

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 intercom⁴ 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 Chief⁵ 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 down⁶ into gold bars⁷ and will be lost. They don't want that to happen.

'At the moment, someone is using a network⁸ of people – people who are working as porters, sleeping car attendants⁹ 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 yacht¹⁰ 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 gangster¹¹ who lives in Harlem. Have you heard about him?'



M pointed to the file in front of him. 'You'll find out more in here.'

'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 SMERSH¹².' 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.'

New York

A pleasant-looking man met Bond at Idlewild Airport¹³ 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's¹⁴ 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 CIA¹⁵ 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 FBI¹⁶.' He nodded his head towards Captain Dexter, who did not look especially pleased about it. 'It's the FBI's case¹⁷ 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.'