six, he went down to the King Cole Bar. A few minutes later, Felix Leiter came in and sat down. His head of yellow hair was now coloured black and he wore a bright blue suit with a white shirt and a black-and-white spotted tie.

‘Mr Big’s people may have my description,’ Leiter said, and gave Bond a big smile. ‘We’ll catch a bus on 5th Avenue. You won’t find many cabs that want to go to Harlem after it’s dark.’

Chapter 5. Harlem

Three men waited at the bus stop on the corner of 5th Avenue and Cathedral Parkway. They were wet and bored. They had been watching the traffic on 5th Avenue since four thirty, but now a bus stopped and one of the men got on it. He saw the two white men and sat down on a seat behind them. He had been given descriptions and he recognized Bond, but not the other man.

At the next stop, he got off the bus and hurried to the nearest public phone. The Whisper questioned him urgently, then immediately started to pass on the information.

‘Boss, the Englishman is on a bus on 5th Avenue. He’s got a friend with him, but the friend doesn’t seem to match the description of

either of the other two.’ The Whisper then described Leiter. ‘They’re both coming north.’

‘Warn the clubs and get this information to Tee-Hee Johnson, McThing, Blabbermouth Foley, Sam Miami...’ said the voice at the other end of the line. It spoke for another five minutes. After that, The Whisper began giving out the news.

* * *

From the moment Bond and Leiter walked into Sugar Ray’s club on 7th Avenue, there was a team of men and women watching them or waiting to watch them. These men and women reported what they saw to The Whisper.

The famous nightclub was crowded, and the walls were covered with pictures of Sugar Ray Robinson, the famous boxer. Bond and Leiter found an empty table, sat down and ordered drinks.

As Bond was paying the waiter, Leiter said suddenly, ‘Do you know where Mr Big is tonight?’

The waiter’s eyes opened wide. He moved close to Leiter. ‘I’ve got a wife and kids, Sir,’ he said out of the corner of his mouth. ‘Don’t ask me that.’ Then he hurried away.

‘Mr Big’s got the best protection of all,’ said Leiter. ‘Fear.’

They finished their drinks and went out onto 7th Avenue. The rain had stopped but there was an icy-cold wind. They moved along with the other people on the pavement, but the looks they were given were not friendly. The streets were dirty and many of the buildings were dark and unwelcoming. Bond wondered what secrets were held behind some of the closed doors.

‘We’ll go to Ma Frazier’s, further up the Avenue,’ said Leiter. ‘It has the best food in Harlem.’

They had an excellent meal of Fried Chicken Maryland with bacon and sweetcorn. But when Leiter asked the waiter about Mr Big, the man pretended not to hear. When they had finished eating and Bond was paying the bill, Leiter tried again.

‘Sorry, Sir,’ said the waiter. ‘I don’t remember anyone with that name.’

By the time they left the restaurant, it was ten thirty. They took a taxi to the Savoy Ballroom, where they had drinks and watched the dancers in the huge, crowded hall. Bond thought many of the girls were very beautiful and he found the music exciting. He almost forgot what he was there for.

‘Great, isn’t it?’ said Leiter. ‘But we’d better move on. I’ll have a walk around while you pay for the drinks. I’ll see if I can get any information about where Mr Big is. We don’t want to have to go to all his places.’

They met outside the entrance a few minutes later, then walked up the street looking for a taxi.

‘It cost me twenty dollars,’ said Leiter, ‘but I was told he’ll be at The Boneyard on Lennox Avenue soon after midnight. I’ll take you to the Yeah Man club on 7th Avenue first, then we’ll move on to The Boneyard at about twelve thirty. There’s a girl dancer there called G-G Sumatra. I’m sure you’ll like her very much, James.’

* * *

The big switchboard was almost quiet. The two men had been checked in and out of Sugar Ray’s, Ma Frazier’s, the Savoy Ballroom and Yeah Man. The last call came at twelve thirty as Bond and Leiter were on their way to The Boneyard.

Mr Big spoke on the phone to the head waiter of The Boneyard. ‘Two white men are coming in. Give them table Z.’ He made two more phone calls. One was to the MC, the Master of Ceremonies, the man introducing the entertainment.

‘Put the lights out at the end of G-G’s act,’ he said.

‘Yes, Sir, Boss,’ said the MC.

The other call was to four men who were playing cards in a downstairs room. It was a long call and the instructions were carefully explained and very detailed.

* * *

At twelve forty-five, Bond and Leiter paid their taxi driver and walked into The Boneyard. The head waiter met them and took them to a table in the corner of the club by the small, crowded dance floor.

Bond looked round. It was not a large room, but there were about fifty tables and about two hundred people. The music stopped. The four-man band carried their musical instruments away, and the red light under the glass dance floor was turned off. Instead, pencil-thin lights in the roof came on and shone on coloured glass balls that hung around the walls - yellow, blue and red.

There were calls of 'Where's G-G?' and 'Come on, G-G!' from the crowd.

Suddenly, the MC came out onto the dance floor. A single white light shone down on him as the rest of the room went dark. There was silence.

'Folks, it's time!' he said, smiling. He put out his right hand. 'Mr Jungles Japhet and his drums!'

Another light came on and the crowd clapped excitedly. Across the floor, four smiling, black men in red shirts and white trousers sat behind four drums of different sizes.

'And now, friends,' said the MC, 'G-G ... SUMATRA!' The last word was a shout.

Two huge black men ran out onto the dance floor. They were carrying a young woman. She was wearing a long black coat and had a black mask across her eyes. The men put her down in the middle of the floor, then moved away into the darkness.

The crowd was suddenly silent. The four men started to play the drums slowly and loudly. The girl began to dance - slowly at first and then a little faster. She put her hand up to her neck and the coat fell away from her. Now she was wearing a small black dress. Her body was small, brown and beautiful. The drums beat faster ... she moved faster

with them, turning round and round. The drums beat louder ... she picked up the coat and threw it off the dance floor.

Some minutes later, the lights suddenly went out. The room was in total darkness and the crowd started shouting.

Bond felt cold air on his face. At the same time, he realized that the shouts from the crowd were disappearing.

‘Hey!’ shouted Leiter. His voice was close but sounded strange.

Then something closed above Bond’s head. He put his hand behind him and it touched a moving wall.

‘Lights,’ said a voice quietly.

Both of Bond’s arms were being held tightly and he was pushed down in his chair. Leiter still sat opposite him across the same table, table Z, but with a huge man holding his arms. They were in the small room downstairs. To their right and left were two more men, each one holding a gun.

One of the men put his gun against Bond’s stomach. Then he moved his free hand across Bond until he found Bond’s Beretta. He took it and gave it to the other man with a gun.

‘Give that to the Boss, Tee-Hee,’ he said. ‘Take the Englishman up. His guard will go with you. His friend will stay with me.’

‘Yes, Sir,’ said the man called Tee-Hee. He was fat and wore a chocolate-coloured shirt.

Bond was pulled up onto his feet. He had one foot under a leg of the table and he pulled it hard. There was a crash of glass. At the same moment, Leiter kicked backwards behind his chair. His foot hit his guard’s leg. Bond did the same, but missed. Then Leiter’s guard threw him against the wall so hard that Leiter’s nose was almost smashed. When he turned round, blood was pouring out of it.

The man giving the orders spoke to Bond’s guard. ‘Take him away. Mr Big’s waiting.’ He turned to Bond. ‘Say goodbye to your friend. You probably won’t see each other again.’

Bond smiled at Leiter. ‘See you later,’ he said.

Bond's guard turned him round and pushed him against part of the wall. A door opened suddenly, and the man called Tee-Hee pushed past them.

'This way,' he said, and then the door closed behind them.

Chapter 6. Mr Big

Bond was taken through several doors to a large warehouse by his guard and Tee-Hee. They walked across the warehouse floor to a metal door, and Tee-Hee rang a bell. After a moment, the door opened. A man with a gun stepped back and they went through into a hallway.

'You can go in, Tee-Hee,' said the man with the gun.

Tee-Hee knocked on a door in front of them, opened it and then took Bond into the room. Mr Big sat behind an expensive desk, his huge head resting against the back of his chair. It was a great football of a head, twice the normal size and very nearly round. There were no hairs on the head and the skin was grey-black. The face was like the face of a week-old dead man.

There was nothing on the desk except an intercom with about twenty buttons and a very small riding whip. Bond's guard led him across the thick carpet to a low chair. Bond sat down and faced the man across the desk.

Mr Big looked at him. There was one high window above his head, and all of the other walls were covered with bookshelves. Bond could not see a door.

Mr Big spoke. 'Stay, Tee-Hee,' he said. His eyes moved to the other man. 'You can go, Miami.'

'Yes, Sir, Boss,' they both said.

Bond heard a door open and close. He put a hand to his pocket to find his cigarettes.

Mr Big spoke. 'You can smoke, Mr Bond. Do not try to do anything else. I hear that you have a double-0 number - 007. Which

means you have had to kill a man. Have you been sent over here to kill me?’

‘So Moscow sent him my description,’ Bond thought.

‘Mr Bond, you must answer me if you and your friend want to stay alive,’ said Mr Big. ‘And don’t try to lie to me. I shall know if you do.’

Bond answered carefully. ‘English gold coins have been bought and sold in America. Edward IV Rose Nobles,’ he said. ‘Some have been sold in Harlem. The American government asked for help to discover where they’re coming from. I came to Harlem to investigate. I came with a man from the American treasury, who I hope is now safely on his way back to his hotel.’

‘Mr Leiter is an agent for the CIA, not the treasury,’ said Mr Big. ‘He is in a very dangerous situation at the moment.’ He thought for a moment, then said, ‘Tee-Hee, tie Mr Bond to his chair.’

Bond started to get up from his seat.

‘Don’t move, Mr Bond,’ said Mr Big. ‘Unless you want to be shot.’

Bond sat down again. Immediately a belt was passed round his body. Two belts went round his wrists and were tied to the arms of the chair. Then two more were tied round his legs.

Mr Big pushed down a button on the intercom. ‘Send in Miss Solitaire.’

Part of a bookcase to the right of the desk opened, and a very beautiful woman came in. The woman looked over Bond, inch by inch, from his head to his feet.

She turned to Mr Big. ‘Yes?’ she asked simply.

Mr Big did not move his head. He spoke to Bond.

‘This is a very clever woman, Mr Bond,’ he said. ‘She is telepathic. She knows at once when someone is not telling the truth.’ He turned and looked at her coldly. ‘I’m going to marry her because she is

so special. But at the moment she will have nothing to do with men. That is why, in Haiti, where she comes from, she was called “Solitaire”.’

‘Sit down,’ he said quietly to her. ‘Tell me if this man lies.’

The woman got a chair and sat down near Bond. Her blue eyes looked into his, and they seemed to have some sort of message for him. She was wearing a long white evening dress which showed the shape of her beautiful body. She had diamond earrings, and a diamond bracelet on her left wrist, but no rings on her fingers. As he watched her, she leaned forward, her knee almost touching his.

The silent message was clear, and a warm smile must have appeared on Bond’s face. Suddenly, Mr Big picked up the riding whip from the desk and hit the girl cruelly across her shoulders.

‘Sit up!’ he said.

She sat up slowly. She had a pack of playing cards in her hands - and used them to send Bond another silent message. She opened the pack so that the knave of hearts was opposite the queen of spades. Then she brought the two halves of the pack together so that the two cards ‘kissed’.

At no time did she look at Bond, but now he was sure that he had a friend.

‘Are you ready, Solitaire?’ asked Mr Big.

‘Yes, the cards are ready,’ she said.

‘Mr Bond, look into the eyes of this woman and tell me again the reason you are here.’

Bond looked into her eyes and repeated what he had said earlier. Did the woman know that he was not telling the whole truth? If she did, would she speak for him or against him?

For a moment there was silence. She looked at Mr Big.

‘He speaks the truth,’ she said coldly.

Chapter 7. Death on the Stairs

Mr Big thought for a moment, then pushed a button on the intercom on his desk.

‘Blabbermouth? You’re holding the American, Leiter,’ he said. ‘Hurt him, then take him to Bellevue Hospital and leave him outside. Don’t let anyone see you.’

‘Yes, Sir, Boss,’ came the reply.

‘Damn you!’ said Bond.

Mr Big looked at Bond, then at Tee-Hee. ‘Tee-Hee, break the little finger of Mr Bond’s left hand.’

Tee-Hee laughed and walked across to Bond.

Bond held on tightly to the arms of his chair. He started to sweat⁵⁰ and tried to imagine the pain so that he could control it. Tee-Hee took hold of the little finger of Bond’s left hand and started to bend it back. The sweat poured off Bond’s face as he fought the pain.

Suddenly there was a terrible crack! as the finger broke - and Bond fainted.

Solitaire closed her eyes.

‘Did he have a gun?’ asked Mr Big.

‘Yes, Sir, Boss,’ said Tee-Hee. He took the Beretta from his pocket and put it on the desk. Mr Big picked it up and emptied the bullets onto his desk. Then he pushed the gun towards its owner.

‘Wake him up,’ he said. He looked at his watch. It said three o’clock.

Tee-Hee pushed his fingernails into Bond’s neck. Bond’s eyes opened and he lifted his head. He looked at Mr Big and swore at him.

‘Be glad that you’re not dead,’ Mr Big told him. ‘Tee-Hee, give him his gun. I have the bullets.’

Tee-Hee took it off the desk and put the Beretta into Bond’s shoulder holster.

‘So, why are you still alive, Mr Bond?’ said Mr Big. ‘Why aren’t you at the bottom of the Harlem River? I’ll tell you. Because it would be a nuisance for me to have a lot of people asking questions about the

disappearance of yourself and Mr Leiter. I have more important things to worry me at this time.’ He looked at his watch. ‘So you must leave the country today, and Mr Leiter must move on to another job. If I see you again, you’ll die. Tee-Hee, take Mr Bond to the garage. Tell two men to take him to Central Park and leave him there.’

Tee-Hee took the belts from Bond’s wrists and legs. Next he took Bond’s injured left hand and pushed it up behind his back. Then he took off the belt around Bond’s body and pulled him to his feet.

Solitaire was staring at her hands. She did not look up. Tee-Hee pushed Bond forward towards a bookcase. He reached across and put a hand on one of the books, and a large part of the bookcase opened like a door. He pushed Bond through and closed the bookcase behind him.

They walked down a short corridor towards some stairs. When they were near the top of the stairs, Bond stopped suddenly. Tee-Hee’s body fell against him, and Bond quickly turned and used his right hand to hit the other man hard in the stomach. Tee-Hee screamed and dropped Bond’s left arm. Bond pulled his empty gun from its holster and hit Tee-Hee across the head. He fell onto his knees, and Bond kicked him with his steel-capped shoe. Tee-Hee screamed again as he fell down the stairs.

Bond wiped the sweat from his face and listened. He pushed his left hand into his coat. The pain was terrible and the hand was twice its usual size. Holding his gun in his right hand, he walked slowly and quietly down the stairs.

At the bottom, Tee-Hee was lying on his back. He was either dead or dying from a broken neck. Bond checked the body for a gun and found a Colt .38 Detective Special. He took it and put his Beretta back in his shoulder holster. There was a small door in front of him. He put his ear against it and heard the sound of an engine. It had to be the garage where they were waiting for him and Tee-Hee.

Bond pushed the door open with a crash. A black car with its engine running was waiting. He saw two black men, one sitting in the

driver's seat of the car and the other standing next to the passenger door. There were several other cars, but nobody else.

Bond shot the man near the passenger door in the stomach, then quickly turned towards the driver of the car. The man screamed and Bond shot him through the head.

Bond ran round the car and opened the door. The driver's body fell towards him and he pulled it out onto the ground. He climbed into the driver's seat and shut the door.

There was a shot as he drove out of the garage. The bullet hit the side of the car. Bond guessed that the first man was still alive and had managed to reach his gun.

Outside the garage, the street was dark and empty. At the end of the street, Bond came to some red traffic lights. He drove through them. There were several more dark streets before he came to an avenue with street lights. There was traffic now. Further on, he checked the street signs and saw that he was on the corner of Park Avenue and 116th Street. He slowed again at the next street. It was 115th. He was going away from Harlem and back into the city.

He turned into 60th Street, stopped the car and got out. He took the gun off the passenger seat and pushed it into his belt, then he walked back to Park Avenue. A few minutes later, he stopped a taxi.

Back at the St Regis Hotel, the man at the desk had a message for him. Bond opened the envelope with his right hand. It was from Felix, sent at 4 am. 'Call me at once,' it said.

Chapter 8. A Strange Report to M

In his hotel room, Bond poured himself a whisky and then used the telephone.

Leiter answered at once.

'Thank God, you're alive!' he said. 'Are you hurt?'

'Broken finger,' said Bond. 'What about you?'

‘Nothing serious. Blabbermouth and I got quite friendly.

I got him talking about movies and music until instructions came from Mr Big. Then he said “Sorry, mister,” knocked me out and took me to Bellevue Hospital. He left me outside. I went to the Emergency Room where they looked at my head, then I came home. I got telephone calls from the police and the FBI. Mr Big had complained that a crazy Englishman had shot three of his men early this morning - a waiter at The Boneyard and two drivers - and had stolen one of his cars.

‘Mr Big wants the police to do something about it, but I talked to them and the FBI. They’re not going to chase after us. But they’re very angry, and we’ve both got to get out of New York at once. Also, Mr Big will be coming after you, James. Now, tell me exactly what happened to you.’

Bond told his story.

When he had finished, Leiter said, ‘That Solitaire lady certainly seems to be your friend. We need to make plans. Listen, I’ll phone you again in a few minutes. First I’ll get the police doctor to come and see you. While you’re waiting, you’d better call your boss in London.’

Ten minutes later, Bond was speaking to M. He chose his words carefully. He knew that someone might be listening to the conversation. ‘It’s James, Sir,’ he said. ‘I may need a bit of help. I went across town to see our main customer last night.

Three of his best men became sick while I was there.’

‘How sick?’ asked M.

‘As sick as a person can be,’ answered Bond.

‘Did you get ... sick?’

‘Only a little, Sir,’ said Bond. ‘But Federated thinks I’ll feel better away from town.’ Bond smiled. M would know that ‘Federated’ was the FBI. ‘So Felicia and I are going soon.’

‘Who?’ asked M.

‘Felicia.’ Bond spelt the name. ‘You know, my new secretary from Washington.’

‘Oh, yes,’ said M.

‘I thought I’d try that factory at San Pedro,’ said Bond. ‘But Federated may have other ideas. I hope you can help me.’

‘Yes, of course,’ replied M. ‘Anything else?’

‘No, that’s all, Sir,’ said Bond. ‘Thank you.’

Bond put down the telephone and grinned. He could imagine M explaining the news to the Chief of Staff. ‘007’s already upset the FBI,’ he would say. ‘The fool went up to Harlem and killed three of Mr Big’s men. He got hurt himself, but only a little. He’s got to get out of New York with Leiter, the CIA man. They’re going down to St Petersburg. Washington will be complaining to us in a minute. Apologize and tell them that it won’t happen again.’

Bond’s telephone rang. It was Leiter again.

‘Everyone’s calmer now,’ he told Bond. ‘The three men you killed were Tee-Hee Johnson, Sam Miami and a man called McThing. The police wanted all of them for different crimes. The FBI wants you to be sent home, so we’d better get out of town quickly. We can’t go together, so you’re going on the train and I’ll fly. Write this down.’

Bond reached for some paper and a pencil.

‘Pennsylvania Station, Track 14,’ Leiter told him. ‘Ten thirty this morning, The Silver Phantom. It goes to St Petersburg through Washington, Jacksonville and Tampa. Pullman Car 245, Compartment H. The ticket will be on the train in the name of Bryce. The conductor will have it. Go straight to your compartment and lock yourself inside until the train starts moving. The train gets to St Petersburg at midday tomorrow. Get a cab to The Everglades Canabas, Gulf Boulevard West, on Sunset Beach. That’s on Treasure Island, where all the beach hotels are. It’s an island joined to St Petersburg by a causeway. Be careful. Mr Big will be looking for you. Any questions?’

‘It sounds fine,’ said Bond. ‘Look after yourself, Felix. See you tomorrow.’

The police doctor came and stayed for a painful fifteen minutes. When he had gone, Bond was thinking of ordering breakfast when the phone rang. He picked it up. A woman's voice asked for Mr Bond.

'Who's calling?' asked Bond. He knew the answer.

'I know it's you,' said the voice. 'This is Solitaire. Listen, I've got to be quick. You must trust me. I've got to get away, and so must you. You've got to take me. I can help you - I know a lot of his secrets. But be quick. If he finds out I called you, he'll kill me. Please, you must trust me!'

Bond said nothing for a moment. He was thinking fast. Then he said, 'OK, write this down. Be at Pennsylvania Station at ten twenty exactly. The Silver Phantom to ... to Washington. Pullman Car 245, Compartment H. Say that you're Mrs Bryce. The conductor will have the ticket if I'm not already there. Go straight to the compartment and wait for me.'

'Thank you, thank you!' said Solitaire. 'Now I must go.' Bond put down the telephone. 'That's going to make things interesting,' he said to himself, smiling.

* * *

At the big switchboard in Harlem, The Whisper was giving Bond's description to all spies. 'Watch the hotel. Watch all the airports, all the train stations...'

Chapter 9. The Silver Phantom

Bond left the hotel through a back door and got a taxi to Pennsylvania Station. One of Mr Big's spies saw him when he got out of the taxi. The man hurried to a telephone. Some minutes later, a waiter in the train's dining car was replaced by another man. This man had been given full and careful instructions on the telephone.

The Silver Phantom was a long train of silver carriages. It stood quietly in the half-light of the underground station. There were not many

passengers. More would get on at Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. Pullman Car 245 was near the back of the train. A porter stood at the door. His black face was bored but friendly.

‘Compartment H,’ said Bond.

‘Mr Bryce?’ said the porter. ‘Mrs Bryce has just arrived. Go to the end of the carriage.’

Bond stepped onto the train. A notice said: ‘If you need anything, ring for your Pullman Porter, Samuel D. Baldwin.’

Compartment H was more than halfway down the carriage. There was an American couple in Compartment E, but all the other rooms were empty. The door of Compartment H was locked. Bond knocked.

‘Who’s that?’ asked a woman’s voice nervously.

‘It’s me,’ said Bond.

The door opened. Bond walked through and locked the door behind him.

Solitaire wore a black suit and her eyes were wide with fear. She looked beautiful.

‘Thank God,’ she said.

Bond looked round the room. Then he opened the bathroom door and looked in. It was empty. Moments later, the train began to move. He sat down on a seat with his back to the engine. Solitaire sat down opposite him, and he saw the dark skin under her eyes. ‘She hasn’t slept either,’ thought Bond.

‘Thank you for trusting me,’ she said.

‘I’m glad I did,’ said Bond. He was trying to open a new pack of cigarettes with his right hand. She reached over, took the pack and opened it for him. ‘You’re going to be busy,’ he said, smiling. ‘I smoke three packs a day.’

‘I’ll just help with the new packs until we get to St Petersburg,’ she said.

Bond’s smile disappeared and his eyes narrowed.

‘What’s wrong?’ she said. ‘Oh, I knew we were going further than Washington. Mr Big was certain you’d travel to Florida. I heard him warning his people down there about you. He spoke to a man called “The Robber”. He told him to watch the airport at Tampa and the trains. Perhaps we should get off the train earlier, at one of the small stations up the coast. Did they see you get on the train?’

‘I don’t think so,’ said Bond. He was calm again. ‘Did you have any trouble getting away?’

‘It was my day for a singing lesson,’ she said. ‘Mr Big wants me to be a singer at The Boneyard. One of his men took me to my teacher and he’ll be there to collect me at midday.’ She looked at her watch. ‘They’ll be looking for me in about an hour. I waited until the car had gone, then telephoned you. Next I got a cab and went into the city. I bought a toothbrush and a few other things. All I’ve got with me is my jewellery and about five thousand dollars of my own money.’ She looked out of the window. ‘I’ve been locked up with Mr Big and his gangsters for such a long time. It feels wonderful to be away from them.’

‘You saved my life last night. Are you really telepathic?’

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘I can often see what’s going to happen, especially to other people. In Haiti I did it for entertainment, and I was paid.’ She smiled at him. ‘When I first saw you, I knew you were going to help me. But it’s going to be difficult. And dangerous.’

He looked at her for several moments.

‘I can tell you want to know more about me,’ she said, ‘but there’s nothing very bad to know. My real name is Simone Latrelle and I’m twenty-five years old. I’ll tell you all about me when we have time, but I want to forget about the past. And now I’m happy, but I’m hungry and very sleepy. Which bed will you have?’

‘I think I’d better have the bottom one,’ replied Bond. Lunch arrived, brought by a black waiter. He seemed to be in a hurry to be paid and get back to his work.

When they had finished eating, Bond rang for the train attendant and the man started to get their beds ready. He seemed worried about something and he pretended to find it difficult to move around in the small compartment. At last he said, ‘Perhaps Mrs Bryce would like to go to the next room while I finish this. It’s empty all the way to St Petersburg.’ He unlocked the inside door to the next compartment without waiting for an answer.

Bond nodded to Solitaire, and she went through the door. Bond remembered the porter’s name and said, ‘Is there something you want to tell me, Baldwin?’

‘Yes, Sir, Mr Bryce,’ said the attendant nervously. ‘You’ve got an enemy on this train. I’ve heard things I don’t like. There’s a man who’s very interested in you, and he’s a bad man. Very bad. You need to be careful.’ He took two small pieces of wood from his pocket. ‘Push these under the doors to stop them opening.’

‘But ...’ Bond began.

‘Can’t help you any more, Sir,’ said Baldwin. ‘I’ll bring your dinner later. Don’t let anybody else into the room.’ He went out quickly.

Bond opened the inside door. ‘He’s finished,’ he told Solitaire. She came back into the compartment and climbed up onto the top bed.

The room was almost in darkness, with just a small light on by the bottom bed. Bond pushed the pieces of wood carefully under both doors. Then he took his coat off, lay down on his bed and went to sleep.

* * *

A few carriages away, a black waiter was waiting for the ten-minute stop at Philadelphia. He had a message that he needed to send.

Chapter 10. A Visitor in the Night

The train travelled on through the bright afternoon. They left Pennsylvania behind, and Maryland. They stopped at Washington, then

went on into Virginia. Bond woke up at seven o'clock. They had dinner, and at nine o'clock Baldwin came to take the dishes away.

'What time do we get into Jacksonville?' Bond asked him.

'About five o'clock in the morning, Sir,' said Baldwin.

'Is there a subway at the station?' asked Bond.

'Yes, Sir, this carriage stops next to it,' replied Baldwin.

'Can you have the door open and the steps down quickly?' said Bond.

Baldwin smiled. 'Yes, Sir. I can do that,' he said.

Bond gave him ten dollars.

After the attendant had left, Bond put the pieces of wood back under the doors. He told Solitaire of the warning Baldwin had given him earlier.

'I'm not surprised,' she said. They probably saw you coming into the station. Mr Big's got a team of spies everywhere. There will be one of them on the train. An attendant or a waiter, or someone else in the dining car. He can make these people do anything he wants them to do.'

'Is it true that he's a member of SMERSH, the Russian spy organization?' asked Bond.

'I don't know what SMERSH is,' said Solitaire, 'but I know he works for Russia. I've heard him talking to Russian visitors. And if Moscow is using him, they are using one of the most powerful men in America. He can find out anything. And if he doesn't get what he wants, somebody is usually killed.'

'So I've heard,' said Bond. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. 'We need to get as much sleep as we can,' he said. 'We'll get off the train at Jacksonville and find another way down to the coast. Maybe his spies won't see us.'

Suddenly, Solitaire put her arms around his neck and kissed him. 'I always hoped that I would meet someone like you,' she said quietly.

Bond smiled at her. 'I think we need to get some sleep. We'll have to wake up at four o'clock,' he said. Then he quietly pulled the

piece of wood away from under the door that opened into the next compartment. He turned the lock. He took the Beretta out of its holster, then looked at Solitaire and nodded his head towards the door. She understood and opened it quickly. The next compartment was empty.

‘Call me when you’re ready for bed,’ he said, and he went in and closed the door behind him.

The door to the corridor was locked. The compartment was the same as theirs, but Bond checked it carefully. If anyone came in, it would be through the doors. He would just have to stay awake.

Solitaire called for him. When he went back into their compartment, she was already lying down in the top bed.

‘Try and get some sleep,’ said Bond. He checked the pieces of wood under the doors, then took off his tie and lay down on the bottom bed. He lay thinking about Solitaire and listening to the sound of the train. Soon it was eleven o’clock, and they were travelling between Columbia and Savannah, Georgia. It would be another six hours before they were in Jacksonville. Mr Big had probably told his man on the train to try to kill Bond during the night, while everyone was asleep and the corridors were empty.

Bond read for a while, then turned off his light and thought about Solitaire and the future. He was half asleep when he heard someone trying to unlock the door of their compartment. It was one o’clock. Moving silently, he went to the inside door and pulled the piece of wood from under it. He opened the door and went into the next compartment. There was a loud click! as he unlocked the door to the corridor. He quickly pulled it open and jumped into the corridor.

Bond saw a man running fast towards the end of the carriage, but he could not get his gun out quickly enough to shoot. Because of his painful hand, he had had to push his Beretta into his belt to open the compartment door.

The man had gone and Bond did not chase him. There were too many empty compartments for the man to hide in. He went back into the

room, carefully closing and locking the doors. He lay down again and waited for the night to end.

Chapter 11. The Everglades

It was five o'clock in the morning when Bond and Solitaire got off the train at Jacksonville. It was still dark and there were very few lights on in the station. The entrance to the subway was near Car 245, and there was nobody around when they ran down the steps. Bond had told Baldwin to keep the door of their compartment locked after they had left. With luck, no one would know they had gone until the train reached St Petersburg.

Bond checked and found that the next train to St Petersburg was The Silver Meteor. It would leave Jacksonville at nine o'clock that morning.

He and Solitaire walked out into the warm, dark street and found an all-night restaurant. They had breakfast and talked. Solitaire told Bond that she had been living in an apartment in Mr Big's Harlem apartment building.

'I've been like a prisoner there for the last two years,' she said. 'Two women live in the apartment with me, and he never lets me go out without a guard. Sometimes I have to go to the room where I saw you and tell him if someone is lying to him. If they are, he usually kills them.'

Bond listened carefully. Every detail she told him added to the picture of a very powerful and cruel man, with a huge team of people working for him.

'Do you know anything about the gold coins?' he asked.

'I've had to ask men how many they've sold and the price they've got for them,' she said. 'Very often, they lie about both.'

Bond was careful to say very little of what he knew or guessed. He had strong feelings for Solitaire, but Bond was there to do his job, and his feelings for her would not change that.

The Silver Meteor arrived at nine o'clock and took them down through Florida. They had lunch, then left the train at Clearwater, which was the last station before St Petersburg. Bond stopped a taxi and gave the driver the address on Treasure Island. It was two o'clock, and the hot sun burnt down out of a blue sky.

The taxi stopped in traffic just before the long Treasure Island causeway across the waters of Boca Ciega Bay. A large man was driving a taxi next to them. When he saw Solitaire, his mouth fell open in surprise. Fie stopped the taxi soon after and ran to a public telephone.

'Let me talk to The Robber,' he said a few moments later. 'Robber? Listen, Mr Big must be in town. I just saw his girl in a Clearwater cab ... What? You just talked to him in New York?... Well, it was her. She was with a man in a blue suit... Follow him? OK, I'll stop their cab when it comes back across the causeway ... OK, OK!'

Five minutes later, the man called The Robber was speaking to Mr Big in New York. He had been warned about Bond, but Solitaire was a surprise. He listened to the instructions from Mr Big, then thought for a moment. Ten thousand dollars to do the job. He would need two men, so that would leave eight thousand dollars for him. Fie smiled, then picked up the telephone again.

* * *

Bond and Solitaire got out of the taxi at a group of small white-and-yellow beach houses called The Everglades. These were on three sides of a square of grass which went down to a beach and the sea.

The two of them went through a door with the word 'Office' on it. The woman behind the desk had blue-grey hair. She smiled. 'Yes?'

'Mr Leiter?' said Bond.

‘Oh, yes,’ she said. ‘You’re Mr Bryce. I’ll show you to your cottage - number one, right down by the sea. Mr Leiter’s been waiting for you.’ She looked at Solitaire.

‘This is Mrs Bryce,’ said Bond.

‘Oh,’ said the woman. ‘I’m Mrs Stuyvesant.’

She took them down a path to a cottage and knocked on the door. Leiter opened it. His mouth fell open in surprise when he saw Bond.

‘This is my wife,’ Bond said quickly.

‘Oh - yes, hello,’ said Leiter.

He almost pulled the two of them into the cottage, then shut the door before Mrs Stuyvesant could speak.

A small living room looked across the beach to the sea. It had comfortable beach chairs and a large table with a glass top. There was a white telephone and some flowers on the table.

Bond and Solitaire sat down and Bond lit a cigarette. He put the pack on the table. Leiter was still staring at them, his eyes wide with surprise, unable to speak. Suddenly, the telephone rang and Leiter picked it up.

‘Is that you, Lieutenant?’ he said. ‘Yes ... He’s here. He’s just arrived.’ He listened for a moment, then turned to Bond. ‘Where did you leave the train?’ Bond told him. ‘Jacksonville,’ Leiter said into the phone. ‘Yes, I’ll get the information from him and phone you later.’

He put down the telephone and sat down opposite Bond. He looked at Solitaire. ‘I guess you’re Solitaire,’ he said, and smiled at her.

‘She’s working with us now,’ Bond told him.

‘That’s great,’ said Leiter. ‘Well, you won’t have seen the newspapers or heard the radio, so I’ll tell you. The Phantom was stopped soon after Jacksonville. Your compartment was bombed, and the bomb killed the train attendant. He was outside in the corridor. The police started asking questions immediately. “Who did it? Who are Mr and Mrs Bryce? Where are they?” Of course, we thought you’d been kidnapped. Then the police found out that your tickets had been bought in New

York by the FBI, and after that everyone wanted answers from me.’ He reached across for one of Bond’s cigarettes. ‘Now tell me your story.’

Bond told him.

‘Did anyone see you when you left the train at Jacksonville?’ asked Leiter.

‘I don’t think so,’ said Bond. ‘But we’d better keep Solitaire here until we can get her safely away. We’ll put her on a flight to Jamaica tomorrow. I can get someone to look after her there until we come.’

‘OK,’ said Leiter. ‘We’ll get a ticket for her to fly to Miami tomorrow. From there she can fly to Jamaica. She should arrive in Jamaica by tomorrow evening.’

‘Is that OK, Solitaire?’ asked Bond.

Solitaire was staring out of the window. ‘Yes,’ she said nervously. ‘Yes, I ... suppose that’s all right.’

Chapter 12. Death of a Bird

Solitaire stood up. ‘I’ll take my things to the bedroom,’ she said. ‘I expect you two have a lot to talk about.’

‘You can have James’s room,’ said Leiter. ‘He can share my room.’

He took her to the bedroom, then went into the kitchen and came back with a bottle of whisky and two glasses. When the two men were holding their drinks, Leiter began to talk about the train.

‘It left Jacksonville about five o’clock,’ he said. ‘It got to Waldo at about six, and the bomb exploded soon after it left. Here’s what I think happened ... Just after the train leaves Waldo, Mr Big’s man gets into the compartment next to yours. He puts some sort of sign in the window - a message to show that your compartment is to the right of it. Maybe a towel or something like that. About twenty minutes after leaving Waldo, the train driver gets an emergency signal to stop the train.’

‘There’s a grey Buick car waiting on the road that runs next to the train track. The train driver sees three black men get out. Two are carrying guns and the other man has something in his hand. They walk along the train and stop outside Car 245. The two men with guns shoot out the glass in your compartment window. The other man throws in the bomb, then all three run back to the Buick. They drive away - fast. The bomb goes boom! End of James Bond. Except that it’s not.’

‘Well, that’s the third time I’ve escaped dying since I arrived in New York,’ said Bond.

‘Mr Big won’t like that at all. He doesn’t usually make mistakes,’ said Leiter.

‘Tell me, what more do you know about the gold coins?’ asked Bond.

‘They definitely get into the USA through St Petersburg,’ said Leiter. ‘The Secatur comes straight from Jamaica and always stops at that factory. What’s it called?’

‘Ourobouros,’ said Bond.

‘Let’s go and see the place,’ said Leiter. ‘The Secatur is in Cuba now. It left St Petersburg a week ago. They searched the yacht when it came in and when it left, but didn’t find anything, of course. No gold coins. But let’s go and see if we can have a look at Mr Big’s Robber. Go and tell Solitaire to stay here until we get back, then we’ll take her out to dinner.’ But Solitaire did not want to be left alone. ‘I want to get away from here,’ she told him with fear in her eyes. Bond kissed her. ‘It’s all right,’ he said. ‘We’ll be back in an hour. Nothing can happen to you here. Then I won’t leave you until you’re on the plane.’

Leiter had a car waiting outside. Minutes later, Bond was driving the car across the causeway from Treasure Island to the city of St Petersburg.

When they came to the city’s waterfront, Leiter said, ‘We’d better get out and walk. The Robber’s place is near here.’

They left the car and walked to a narrow street which ended at a small wooden jetty that reached out twenty feet into the sea. Next to the open gate of the jetty was a long, low warehouse. Painted on the wide door were the words: OUROBOUROS WORM AND BAIT SHIPPERS CORAL, SHELLS, TROPICAL FISH. Inside the big door, there was a smaller door with a lock on it. The sign on this smaller door said: PRIVATE. KEEP OUT.

The Robber was sitting in a chair outside the small door. He was cleaning a gun - a Remington .30 rifle, Bond thought. He was about forty years old, with a thin, dark face. He looked cruel and cold, like the bad man in a crime film.

Bond and Leiter walked past him and onto the jetty. He did not look up, but Bond could feel the man's eyes following them. They watched a large grey bird - a pelican - flying above the water. Suddenly, it flew down into the water and came back up holding a fish. Moments later, it flew slowly back, landed on the jetty and swallowed the fish.

Bond and Leiter turned around and walked back to The Robber. He was still cleaning the rifle.

'Good afternoon,' said Leiter. 'Are you the manager here?'

'Yeah,' said the man, without looking up.

'Could we leave our boat here?' asked Leiter. 'It's too crowded everywhere else.'

'No,' said the man.

Leiter took a twenty dollar bill from his pocket and held it out to The Robber. 'Would this help to change your mind?'

'No,' said The Robber. Then, after a moment, he asked, 'What's the name of your boat?'

'The Sybil,' said Leiter.

The Robber stared at them. Then he moved the rifle across the front of both Bond and Leiter. They did not move. The Robber pointed the rifle down the jetty, narrowed his eyes and pulled the trigger. The

pelican made a small noise, and they heard its heavy body fall into the water.

‘Why did you do that?’ asked Bond angrily.

‘Practice,’ said The Robber, putting another bullet into the rifle. He stared at them. ‘You’ve got guns, I can smell them.’ He moved the rifle so that it pointed at Leiter’s stomach, then he got up and opened the door behind him. ‘Come around here again and I’ll shoot you, just like the bird. I’ve had enough of cops like you looking around and asking questions.’

He went into the warehouse and closed the door with a crash behind him.

Bond and Leiter looked at each other.

‘So we won’t be going in the front door,’ said Bond, smiling. ‘But every warehouse has more than one door.’

‘We’ll check that on our next visit,’ said Leiter. ‘We’d better get back to Solitaire.’

They drove back to The Everglades, where they found Mrs Stuyvesant waiting outside. She saw them get out of the car and hurried towards them.

‘There was a large wooden box delivered to your cottage, Mr Leiter,’ she said. ‘Very large. The two men who brought it had trouble getting it through the door. I hope

Her mouth fell open in surprise as Bond and Leiter turned and ran towards the cottage.

Chapter 13. The Man with No Face

Solitaire was not in the cottage and the lock of her room had been broken. Bond swore angrily to himself. He should not have left her alone. The two men had probably been carrying guns. Bond imagined the fear Solitaire must have felt as they put her in the wooden box. But

how had Mr Big found her so fast? It was just another example of the fact that Mr Big's spies were everywhere.

Leiter was speaking to the FBI on the telephone. When he put the phone down, he said, 'They're sending two of their men here. I'll talk to Washington and New York.'

Bond went back into Solitaire's room. Her things were still there, and he found her bag under the bed. He looked inside it and found the five thousand dollars. Bond put them into his pocket. The money would be safe with him.

It was eight o'clock when the FBI men finished their search for clues and left. Bond and Leiter went out and had dinner and some drinks, then went back to their cottage. Much later, after more drinks, they went to bed.

Bond slept in Solitaire's room and woke up at eight o'clock the next day. He had a quick shower and went into Leiter's room. Leiter was not there but there was a note by the door.

It's five o'clock. I'm going to visit the worm and bait warehouse. It's strange that The Robber was sitting there with his rifle while Solitaire was being kidnapped. Maybe he knew we were in town and was ready for trouble if things went wrong. If I'm not back by ten, call the FBI on Tampa 88.

Felix

Bond did not wait. He telephoned for a taxi. He got dressed and was just about to leave to go to the warehouse when the telephone rang. He picked it up.

'Mr Bryce? This is Mound Park Hospital speaking,' said a voice. 'Doctor Roberts here. We have a Mr Leiter here who is asking for you.'

'What happened?' asked Bond, full of fear. 'Is he all right?'

'A car accident, but it's not too serious,' said the voice. 'Can you come now?'

Bond's taxi arrived and minutes later he was crossing the Treasure Island Causeway. An ambulance went past them. 'More trouble,' thought Bond.

A pretty nurse sat at the hospital desk. 'Yes?' she said. 'Doctor Roberts called me,' said Bond. 'I'm looking for a patient called Felix Leiter. He was brought in this morning.'

'There's no doctor called Roberts here,' said the nurse. She looked down at a list on the desk. And there's no patient called Leiter. Are you sure you're at the right hospital?'

Bond stared at her, trying to keep calm. Then he turned away without answering.

Luckily, there was a taxi outside. Bond told the driver to take him back to The Everglades as fast as possible. When they arrived, Mrs Stuyvesant hurried out to meet him.

'An ambulance came just after you left,' she told Bond. 'The men said that Mr Leiter had been in a car accident. They had to carry him into the cottage, and his face was covered with bandages.'

Bond did not wait to hear more. He ran to the cottage and straight into Leiter's bedroom. There was the shape of a body on Leiter's bed, covered with a sheet. Bond pulled the sheet away from the face. But there was no face, only something covered tightly in dirty bandages.

He pulled the sheet down further. There were more bandages, then a large bag covered in blood which was holding the bottom half of the body. There was a small hole in the bandages where the person's mouth should have been. Bond moved his face nearer to the bandages. There was a whisper of breath against his cheek.

He picked up the telephone by the bed and called Tampa 88. It took several minutes to make them understand what he was telling them.

Bond took off some of the bandages round the top of the head. The hair was wet. Bond touched it, then put his finger to his mouth. It tasted of salt. He looked more closely at the hair - and then he knew for sure. It was Felix.

A police doctor and two detectives arrived, and Bond told them everything that he knew. After some time, the police doctor came out from the bedroom. ‘I think he’ll live,’ he told Bond. ‘But one arm is gone, and half of the left leg. I don’t know what did it. An animal? Maybe a shark?’

There was a telephone call from an FBI lieutenant. He had been sent to The Robber’s place after Bond’s earlier phone call. The Robber and two other men had been questioned for an hour. All three had alibis for that morning, and there was nothing at the warehouse except tanks of fish, bait and cases of coral and shells. Leiter’s car had been found on the other side of the harbour.

Soon after, the police ambulance arrived and left with Leiter and the police doctor. The two detectives also left. The telephone rang, and it was Leiter’s CIA boss. He asked Bond to move on to Jamaica as soon as possible.

‘I think there’s a flight tomorrow,’ said Bond. ‘I’ll be on it. Any other news?’

‘Oh, yes,’ said the man. ‘Mr Big and his girlfriend, Solitaire, left for Havana, Cuba, during the night. They left from a small airfield on a private plane. That’s how we missed them. Our man in Cuba reported their arrival. The Secatur is still there, too.’

After the call, Bond thought for several minutes, then found the telephone book. After a minute, he picked up the telephone and spoke to a man at the Eastern Garden Aquarium. ‘Where could I buy a live shark?’ he asked.

‘The only place I know is Ourobouros Worm and Bait,’ came the answer. ‘They’ve got sharks. Big ones. White, tiger, even hammerhead sharks.’

Bond thanked him. Then he got out his gun and cleaned it, waiting for night to come.

At six o'clock, Bond paid his bill at The Everglades and left. Leiter's car had been returned and Bond drove it into the town. He visited a shop and bought several things, then found a restaurant. After dinner, he drove to the harbour and parked the car near the sea.

It was a bright, moonlit night and he walked along by the low sea wall. The wall was about three feet wide, and Bond climbed up and walked on top of it. When he got close to the warehouse, he jumped off the wall into the parking space at the back of the building.

Above his head, the roof and top part of the south wall of the warehouse were all made of glass. There were open windows up on the roof, but they were too high for Bond to reach. He started working with a glass-cutter that he had bought at the shop. While he was working, he looked through the glass into the huge, moonlit warehouse. He could see rows and rows of large glass tanks, and above them there was a long metal walkway. There were also shelves of shells and coral.

After a quarter of an hour's careful work, Bond took out a large, square piece of the glass in front of him. He took off his shoes and pushed them inside his shirt. Then he pulled himself through the hole in the glass and dropped onto one of the shelves of shells. As quietly as he could, he made a space for his feet. A moment later, he was down on the floor.

He left his shoes on the shelf, then moved across the floor with a small torch in his hand. He walked slowly past tank after tank of coloured fish. Underneath these were trays of live worms and bait.

After a time, he found what he was looking for - the poisonous fish. Here the tanks were smaller, and there was only one fish in each tank. There must have been hundreds of these tanks. On the glass of each one was a sign saying VERY DANGEROUS or DON'T TOUCH.

He chose a tank which had a scorpion fish in it. Bond knew these did not attack, but they were poisonous when touched. He took out a pocket knife and opened the longest blade. He pulled up his shirt sleeve

and put his arm into the tank. He then pushed the knife blade quickly towards the centre of the fish's head. The knife went through it and Bond carefully removed the fish from the tank. He dropped it onto the floor.

Next, he put his hand into the sand at the bottom of the tank. His fingers touched rows of coins in a flat tray. He pulled out a coin and shone his torch on it. It was gold, and it was Spanish.

Bond thought for a moment. There had to be a thousand coins in that one tank. Several thousand dollars' worth, guarded by one poisonous fish. The Secatur would carry about a hundred tanks - well over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of gold on each journey. Trucks would come for the tanks, and in another place, the fish would be taken out and thrown back into the sea or perhaps burnt. The water and sand would be taken out and the gold coins washed and put into bags. Then the bags would go to Mr Big's men to be sold. 'All very clever,' thought Bond.

He dropped the scorpion fish back into the tank.

Suddenly, all the lights in the warehouse came on. A voice said, 'Don't move! Put your hands in the air!'

Bond turned and threw himself under the tank. The Robber was about twenty yards away, pointing his rifle at him. There was a crack as The Robber fired a shot: and the tank above Bond exploded like a bomb. Water poured down, but Bond had rolled into the next passageway. He quickly got up and ran. There was another shot and a second tank exploded near him.

He was now at the end of the warehouse where he had climbed in. The Robber was at the other end, fifty yards away and he was shooting under the tanks at Bond's legs. Bond fired two shots from his Beretta as he quickly crossed the central passageway. There was a crash of glass and water, a scream, and then The Robber was shooting again.

As Bond passed a row of much smaller tanks, he pushed one of them onto the floor. It left a space on the table. He ran to get his shoes,

then quickly ran back and jumped up onto the table. There was a moment's silence as Bond hid on the table and put his shoes back on. Then The Robber shouted.

'Come out, or I'll bomb you out! Drop your gun on the floor and come down the central passageway with your hands up. I won't shoot. We'll have a little talk.'

'OK,' replied Bond, after a moment. 'I don't really have a choice.' He dropped his Beretta on the floor. Then he took the gold coin from his pocket and held it tight in his injured left hand. He walked slowly along the central passageway with his hands up and stopped halfway up the passage.

The Robber came towards him. When he was a few yards from Bond, he stopped. 'Put your hands up higher!' he shouted.

Bond lifted his hands across his face. Between his fingers, he saw The Robber move something on the floor with his foot.

Suddenly, Bond guessed what had happened to Leiter, but there was no time to think about it now.

The Robber moved nearer. At that moment, Bond dropped the gold coin from his left hand. The Robber looked down, and Bond moved quickly. He reached out with his right foot and the steel-capped shoe almost kicked the rifle from the man's hands. At the same time, The Robber fired the gun and the bullet went through the glass roof.

Bond threw himself at the man's stomach. The Robber began to fall backwards, and Bond kicked again with his steel' capped shoe. It hit The Robber's knee, and the man screamed with pain and dropped his rifle. As he fell to the ground, a large part of the floor moved and suddenly started to open. The Robber almost disappeared down the black opening of a trapdoor. He gave a scream of fear as his fingers caught the edge of the floor.

Bond looked down. Behind The Robber's terrified face he could see nothing but blackness. But he heard the sound of water and guessed that there was a way out to the sea, probably through narrow bars. And

he could hear something moving down there. A hammerhead or a tiger shark?

‘Pull me out!’ cried The Robber. His eyes were wide with fear. ‘I’ll tell you anything!’

‘What happened to Solitaire?’ asked Bond coldly.

‘Mr Big told me to arrange a kidnapping,’ said The Robber. ‘Two men in Tampa - Butch and The Lifer. They’ll be at The Oasis bar. Now will you pull me out?’

‘And the American, Leiter?’ asked Bond. ‘What happened to him?’

‘He called me early this morning. Told me to come here because the warehouse was on fire. When I got here, he said he wanted to search the place. He had a gun. He ... he just fell through the trapdoor. It was an accident. We pulled him out before he was killed. He’ll be OK.’

Bond looked over at the fingers holding the edge of the floor. He knew that The Robber must have got Leiter over the trapdoor, then opened it. He imagined The Robber laughing at Felix’s half-eaten body.

Bond suddenly became very angry and he kicked the man as hard as he could in the back - twice.

The Robber screamed as he fell. There was a big splash, and more screams as he was attacked by something in the water.

Bond kicked the trapdoor shut and there was silence. He picked up the gold coin and his Beretta, turned off the lights and then walked out of the building.

Chapter 15. Jamaica

Bond drove towards Tampa and stopped at a bar for a drink. He used the washroom to clean himself. The bandages on his left hand were dirty and his finger was very painful. He was very tired, but he got back into the car and drove towards the airport. He stopped at the first hotel

that looked open and awake. It was two o'clock in the morning, and he went straight to bed.

He woke up at midday and walked down the road to a cafe for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. Then he went back to his room and wrote a report for the FBI at Tampa. He said nothing in the report about the gold in the poisonous fish tanks - this would be Bond's secret. He did not want Mr Big to know he had seen the coins.

Later, he drove to the airport and left Leiter's car outside for the FBI to collect. Before he got on the plane, he telephoned the hospital in St Petersburg. Leiter was no better, but no worse.

Bond noticed an FBI agent watching him at the airport. He was certain that the agent was there to make sure that Bond got on the plane. They would be glad to see the last of him. Wherever he had gone in America, he had left dead bodies.

The plane for Jamaica left at five o'clock. The sun was low in the sky as the plane flew round over Tampa Bay and then flew east. Soon they were over Miami. After an early dinner, the plane stopped at Nassau before flying on across Cuba and finally to Jamaica.

When Bond arrived at Palisadoes Airport, Strangways, the Chief Secret Service Agent for the Caribbean, was there to meet him. He was good-looking, thirty-five years old and wore a black patch over one eye. It was nearly eleven o'clock, and the night was quiet and hot. The two men spoke very little until they were sitting outside Strangways's attractive white house. Then the Caribbean agent told Bond about the Jamaican part of the case.

'There have always been stories about Bloody Morgan's treasure on the Isle of Surprise,' he explained. 'It's a small island in the centre of Shark Bay, where Morgan used to keep his ships. They say that when he left here for the last time in 1683, he hid his treasure somewhere in Jamaica. When he died, the secret of the treasure's hiding place on the island died with him.'

‘For two hundred years, treasure hunters found nothing. Then, six months ago, a New York company bought the island, and a few weeks later the Secatur came into Shark Bay. The men on the boat started to cut steps into the rocks up to the top of the island. Then they built several simple, small buildings there. They said that they had come to collect shells and catch tropical fish for the Ourobours company. They bought large numbers of fish, shells and coral from the Shark Bay fishermen. Then for a week there were explosions on the island, and the men on the boat told people that they were making a large fish tank in the ground.

‘The Secatur visited every two weeks to collect the fish, shells and coral. Fishermen were warned to stay away from the island. One fisherman swam across there at night, planning to search for the treasure. He didn’t come back and his body was never found. After that, nobody went near the island again. They were too frightened.

‘It was about that time that I got interested,’ Strangways continued. ‘I sent a report to London and they discovered that the island belonged to Mr Big. This was about three months ago. I was told to find out what was really happening there, so I arranged for the island to be watched day and night. Nothing suspicious happened, so I got two good swimmers to make an underwater visit to the island. They didn’t return, and their bodies appeared in different parts of the bay the next day. Or what the sharks had left of the bodies. Terrible. You can imagine how I felt about it.’

‘Where is the Secatur now?’ asked Bond.

‘In Cuba,’ said Strangways. ‘It will be here in a week, the CIA tells me.’

‘How many journeys has the boat made?’ asked Bond. ‘About twenty,’ said Strangways.

Bond took a moment to think. So Mr Big had already taken around a million pounds in gold out of the island.

‘I’ve got you a house at Beau Desert. You can see the island from there,’ Strangways told Bond. ‘I’ve got you a car and a good man to work with you. His name’s Quarrel and he’s the best fisherman and swimmer in the Caribbean. You should rest for a week, until the Secatur comes in, then you’re going to have to get onto the island. I’ll be in Kingston, reporting to London and Washington. They’ll want to know everything we do. Is there anything else I can do for you?’

‘Yes...’ said Bond. ‘I need a frogman suit with a compressed air bottle, a good underwater harpoon gun and an underwater torch, and all the information you can get me about sharks. Oh yes, and a limpet mine.’

Chapter 16. Bond Gets Ready

After breakfast the next morning, Strangways introduced Quarrel to Bond.

‘Good morning, Captain,’ Quarrel said. He was a man of the sea, and ‘captain’ was the highest title he knew.

Bond liked him. After they had discussed their plans, the two men left in the little car Quarrel had brought with him. Strangways went to get the things that Bond needed for the job ahead.

By half past ten, they were travelling down the little road that went to Shark Bay. The bay was C-shaped, and in the centre was the Isle of Surprise. Quarrel pointed towards the little buildings on the top of the island. There were trees all around them, and Bond looked at them carefully through Quarrel’s binoculars. He looked at the place in the bay where the Secatur would anchor when it arrived. Then Quarrel pointed to Beau Desert, in the middle of the western side of the ‘C’.

‘That’s where we’ll work from,’ he said.

They drove back onto the main coast road and stopped for lunch on the other side of the wide bay. Then they drove to the western end of the island to the most beautiful beach Bond had ever seen. There was

white sand reaching down to the sea and small fishermen's cottages with palm trees all around them.

This was where they were going to stay for the week before going to Beau Desert. Bond went for a swim while Quarrel went into the cottage and made it comfortable.

Later, when the stars and the moon shone down, the sound of the sea died to a whisper. There was the short silence between the two great winds of Jamaica, then the palm trees began to whisper again.

'The "Undertaker's Wind",' Quarrel told Bond. 'It blows the bad air out of the island at night, from six until six. Then every morning the "Doctor's Wind" comes and blows the sweet air in from the sea. Well, that's what we call them in Jamaica.' He grinned at Bond. 'I guess you and the Undertaker's Wind have got the same job, Captain.'

Bond laughed.

The next day Bond began his training. Every morning before breakfast, he swam a mile up the beach and then ran back along the sand. At about nine o'clock, he and Quarrel would go out in a canoe. The single sail took them fast through the water, up the coast to Bloody Bay and Orange Bay. Here they pulled the canoe up onto the beach and then went underwater hunting. Bond used a mask and an old harpoon gun.

'Fish don't usually attack a man,' Quarrel told him. 'Except the barracuda - a big, dangerous fish with very sharp teeth.'

By the end of the week, Bond could swim two miles without feeling tired. His hand was completely better and he was sunburnt.

Quarrel was pleased with him. 'You're ready for Surprise, Captain,' he said.

In the evening of the eighth day, they came back to the cottage to find Strangways waiting for them. He had good news for them. Felix Leiter had lost an arm and a leg, but he would not die.

'He says that he's sorry not to be with you,' Strangways told Bond. 'Also, the Secatur sails tomorrow for Surprise and should be here

before dark. Mr Big is on board. Oh, and a girl called Solitaire is with him. Do you know anything about her?’

‘Not much,’ Bond said. ‘But I’d like to get her away from him. She’s not one of his team.’

He went outside and looked up at the stars. There was a lot to think about and a lot to do. Discovering the secret of the treasure, killing a dangerous criminal - and rescuing Solitaire.

* * *

After dinner Strangways gave Bond several books about sharks and dangerous fish and then left the cottage. At six the next morning, Bond and Quarrel left for Beau Desert. They were there by ten thirty. There was a path between the trees that went down to the little beach house. From inside the house, Bond looked across at the island. The top half was hidden by trees, but the cliff looked grey and dangerous in the half-shadow made by the hot sun.

After lunch, Bond looked at the things that had come from London. Strangways had sent them on from Kingston. Bond put on the black frogman’s suit. It fitted him perfectly. He checked the air bottle, the harpoon gun, dagger and torch. Finally, there was the heavy limpet mine with some fuses. These were in a box with the word DANGER printed on top of it.

At five o’clock, Strangways arrived with news of the Secatur.

‘They’ve come through Port Maria and will be here soon,’ he said. ‘Mr Big has a passport in the name of Gallia. The girl’s passport is in the name of Simone Latrelle. There are more than a hundred empty fish tanks on board.’

‘I’ll go to the island tomorrow night,’ Bond told him.

Quarrel came in from outside. ‘The Secatur is coming in through the coral reef now, Captain.’

They went a little nearer to the water’s edge and looked at the boat through binoculars. It was a good-looking yacht, about seventy foot long, black and grey and built for speed. On the island, three men came

running down the cliff steps to the jetty. They caught the ropes which were thrown from the boat as it dropped its anchor into the deep water. Mr Big stepped onto the jetty, then started to climb the steps. Two men were carrying a stretcher and they followed Mr Big up the steps. There was a woman's body tied to the stretcher. Bond could see Solitaire's black hair through his binoculars.

Then twelve men made a line up the steps and handed the empty fish tanks up one after another. Quarrel counted a hundred and twenty tanks. After this, tanks half filled with water and sand were carefully passed down to the boat - one every five minutes.

'They're putting things on the boat already!' Strangways said. 'That's unusual. Maybe they're all leaving the island in the morning. This could be the last trip.'

Bond and Strangways walked back up through the trees, leaving Quarrel to watch the yacht. They sat down in the living room and Strangways got himself a glass of whisky. Bond stared out of the window, thinking.

It was six o'clock. The moon was already in the sky, and the Undertaker's Wind blew softly through the palm trees. He had travelled two thousand miles for this, but suddenly he hated and feared the sea, and everything in it. And in a few hours, he would walk alone under that black sheet of water.

Quarrel came in soon after. 'They're working with lights now, Captain,' he said. 'A tank every five minutes. I guess that'll be ten hours work. They'll finish at about four in the morning, but won't sail before six. It would be too dangerous to leave earlier. It needs to be light for them to find their way through the coral reef.'

'I'll start at ten o'clock tonight,' said Bond. 'I'll go from the rocks at the left of the beach. Can you get us some dinner and then get the things I need out onto the beach?'

Quarrel left the room, and Bond turned to Strangways. 'Now, tell me what they usually do when they're ready to sail,' he said. 'How long

does it take them to get away from the island? If it's the last trip, they'll leave with extra men.'

Listening carefully to Strangways, Bond suddenly felt strong again and his fear disappeared. They talked for the next three hours.

At ten o'clock, Bond was on the beach and dressed in his black frogman's suit. Quarrel and Strangways watched him go slowly into the sea and vanish under the water.

'Go safely,' said Quarrel quietly.

Then he and Strangways moved back through the bright moonlight and the shadows to the house to wait for Bond's return.

Chapter 17. Food for the Barracudas

The heavy limpet mine was tied to Bond's chest and carried him straight to the bottom of the sea. He was carrying the harpoon gun in his left hand, but he travelled fast through the water. He was warm in the frogman's suit and breathed easily with the help of the compressed air.

It took him fifteen minutes to swim through fifty yards of the dangerously sharp coral reef, which was full of all sorts of sea life. He stopped and rested for a short time at the edge of the reef. Suddenly, he felt something moving tightly around both of his legs. It was an octopus.

Bond tried to swim away, but the octopus was stronger than he had expected. In a moment he would be pulled down flat onto his face. Then it might be impossible to fight the octopus with the heavy mine on his chest and the air bottle on his back.

Bond quickly pulled the dagger from his belt and tried to attack the octopus between his legs. But then he was turned over onto his back and was lying on the sand. At that moment, he remembered the harpoon gun and reached for it. He pulled the trigger. Immediately a thick, black cloud came from the octopus's body. One of Bond's legs came free, and then the other. He pulled hard on the harpoon line and another black cloud poured towards him - the harpoon was free.

Bond was breathing heavily. Above him, a stream of air bubbles went up to the surface of the water. Bond swore, afraid that they might be seen from the yacht, but there was nothing he could do.

He swam forwards. There were shadows of big fish on the moonlit sand, some as long as himself. One shadow followed beside him, and he looked up to see a shark. Its nose was following Bond's line of air bubbles. After about a minute, it moved away.

Then there were large barracudas moving above him and looking down out of their angry eyes. They were interested in him and his bubbles and followed him silently. There were about twenty of them by the time Bond was near the island.

Suddenly, Bond could see the bottom of the Secatur above him. He looked at his watch. It was three minutes past eleven o'clock. He took a seven-hour fuse from his side pocket and pushed it into the limpet mine. The rest of the fuses he buried in the sand. He did not want them to be found if he was caught.

After this, he swam up, carrying the mine between his hands. He fixed it as carefully as he could to the bottom of the Secatur and turned to swim towards some rocks. Then he saw what was happening behind him.

The barracudas seemed to be going crazy. They were swimming round in circles like mad dogs, and three sharks were moving quickly between them in the water. Bond was hit in the face and knocked again and again. At any moment, his rubber suit would be torn and his skin broken and bleeding. Then the barracudas would smell the blood and be attacking him in seconds.

He swam fast along the bottom of the boat with his harpoon gun ready. Suddenly, the sea above him turned red. Pieces of something floated down towards him. He caught a piece and looked at it.

Up above, someone was throwing dead fish and pouring blood into the water. Now Bond understood why there were so many barracudas and sharks around the island. Mr Big was feeding them.

They were his protection against people who wanted to have a look around, three of whom had already been half-eaten by the fish.

Something hit Bond hard on his left shoulder, and a large barracuda swam away with a piece of black rubber in its mouth. Bond felt no pain as he swam wildly towards the rocks. But blood was coming from his shoulder, and water was starting to come in between the rubber frogman's suit and his skin.

He was just about to swim up to the water's surface when he saw a wide hole in the rocks in front of him. A large rock lay on its side next to it, and Bond swam behind the rock.

He turned in time to see the barracuda coming towards him again. He fired the harpoon gun and hit the fish in the centre of its open mouth. The fish stopped and tried to close its mouth, then it swam away taking the gun, the line and harpoon with it.

Now Bond saw the cave that the large rock had been hiding. He swam through the opening for several yards, then stood up on soft sand. He shone his torch on the sides and ceiling of the cave. He guessed that it had been dug outwards from somewhere in the centre of the island. Probably by Bloody Morgan's men.

The big rock had been there to cover the entrance. The Shark Bay fisherman who had disappeared six months ago must have found it. Perhaps a bad storm had moved it. Then the fisherman had found the treasure and had gone to Mr Big for help selling it. That had been a big mistake. Bond guessed that the fisherman had been killed and thrown into the Harlem River.

Bond guessed that his air bubbles had been seen, but he had to go on. He had to stop Solitaire getting on the boat. He looked at his watch. Half an hour after midnight. He felt the Beretta under his rubber suit. Had it been damaged by water?

He moved on into the cave, shining the torch in front of him. After about ten yards, there was a small light in the water ahead of him. He switched off the torch and moved towards it. There was a wide,

shining pool beyond the end of the cave. Its white, sandy bottom was as bright as day. Bond stopped near the edge of the pool, in the shadows.

He tried to think. Suddenly, he saw a thin stream of his blood moving into the pool from his shoulder. He had forgotten the injury from the barracuda, but now it began to hurt.

Suddenly, there was a big splash from the pool and two men were swimming towards him with knives in their hands. Before Bond could reach his own knife, they had pulled him up to the surface of the pool and out onto flat sand. His rubber suit was pulled off him, leaving him in swimming shorts.

Bond looked up and saw Mr Big sitting behind a small table. He had a pen in one hand, and there were papers on the table. He looked calm and bored.

‘Good morning, Mr Bond,’ he said. ‘You took a long time coming. We saw your air bubbles some time ago.’

Bond was in a cave as big as a church. The pool covered half the floor. Then there was the narrow bit of sand he was standing on, and the rest of the floor was smooth, flat rock. Some steps went up behind Mr Big, and there were bright lights on the walls.

A group of men stood to Bond’s left, watching him. There were hundreds of gold coins round their feet and rows of wooden trays beside them. Some trays were on the floor, and partly filled with coins. A man had stopped at the bottom of the steps. He was carrying a full tray of coins. In the left corner of the cave, two men stood next to a large metal pot. The pot was hanging over a fire. Beside it were gold cups, plates and other things made of gold. Along the wall near them were rows of metal trays, each one filled with flat, bright gold.

Mr Big got up slowly from the table and walked over to the steps in the rock. He started to climb.

‘Bring Mr Bond up,’ he said.

They climbed up the steps past an open door near the ceiling. Mr Big stopped to rest for a moment, then up they went again. Bond counted more than eighty steps before they reached the top, where there was a metal door. Mr Big unlocked the door and opened it, and Bond and his guard followed him through into a long narrow room. There were metal shackles low down in the walls. A light hung down from the roof at the far end. There was someone lying under it, under a blanket.

‘Solitaire,’ said Mr Big softly.

Bond started to move forward, but the guard moved quickly and stopped him. Then Mr Big turned round. He had a small gun in his hand. He pointed it at Bond.

‘You can let him go,’ Mr Big told Bond’s guard.

Bond went past Mr Big. Solitaire was on her feet and moving towards him. She saw his face and began to run.

‘James!’ she cried. ‘James!’

They held each other.

‘Get me some rope,’ said Mr Big.

‘It’s all right, Solitaire,’ said Bond, but he knew that everything was not all right, ‘I’m here now.’

Solitaire was very pale and there were black circles under her eyes. She wore a dirty white suit and looked thin. She saw the blood on his shoulder and down his arm. ‘Oh, my darling, what is it?’ she said, and started to cry.

‘Tie them up,’ said Mr Big.

The black guard came towards them with rope in his hands. For a second or two, Bond thought about attacking him.

‘No, Mr Bond,’ Mr Big said simply.

The guard tied Bond’s arms behind his back.

‘Over there,’ said Mr Big. He pointed at one of the shackles.

The guard knocked Bond’s legs from under him, and Bond fell onto his injured shoulder. The guard pulled him across to the shackle,

then put the rope through the shackle and down to Bond's legs. He tied them together. Then he walked back to Solitaire and tied her to a shackle opposite Bond.

Mr Big looked at his watch. 'Go,' he told the guard. He closed the big door behind the man, then turned to Bond. 'Four of my men have died because of you. My people are beginning to question my power, so something must be done. What happened to the American was not enough, so you and the girl can die together.' He looked at his watch again. 'In two-and-a-half hours, at six o'clock, you will be tied together. Then you'll be pulled through the sea behind the yacht when it leaves. The coral reef will cut you into pieces, and the sharks will smell the blood. They'll finish the job for me.'

Bond looked at him. 'You're a big man,' he said. 'And one day you'll die a big and terrible death. If you kill us, that death will come very fast. I've arranged for it to happen.' His mind was working fast while he spoke. He was thinking of the timed fuse in the limpet mine and counting hours and minutes. But would he and Solitaire be dead before that time came? He smiled at her, but she did not seem to see him.

Suddenly, she shouted, 'I don't know. I can't see. It's so near, so close. There is much death, but ...'

'Solitaire!' shouted Bond. 'Stop!'

He was afraid that the strange things she saw in the future might give a warning to Mr Big. She looked strangely back at Bond, but said nothing.

'Nothing you have arranged can hurt me, Mr Bond,' said Mr Big. He stood in the doorway and looked at them. 'I'll leave you now. A short, but very good night to you both.'

It was not yet light when the guards came for Bond and Solitaire. Their leg ropes were cut and they were taken up to the open ground above. They stood by some trees, and Bond breathed in the cool

morning air. As they stood waiting, they saw men walking past carrying things. Everyone was leaving the island.

Bond moved nearer to Solitaire. After Mr Big had left them, he had told her about the limpet mine. It would explode a few minutes after six o'clock, so it was important that the Secatur sailed at six. If they were still on the jetty beside the boat, they would be killed with Mr Big.

Bond guessed that they would be pulled along at least seventy yards behind the yacht. The Secatur would go through the reef before them. With luck, the mine would explode before he and Solitaire reached the reef and were cut to pieces. But would they be killed by the explosion?

They had talked all night and held each other. 'Don't worry about me,' Solitaire had told him. 'I'm not afraid, although there is much death very close. Do you love me a little?'

'Yes,' Bond had told her. 'I do.'

It was getting lighter now, and Bond could hear the sound of the boat's engines. Mr Big appeared with a briefcase in his hand. He looked up at the sky and said in a loud voice, 'Thank you, Bloody Morgan. We'll spend your treasure well!' He turned towards the guards, who were staring at him. 'Is everything on the boat?' he asked.

'Yes, Sir,' replied one of the men.

'Then take them down,' Mr Big said.

The guards took Bond and Solitaire to the edge of the cliff and down the steps. Mr Big followed them. There were two men on the jetty standing next to the yacht's ropes.

'Tie something round Mr Bond's shoulder. I don't want any blood in the water yet,' Mr Big told Bond's guard.

One of the guards cut some of Solitaire's skirt off and used it for Bond's shoulder. He cut their hands free then pushed them together, face to face. Their arms were put round each other and then they were both tied tightly together. One end of some of the rope on the jetty was

tied to the back of the Secatur. The other end was tied to Solitaire and Bond.

For a moment, Bond could see Mr Big's watch. It was five minutes to six.

Mr Big looked at them. 'Their legs can stay free,' he said, and he stepped onto the yacht. He went to the back of the boat and sat where he would be able to see Bond and Solitaire.

The two guards went on board. The two men on the jetty untied the yacht's ropes and followed. Moments later, the Secatur moved away from the island.

'Look out!' said Bond as he saw the rope disappearing fast into the water. Bond and Solitaire were suddenly pulled off the jetty and into the sea. For a second, they both went under the water and then they were up again. The water was rushing past them and they were pulled through the waves.

'Breathe, breathe!' shouted Bond. 'Put your legs between mine!'

After a time, the boat's speed dropped as the Secatur moved slowly through the reef. Suddenly, Bond felt the rope tighten again.

'Breathe, Solitaire, breathe!' he shouted, as they started to speed through the water once more. It must be after six o'clock now. What had happened to the mine?

They were only about thirty yards from the reef now. Now twenty ... ten ...

Suddenly, the breath was knocked from his body. Solitaire and Bond went right up out of the sea before falling back again. The sky lit up with the huge explosion.

They stopped moving through the waves and Bond felt the heavy rope pulling them under the water. He pushed hard with his legs and they came to the surface. Solitaire's head was on his shoulder and her eyes were shut.

The reef had protected them from the explosion, but now the sea was pulling them towards it. Suddenly, Bond felt the sharp coral against

the back of his legs and arms. There was something sharp under his feet, and he pushed against it. His feet were on the coral and then he felt the pain of a rock pushing into his back.

He rested for a minute. Solitaire was breathing thinly. There was blood in the water around him, but he guessed that the big fish would not come into the sharp reef.

He looked out to sea. The Secatur was gone, and a great cloud of smoke was blowing towards the land. There were pieces of the boat all over the water. He saw dead fish and parts of men's bodies.

Bond saw the head of a huge fish come out of the water. It dived down onto something. There was a long and terrible scream, then two black arms suddenly went up into the air and disappeared again.

Two men started to swim towards the reef. One stopped, his hands splashing the water wildly before they disappeared under the surface. He began to scream as he was attacked under the water. The other man was getting nearer to Bond and Solitaire. Bond saw a large head with blood pouring down over its face. It was Mr Big.

His eyes were wide open and staring madly as he swam towards Bond. Suddenly, he gave a scream of pain and his head went under the water and came up again. There was a cloud of dark blood in the sea around him. Two large black shadows moved out of the cloud, then raced back again. Half of Mr Big's left arm came out of the water. It had no hand on it, but the great head was still alive and screaming.

The head went under once more. When it came to the surface again, its mouth was closed. The yellow eyes still seemed to look at Bond, but they were dead eyes. Then the shark's head came up and its open mouth came down on the head. There was a horrible crunch, then both head and shark went under the water for the last time. There was silence.

Bond went on staring at the blood-red water for several seconds. Then Solitaire made a small noise and there was a shout from behind

him. Bond turned and saw canoes coming towards him - and Quarrel was in the front canoe, yards ahead of the rest.

For the first time since his childhood, Bond felt tears come into his blue-grey eyes. They were tears of happiness and relief. Fie looked across at the soft green hills of Jamaica. A fresh, north-easterly wind had started to blow and the sun was beginning to shine down on the water. Life was suddenly very good.

Chapter 19. A Holiday for Two

Quarrel brought them to the little beach at Beau Desert, and Bond half-carried Solitaire to the house. After they had baths and cleaned themselves, Quarrel took Bond to the hospital at Port Maria. The doctors worked on his shoulder, then Quarrel brought him back to the house. Bond was tired and covered in bandages. Another doctor had visited Solitaire, who had been cut by the coral, but was not badly hurt. Some new clothes would be brought for her from Kingston the next day.

There were police on the Isle of Surprise now. Strangways had gone straight to them and told them what had happened. The Secatur, or what was left of her, was at the bottom of the sea in the bay, and police divers were on their way from Kingston. News reporters had heard about the explosion and there was now a police guard at Beau Desert to keep them away.

A full report was sent to M, and to Washington. The information would be enough to arrest" Mr Big's men in Harlem and St Petersburg for gold smuggling.

Strangways arrived back from Kingston soon after Bond returned from the hospital. He had a message from M. It read:

**HAVE YOU PUT IN A CLAIM FOR US FOR THE
TREASURE? PLEASE DO.**

WELL DONE. TAKE TWO WEEKS' HOLIDAY.

‘I put in a claim at Government House for you,’ said Strangways. ‘But the British and American governments will both want the treasure.’

They talked some more, then Strangways left.

The evening was cool after the hot day. Solitaire came out of the house and walked across the grass. She was not wearing any shoes and was carrying a tray with two glasses. She put it down on the garden table near Bond’s chair.

‘I hope they’re OK,’ she said. ‘I’ve never made a martini before.’

Bond looked up at her. She was wearing a pair of his white silk pyjamas. She kissed him, then sat down on the warm grass and put her head against his knee.

‘You look wonderful,’ Bond told her. They sat for a while, looking out between the trees as the sunlight started to disappear.

There was a crash of broken dishes from the kitchen at the back of the house. Then there was the sound of Quarrel shouting at someone.

‘Poor Quarrel,’ said Solitaire. ‘He’s borrowed the best cook in the village and is making us a special dinner. But it’s supposed to be a surprise for us.’

After they had eaten dinner, Bond told Solitaire about M’s message. ‘Two weeks’ holiday will be wonderful. But I’m badly hurt. I’ll also need someone special who can look after me and help me to get better. Do you know of anyone?’ he asked, and grinned at her.

There was love in Solitaire’s eyes as she looked up at him and smiled. ‘Well, I haven’t got any other plans for the next two weeks ...’ she said.

- THE END -

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