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Ian Fleming

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Ian Fleming

"You know what?" said Major Dexter Smythe to the octopus. "You're going to have a real treat today if I can manage it."

He had spoken aloud, and his breath had steamed up the glass of his Pirelli mask. He put his feet down to the sand beside the coral boulder and stood up. The water reached to his armpits. He took off the mask and spat into it, rubbed the spit

round the glass, rinsed it clean, and pulled the rubber band of the mask back over his head. He bent down again.

The eye in the mottled brown sack was still watching him carefully from the hole in the coral, but now the tip of a single small tentacle wavered hesitatingly an inch or two out of the shadows and quested vaguely with its pink suckers uppermost. Dexter Smythe smiled with satisfaction. Given time—perhaps one more month on top of the two during which he had been chumming the octopus—and he would have tamed the darling. But he wasn't going to have that month. Should he take a chance today and reach down and offer his hand, instead of the expected lump of raw meat on the end of his spear, to the tentacle? Shake it by the hand, so to speak? No, Pussy, he thought. I can't quite trust you yet. Almost certainly other tentacles would whip out of the hole and up his arm. He only needed to be dragged down less than two feet for the cork valve on his mask to automatically close, and he would be suffocated inside it or, if he tore it off, drowned. He might get in a quick lucky jab with his spear, but it would take more than that to kill Pussy. No. Perhaps later in the day. It would be rather like playing Russian roulette, and at about the same five-to-one odds. It might be a quick, a whimsical, way out of his troubles! But not now. It would leave the interesting question unsolved. And he had promised that nice Professor Bengry at the Institute.... Dexter Smythe swam leisurely off toward the reef, his eyes questing for one shape only, the squat, sinister wedge of a scorpionfish, or, as Bengry would put it, *Scorpaena plumieri*.

Major Dexter Smythe, O.B.E., Royal Marines (Retd.), was the remains of a once brave and resourceful officer and of a

handsome man who had had the sexual run of his teeth all his life, particularly among the Wrens and Wracs and ATS who manned the communications and secretariat of the very special task force to which he had been attached at the end of his service career. Now he was fifty-four and slightly bald, and his belly sagged in his Jantzen trunks. And he had had two coronary thromboses, the second (the "second warning" as his doctor, Jimmy Greaves, who had been one of their high poker game at Prince's Club when Dexter Smythe had first come to Jamaica, had half jocularly put it) only a month before. But, in his well-chosen clothes, with his varicose veins out of sight, and with his stomach flattened by a discreet support belt behind an immaculate cummerbund, he was still a fine figure of a man at a cocktail party or dinner on the North Shore. And it was a mystery to his friends and neighbors why, in defiance of the two ounces of whiskey and the ten cigarettes a day to which his doctor had rationed him, he persisted in smoking like a chimney and going to bed drunk, if amiably drunk, every night.

The truth of the matter was that Dexter Smythe had arrived at the frontier of the death wish. The origins of this state of mind were many and not all that complex. He was irretrievably tied to Jamaica, and tropical sloth had gradually riddled him so that, while outwardly he appeared a piece of fairly solid hardwood, inside the varnished surface, the termites of sloth, self-indulgence, guilt over an ancient sin, and general disgust with himself had eroded his once hard core into dust. Since the death of Mary two years before, he had loved no one. (He wasn't even sure that he had really loved her, but he knew that, every hour of the day, he missed her love of him and her gay, untidy, chiding, and often irritating presence.) And though he

ate their canapés and drank their martinis, he had nothing but contempt for the international riffraff with whom he consorted on the North Shore. He could perhaps have made friends with the more solid elements—the gentleman-farmers inland, the plantation owners on the coast, the professional men, the politicians—but that would mean regaining some serious purpose in life which his sloth, his spiritual accidie, prevented, and cutting down on the bottle, which he was definitely unwilling to do. So Major Smythe was bored, bored to death, and, but for one factor in his life, he would long ago have swallowed the bottle of barbiturates he had easily acquired from a local doctor. The lifeline that kept him clinging to the edge of the cliff was a tenuous one. Heavy drinkers veer toward an exaggeration of their basic temperaments, the classic four—sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic. The sanguine drunk goes gay to the point of hysteria and idiocy; the phlegmatic sinks into a morass of sullen gloom; the choleric is the fighting drunk of the cartoonists who spends much of his life in prison for smashing people and things; and the melancholic succumbs to self-pity, mawkishness, and tears. Major Smythe was a melancholic who had slid into a drooling fantasy woven around the birds and insects and fish that inhabited the five acres of Wavelets (the name he had given his small villa was symptomatic), its beach, and the coral reef beyond. The fish were his particular favorites. He referred to them as "people," and since reef fish stick to their territories as closely as do most small birds, he knew them all, after two years, intimately, "loved" them, and believed that they loved him in return.

They certainly knew him, as the denizens of zoos know their keepers, because he was a daily and a regular provider,

scraping off algae and stirring up the sand and rocks for the bottom-feeders, breaking up sea eggs and sea urchins for the small carnivores, and bringing out scraps of offal for the larger ones. And now, as he swam slowly and heavily up and down the reef and through the channels that led out to deep water, his "people" swarmed around him fearlessly and expectantly, darting at the tip of the three-pronged spear they knew only as a prodigal spoon, flirting right up to the glass of the Pirelli, and even, in the case of the fearless, pugnacious demoiselles, nipping softly at his feet and legs.

Part of Major Smythe's mind took in all these brilliantly colored little "people" and he greeted them in unspoken words. ("Morning, Beau Gregory" to the dark blue demoiselle sprinkled with bright blue spots—the jewelfish that exactly resembles the starlit fashioning of a bottle of Guerlain's Dans La Nuit; "Sorry. Not today, sweetheart" to a fluttering butterflyfish with false black eyes on its tail; and "You're too fat anyway, Blue Boy," to an indigo parrotfish that must have weighed a good ten pounds.) But today he had a job to do and his eyes were searching for only one of his "people"—his only enemy on the reef, the only one he killed on sight, a scorpionfish.

The scorpionfish inhabits most of the southern waters of the world, and the rascasse that is the foundation of bouillabaisse belongs to the family. The West Indian variety runs up to only about twelve inches long and perhaps a pound in weight. It is by far the ugliest fish in the sea, as if nature were giving warning. It is a mottled brownish gray with a heavy wedge-shaped shaggy head. It has fleshy pendulous "eyebrows" that droop over angry red eyes and a coloration and broken

silhouette that are perfect camouflage on the reef. Though a small fish, its heavily toothed mouth is so wide that it can swallow whole most of the smaller reef fishes, but its supreme weapon lies in its erectile dorsal fins, the first few of which, acting on contact like hypodermic needles, are fed by poison glands containing enough dotoxin to kill a man if they merely graze him in a vulnerable spot—in an artery, for instance, or over the heart or in the groin. It constitutes the only real danger to the reef swimmer, far more dangerous than the barracuda or the shark, because, supreme in its confidence in its camouflage and armory, it flees before nothing except the very close approach of a foot or actual contact. Then it flits only a few yards, on wide and bizarrely striped pectorals, and settles again watchfully either on the sand, where it looks like a lump of overgrown coral, or among the rocks and seaweed where it virtually disappears. And Major Smythe was determined to find one and spear it and give it to his octopus to see if it would take it or spurn it—to see if one of the ocean's great predators would recognize the deadliness of another, know of its poison. Would the octopus consume the belly and leave the spines? Would it eat the lot? And if so, would it suffer from the poison? These were the questions Bengry at the Institute wanted answered, and today, since it was going to be the beginning of the end of Major Smythe's life at Wavelets—and though it might mean the end of his darling Octopussy—Major Smythe had decided to find out the answers and leave one tiny memorial to his now futile life in some dusty corner of the Institute's marine biological files.

For, in only the last couple of hours, Major Dexter Smythe's already dismal life had changed very much for the worse. So much for the worse that he would be lucky if, in a few weeks'

time—time for an exchange of cables via Government House and the Colonial Office to the Secret Service and thence to Scotland Yard and the Public Prosecutor, and for Major Smythe's transportation to London with a police escort—he got away with a sentence of imprisonment for life.

And all this because of a man called Bond, Commander James Bond, who had turned up at ten-thirty that morning in a taxi from Kingston.

The day had started normally. Major Smythe had awakened from his Seconal sleep, swallowed a couple of Panadols (his heart condition forbade him aspirin), showered, skimped his breakfast under the umbrella-shaped sea almonds, and spent an hour feeding the remains of his breakfast to the birds. He then took his prescribed doses of anticoagulant and blood-pressure pills and killed time with the *Daily Gleaner* until it was time for his elevenses, which, for some months now, he had advanced to ten-thirty. He had just poured himself the first of two stiff brandy and ginger ales (The Drunkard's Drink) when he heard the car coming up the drive.

Luna, his colored housekeeper, came out into the garden and announced "Gemmun to see you, Major."

"What's his name?"

"Him doan say, Major. Him say to tell you him come from Govment House."

Major Smythe was wearing nothing but a pair of old khaki

shorts and sandals. He said, "All right, Luna. Put him in the living room and say I won't be a moment." And he went round the back way into his bedroom and put on a white bush shirt and trousers and brushed his hair. Government House! Now what the hell?

As soon as he had walked through into the living room and seen the tall man in the dark blue tropical suit standing at the picture window looking out to sea, Major Smythe had somehow sensed bad news. And, when the man had turned slowly toward him and looked at him with watchful, serious gray-blue eyes, he had known that this was officialdom, and when his cheery smile was not returned, inimical officialdom. And a chill had run down Major Smythe's spine. "They" had somehow found out.

"Well, well. I'm Smythe. I gather you're from Government House. How's Sir Kenneth?"

There was somehow no question of shaking hands. The man said, "I haven't met him. I only arrived a couple of days ago. I've been out round the island most of the time. My name's Bond, James Bond. I'm from the Ministry of Defense."

Major Smythe remembered the hoary euphemism for the Secret Service. He said bonhomously, "Oh. The old firm?"

The question had been ignored. "Is there somewhere we can talk?"

"Rather. Anywhere you like. Here or in the garden? What about a drink?" Major Smythe clinked the ice in the glass he still held in his hand. "Rum and ginger's the local poison. I

prefer the ginger by itself." The lie came out with the automatic smoothness of the alcoholic.

"No thanks. And here would be fine." The man leaned negligently against the wide mahogany windowsill.

Major Smythe sat down and threw a jaunty leg over the low arm of one of the comfortable planters' chairs he had had copied from an original by the local cabinetmaker. He pulled out the drink coaster from the other arm, took a deep pull at his glass, and slid it, with a consciously steady hand, down into the hole in the wood. "Well," he said cheerily, looking the other man straight in the eyes, "what can I do for you? Somebody been up to some dirty work on the North Shore and you need a spare hand? Be glad to get into harness again. It's been a long time since those days, but I can still remember some of the old routines."

"Do you mind if I smoke?" The man had already got his cigarette case in his hand. It was a flat gun-metal one that would hold around twenty-five. Somehow this small sign of a shared weakness comforted Major Smythe.

"Of course, my dear fellow." He made a move to get up, his lighter ready.

"It's all right, thanks." James Bond had already lit his cigarette. "No, it's nothing local. I want to ... I've been sent out to ... ask you to recall your work for the Service at the end of the war." James Bond paused and looked down at Major Smythe carefully. "Particularly the time when you were working with the Miscellaneous Objectives Bureau."

Major Smythe laughed sharply. He had known it. He had known it for absolutely sure. But when it came out of this man's mouth, the laugh had been forced out of Major Smythe like the scream of a hit man. "Oh Lord, yes. Good old MOB. That was a lark all right." He laughed again. He felt the anginal pain, brought on by the pressure of what he knew was coming, build up across his chest. He dipped his hand into his trouser pocket, tilted the little bottle into the palm of his hand, and slipped the white TNT pill under his tongue. He was amused to see the tension coil up in the other man, the way the eyes narrowed watchfully. *It's all right, my dear fellow. This isn't a death pill*. He said, "You troubled with acidosis? No? It slays me when I go on a bender. Last night. Party at Jamaica Inn. One really ought to stop thinking one's always twenty-five. Anyway, let's get back to MOB Force. Not many of us left, I suppose." He felt the pain across his chest withdraw into its lair. "Something to do with the Official History?"

James Bond looked down at the tip of his cigarette. "Not exactly."

"I expect you know I wrote most of the chapter on the Force for the War Book. It's fifteen years since then. Doubt if I'd have much to add today."

"Nothing more about that operation in the Tirol—place called Oberaurach, about a mile east of Kitzbühel?"

One of the names he had been living with for fifteen years forced another harsh laugh out of Major Smythe. "That was a piece of cake! You've never seen such a shambles. All those Gestapo toughs with their doxies. All of 'em hog-drunk. They'd

kept their files all ticketty-boo. Handed them over without a murmur. Hoped that'd earn 'em easy treatment I suppose. We gave the stuff a first going-over and shipped all the bods off to the Munich camp. Last I heard of them. Most of them hanged for war crimes I expect. We handed the bumf over to HQ, at Salzburg. Then we went on up the Mittersill valley after another hideout." Major Smythe took a good pull at his drink and lit a cigarette. He looked up. "That's the long and the short of it."

"You were Number Two at the time, I think. The CO was an American, a Colonel King from Patton's army."

"That's right. Nice fellow. Wore a mustache, which isn't like an American. Knew his way among the local wines. Quite a civilized chap."

"In his report about the operation he wrote that he handed you all the documents for a preliminary run-through as you were the German expert with the unit. Then you gave them all back to him with your comments?" James Bond paused. "Every single one of them?"

Major Smythe ignored the innuendo. "That's right. Mostly lists of names. Counterintelligence dope. The CI people in Salzburg were very pleased with the stuff. Gave them plenty of new leads. I expect the originals are lying about somewhere. They'll have been used for the Nuremberg Trials. Yes, by Jove!"—Major Smythe was reminiscent, pally—"those were some of the jolliest months of my life, haring around the country with MOB Force. Wine, women, and song! And you can say that again!"

Here, Major Smythe was saying the whole truth. He had had a dangerous and uncomfortable war until 1945. When the commandos were formed in 1941, he had volunteered and been seconded from the Royal Marines to Combined Operations Headquarters under Mountbatten. There his excellent German (his mother had come from Heidelberg) had earned him the unenviable job of being advanced interrogator on commando operations across the Channel. He had been lucky to get away from two years of this work unscathed and with the O.B.E. (Military), which was sparingly awarded in the last war. And then, in preparation for the defeat of Germany, the Miscellaneous Objectives Bureau had been formed jointly by the Secret Service and Combined Operations, and Major Smythe had been given the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel and told to form a unit whose job would be the cleaning up of Gestapo and Abwehr hideouts when the collapse of Germany came about. The OSS got to hear of the scheme and insisted on getting into the act to cope with the American wing of the front, and the result was the creation of not one but six units that went into operation in Germany and Austria on the day of surrender. They were units of twenty men, each with a light armored car, six jeeps, a wireless truck, and three lorries, and they were controlled by a joint Anglo-American headquarters in SHAEF, which also fed them with targets from the Army Intelligence units and from the SIS and OSS. Major Smythe had been Number Two of "A" Force, which had been allotted the Tirol—an area full of good hiding places with easy access to Italy and perhaps out of Europe—that was known to have been chosen as funkhole Number One by the people MOB Force was after. And, as Major Smythe had just told Bond, they had had themselves a ball. All without firing a shot—except, that is, two fired by Major Smythe.

James Bond said casually, "Does the name of Hannes Oberhauser ring a bell?"

Major Smythe frowned, trying to remember. "Can't say it does." It was eighty degrees in the shade, but he shivered.

"Let me refresh your memory. On the same day as those documents were given to you to look over, you made inquiries at the Tiefenbrünner Hotel, where you were billeted, for the best mountain guide in Kitzbühel. You were referred to Oberhauser. The next day you asked your CO for a day's leave, which was granted. Early next morning you went to Oberhauser's chalet, put him under close arrest, and drove him away in your jeep. Does that ring a bell?"

That phrase about "refreshing your memory." How often had Major Smythe himself used it when he was trying to trap a German liar? *Take your time! You've been ready for something like this for years*. Major Smythe shook his head doubtfully. "Can't say it does."

"A man with graying hair and a gammy leg. Spoke some English, he'd been a ski teacher before the war."

Major Smythe looked candidly into the cold, clear blue eyes. "Sorry. Can't help you."

James Bond took a small blue leather notebook out of his inside pocket and turned the leaves. He stopped turning them. He looked up. "At that time, as side arms, you were carrying a regulation Webley-Scott forty-five with the serial number eight-nine-six-seven-three-sixty-two."

"It was certainly a Webley. Damned clumsy weapon. Hope they've got something more like the Luger or the heavy Beretta these days. But I can't say I ever took a note of the number."

"The number's right enough," said James Bond. "I've got the date of its issue to you by HQ and the date when you turned it in. You signed the book both times."

Major Smythe shrugged. "Well then, it must have been my gun. But"—he put rather angry impatience into his voice —"what, if I may ask, is all this in aid of?"

James Bond looked at him almost with curiosity. He said, and now his voice was not unkind, "You know what it's all about, Smythe." He paused and seemed to reflect. "Tell you what. I'll go out into the garden for ten minutes or so. Give you time to think things over. Give me a hail." He added seriously "It'll make things so much easier for you if you come out with the story in your own words."

Bond walked to the door into the garden. He turned around. "I'm afraid it's only a question of dotting the *i*'s and crossing the *t*'s. You see I had a talk with the Foo brothers in Kingston yesterday." He stepped out onto the lawn.

Something in Major Smythe was relieved. Now at least the battle of wits, the trying to invent alibis, the evasions, were over. If this man Bond had got to the Foos, to either of them, they would have spilled the beans. The last thing they wanted was to get in bad with the government, and anyway there was only about six inches of the stuff left.

Major Smythe got briskly to his feet and went to the loaded

sideboard and poured himself out another brandy and ginger ale, almost fifty-fifty. He might as well live it up while there was still time! The future wouldn't hold many more of these for him. He went back to his chair and lit his twentieth cigarette of the day. He looked at his watch. It said eleven-thirty. If he could be rid of the chap in an hour, he'd have plenty of time with his "people." He sat and drank and marshaled his thoughts. He could make the story long or short, put in the weather and the way the flowers and pines had smelled on the mountain, or he could cut it short. He would cut it short.

Up in that big double bedroom in the Tiefenbrünner, with the wads of buff and gray paper spread out on the spare bed, he hadn't been looking for anything special, just taking samples here and there and concentrating on the ones marked, in red, KOMMANDOSACHE—HÖCHST VERTRAULICH. There weren't many of these, and they were mostly confidential reports on German top brass, intercepts of broken allied ciphers, and information about the whereabouts of secret dumps. Since these were the main targets of "A" Force, Major Smythe had scanned them with particular excitement—food, explosives, guns, espionage records, files of Gestapo personnel. A tremendous haul! And then, at the bottom of the packet, there had been the single envelope sealed with red wax and the notation ONLY TO BE OPENED IN FINAL EMERGENCY. The envelope contained one single sheet of paper. It was unsigned, and the few words were written in red ink. The heading said VALUTA, and beneath it was written: WILDE KAISER. FRANZISKANER HALT. 100 M.

ÖSTLICH STEINHÜGEL. WAFFENKISTE. ZWEI BAR 24 KT. Under that was a list of measurements in centimeters. Major Smythe held his hands apart as if telling a story about a fish he had caught. The bars would be about as wide as his shoulders and about two by four inches. And one single English sovereign of only eighteen carats was selling nowadays for two to three pounds! This was a bloody fortune! Forty, fifty thousand pounds worth! Maybe even a hundred! He didn't stop to think, but, quite coolly and speedily, in case anyone should come in, he put a match to the paper and the envelope, ground the ashes to powder, and swilled them down the lavatory. Then he took out his large-scale Austrian ordnance map of the area and in a moment had his finger on the Franziskaner Halt. It was marked as an uninhabited mountaineers' refuge on a saddle just below the highest of the easterly peaks of the Kaiser mountains, that awe-inspiring range of giant stone teeth that gave Kitzbühel its threatening northern horizon. And the cairn of stones would be about there —his fingernail pointed—and the whole bloody lot was only ten miles and perhaps a five hours' climb away!

The beginning had been as this fellow Bond had described. He had gone to Oberhauser's chalet at four in the morning, had arrested him, and had told his weeping, protesting family that Smythe was taking him to an interrogation camp in Munich. If the guide's record was clean he would be back home within a week. If the family kicked up a fuss it would only make trouble for Oberhauser. Smythe had refused to give his name and had had the forethought to shroud the numbers on his jeep. In twenty-four hours, "A" Force would be on its way, and by the time military government got to Kitzbühel, the incident would already be buried under the morass of the Occupation

tangle.

Oberhauser had been a nice enough chap once he had recovered from his fright, and when Smythe talked knowingly about skiing and climbing, both of which he had done before the war, the pair, as Smythe intended, became quite pally. Their route lay along the bottom of the Kaiser range to Kufstein, and Smythe drove slowly, making admiring comments on the peaks that were now flushed with the pink of dawn. Finally, below the peak of gold, as he called it to himself, he slowed to a halt and pulled off the road into a grassy glade. He turned in his seat and said with an assumption of candor, "Oberhauser, you are a man after my own heart. We share many interests together, and from your talk, and from the man I think you to be, I am sure you did not cooperate with the Nazis. Now I will tell you what I will do. We will spend the day climbing on the Kaiser, and I will then drive you back to Kitzbühel and report to my commanding officer that you have been cleared at Munich." He grinned cheerfully. "Now. How about that?"

The man had been near to tears of gratitude. But could he have some kind of paper to show that he was a good citizen? Certainly. Major Smythe's signature would be quite enough. The pact was made, the jeep was driven up a track and well hidden from the road, and they were off at a steady pace, climbing up through the pine-scented foothills.

Smythe was well dressed for the climb. He had nothing on except his bush shirt, shorts, and a pair of the excellent rubber-soled boots issued to American parachutists. His only burden was the Webley-Scott, and, tactfully, for Oberhauser was after

all one of the enemy, Oberhauser didn't suggest that he leave it behind some conspicuous rock. Oberhauser was in his best suit and boots, but that didn't seem to bother him, and he assured Major Smythe that ropes and pitons would not be needed for their climb and that there was a hut directly up above them where they could rest. It was called the Franziskaner Halt.

"Is it indeed?" said Major Smythe.

"Yes, and below it there is a small glacier. Very pretty, but we will climb round it. There are many crevasses."

"Is that so?" said Major Smythe thoughtfully. He examined the back of Oberhauser's head, now beaded with sweat. After all, he was only a bloody kraut, or at any rate of that ilk. What would one more or less matter? It was all going to be as easy as falling off a log. The only thing that worried Major Smythe was getting the bloody stuff down the mountain. He decided that he would somehow sling the bars across his back. After all, he could slide it most of the way in its ammunition box or whatnot.

It was a long, dreary hack up the mountain, and when they were above the treeline, the sun came up and it was very hot. And now it was all rock and scree, and their long zigzags sent boulders and rubble rumbling and crashing down the slope that got ever steeper as they approached the final crag, gray and menacing, that lanced away into the blue above them. They were both naked to the waist and sweating, so that the sweat ran down their legs into their boots, but despite Oberhauser's limp, they kept up a good pace, and when they stopped for a drink and a swabdown at a hurtling mountain stream,

Oberhauser congratulated Major Smythe on his fitness. Major Smythe, his mind full of dreams, said curtly and untruthfully that all English soldiers were fit, and they went on.

The rock face wasn't difficult. Major Smythe had known that it wouldn't be or the climbers' hut couldn't have been built on the shoulder. Toeholds had been cut in the face, and there were occasional iron pegs hammered into crevices. But he couldn't have found the more difficult traverses by himself, and he congratulated himself on deciding to bring a guide.

Once, Oberhauser's hand, testing for a grip, dislodged a great slab of rock, loosened by five years of snow and frost, and sent it crashing down the mountain. Major Smythe suddenly thought about noise. "Many people around here?" he asked as they watched the boulder hurtle down into the treeline.

"Not a soul until you get near Kufstein," said Oberhauser. He gestured along the arid range of high peaks. "No grazing. Little water. Only the climbers come here. And since the beginning of the war...." He left the phrase unfinished.

They skirted the blue-fanged glacier below the final climb to the shoulder. Major Smythe's careful eyes took in the width and depth of the crevasses. Yes, they would fit! Directly above them, perhaps a hundred feet up under the lee of the shoulder, were the weatherbeaten boards of the hut. Major Smythe measured the angle of the slope. Yes, it was almost a straight dive down. Now or later? He guessed later. The line of the last traverse wasn't very clear.

They were up at the hut in five hours flat. Major Smythe said he wanted to relieve himself and wandered casually along the shoulder to the east, paying no heed to the beautiful panoramas of Austria and Bavaria that stretched away on either side of him perhaps fifty miles into the heat haze. He counted his paces carefully. At exactly one hundred and twenty there was the cairn of stones, a loving memorial perhaps to some long dead climber. Major Smythe, knowing differently, longed to tear it apart there and then. Instead he took out his Webley-Scott, squinted down the barrel, and twirled the cylinder. Then he walked back.

It was cold up there at ten thousand feet or more, and Oberhauser had got into the hut and was busy preparing a fire. Major Smythe controlled his horror at the sight. "Oberhauser," he said cheerfully, "come out and show me some of the sights. Wonderful view up here."

"Certainly, Major." Oberhauser followed Major Smythe out of the hut. Outside, he fished in his hip pocket and produced something wrapped in paper. He undid the paper to reveal a hard wrinkled sausage. He offered it to the major. "It is only what we call a Soldat," he said shyly. "Smoked meat. Very tough but good." He smiled. "It is like what they eat in Wild West films. What is the name?"

"Pemmican," said the major. Then—and later this had slightly disgusted him with himself—he said, "Leave it in the hut. We will share it later. Come over here. Can we see Innsbruck? Show me the view on this side."

Oberhauser bobbed into the hut and out again. The major

fell in just behind him as he talked, pointing out this or that distant church spire or mountain peak.

They came to the point above the glacier. Major Smythe drew his revolver, and at a range of two feet, fired two bullets into the base of Hannes Oberhauser's skull. No muffing! Dead-on!

The impact of the bullets knocked the guide clean off his feet and over the edge. Major Smythe craned over. The body hit twice only, and then crashed onto the glacier. But not onto its fissured origin. Halfway down and on a patch of old snow! "Hell!" said Major Smythe.

The deep boom of the two shots, which had been batting to and fro among the mountains, died away. Major Smythe took one last look at the black splash on the white snow and hurried off along the shoulder. First things first!

He started on the top of the cairn, working as if the devil were after him, throwing the rough, heavy stones indiscriminately down the mountain to right or left. His hands began to bleed, but he hardly noticed. Now there were only two feet or so left, and nothing! Bloody nothing! He bent to the last pile, scrabbling feverishly. And then! Yes! The edge of a metal box. A few more rocks away, and there was the whole of it! A good old gray Wehrmacht ammunition box with the trace of some lettering still on it. Major Smythe gave a groan of joy. He sat down on a hard piece of rock, and his mind went orbiting through Bentleys, Monte Carlo, penthouse flats, Cartier's, champagne, caviar, and, incongruously (but because he loved golf), a new set of Henry Cotton irons.

Drunk with his dreams, Major Smythe sat there looking at the gray box for a full quarter of an hour. Then he looked at his watch and got briskly to his feet. Time to get rid of the evidence. The box had a handle at each end. Major Smythe had expected it to be heavy. He had mentally compared its probable weight with the heaviest thing he had ever carried—a forty-pound salmon he had caught in Scotland just before the war—but the box was certainly double that weight, and he was only just able to lift it out of its last bed of rocks onto the thin alpine grass. Then he slung his handkerchief through one of the handles and dragged it clumsily along the shoulder to the hut. Then he sat down on the stone doorstep, and, his eyes never leaving the box, he tore at Oberhauser's smoked sausage with his strong teeth and thought about getting his fifty thousand pounds—for that was the figure he put it at—down the mountain and into a new hiding place.

Oberhauser's sausage was a real mountaineer's meal—tough, well-fatted, and strongly garlicked. Bits of it stuck uncomfortably between Major Smythe's teeth. He dug them out with a sliver of matchstick and spat them on the ground. Then his Intelligence-wise mind came into operation, and he meticulously searched among the stones and grass, picked up the scraps, and swallowed them. From now on he was a criminal—as much a criminal as if he had robbed a bank and shot the guard. He was a cop turned robber. He must remember that! It would be death if he didn't—death instead of Cartier's. All he had to do was to take infinite pains. He would take those pains, and by God they would be infinite! Then, for ever after, he would be rich and happy. After taking ridiculously minute trouble to eradicate any sign of entry into the hut, he dragged the ammunition box to the edge of the last rock face and,

aiming it away from the glacier, tipped it, with a prayer, into space.

The gray box, turning slowly in the air, hit the first steep slope below the rock face, bounded another hundred feet, and landed with an iron clang in some loose scree and stopped. Major Smythe couldn't see if it had burst open. He didn't mind one way or the other. He had tried to open it without success. Let the mountain do it for him!

With a last look around, he went over the edge. He took great care at each piton, tested each handhold and foothold before he put his weight on it. Coming down, he was a much more valuable life than he had been climbing up. He made for the glacier and trudged across the melting snow to the black patch on the icefield. There was nothing to be done about footprints. It would take only a few days for them to be melted down by the sun. He got to the body. He had seen many corpses during the war, and the blood and broken limbs meant nothing to him. He dragged the remains of Oberhauser to the nearest deep crevasse and toppled it in. Then he went carefully around the lip of the crevasse and kicked the snow overhang down on top of the body. Then, satisfied with his work, he retraced his steps, placing his feet exactly in his old footprints, and made his way on down the slope to the ammunition box.

Yes, the mountain had burst open the lid for him. Almost casually he tore away the cartridge-paper wrappings. The two great hunks of metal glittered up at him under the sun. There were the same markings on each—the swastika in a circle below an eagle, and the date 1943—the mint marks of the Reichsbank. Major Smythe gave a nod of approval. He

replaced the paper and hammered the crooked lid half-shut with a rock. Then he tied the lanyard of his Webley around one of the handles and moved on down the mountain, dragging his clumsy burden behind him.

It was now one o'clock, and the sun beat fiercely down on his naked chest, frying him in his own sweat. His reddened shoulders began to burn. So did his face. To hell with them! He stopped at the stream from the glacier, dipped his handkerchief in the water, and tied it across his forehead. Then he drank deeply and went on, occasionally cursing the ammunition box as it caught up with him and banged at his heels. But these discomforts, the sunburn and the bruises, were nothing compared with what he would have to face when he got down to the valley and the going leveled out. For the time being he had gravity on his side. There would come at least a mile when he would have to carry the blasted stuff. Major Smythe winced at the thought of the havoc the eighty pounds or so would wreak on his burned back. "Oh well," he said to himself almost lightheadedly, "*il faut souffrir pour être millionaire!*"

When he got to the bottom and the time had come, he sat and rested on a mossy bank under the firs. Then he spread out his bush shirt and heaved the two bars out of the box and onto its center and tied the tails of the shirt as firmly as he could to where the sleeves sprang from the shoulders. After digging a shallow hole in the bank and burying the empty box, he knotted the two cuffs of the sleeves firmly together, knelt down and slipped his head through the rough sling, got his hands on either side of the knot to protect his neck, and staggered to his feet, crouching far forward so as not to be pulled over on his back. Then, crushed under half his own

weight, his back on fire under the contact with his burden, and his breath rasping through his constricted lungs, coolie-like, he shuffled slowly off down the little path through the trees.

To this day he didn't know how he had made it to the jeep. Again and again the knots gave under the strain and the bars crashed down on the calves of his legs, and each time he had sat with his head in his hands and then started all over again. But finally, by concentrating on counting his steps and stopping for a rest at every hundredth, he got to the blessed little jeep and collapsed beside it. And then there had been the business of burying his hoard in the wood, amongst a jumble of big rocks that he would be sure to find again, of cleaning himself up as best he could, and of getting back to his billet by a circuitous route that avoided the Oberhauser chalet. And then it was all done, and he had got drunk by himself off a bottle of cheap schnapps and eaten and gone to bed and fallen into a stupefied sleep. The next day, MOB "A" Force had moved off up the Mittersill valley on a fresh trail, and six months later Major Smythe was back in London and his war was over.

But not his problems. Gold is difficult stuff to smuggle, certainly in the quantity available to Major Smythe, and it was now essential to get his two bars across the Channel and into a new hiding place. So he put off his demobilization and clung to the red tabs of his temporary rank, and particularly to his Military Intelligence passes, and soon got himself sent back to Germany as a British representative at the Combined Interrogation Center in Munich. There he did a scratch job for six months, during which, on a weekend's leave, he collected his gold and stowed it away in a battered suitcase in his quarters. Then he resigned his post and flew back to England,

carrying the two bars in a bulky briefcase. The hundred yards across the tarmac at each end of the flight, and the handling of his case as if it contained only papers, required two benzedrine tablets and a will of iron, but at last he had his fortune safe in the basement of an aunt's flat in Kensington and could get on with the next phase of his plans at leisure.

He resigned from the Royal Marines and got himself demobilized and married one of the many girls he had slept with at MOB Force Headquarters, a charming blonde Wren from a solid middle-class family named Mary Parnell. He got passages for them both in one of the early banana boats sailing from Avonmouth to Kingston, Jamaica, which they both agreed would be a paradise of sunshine, good food, cheap drink, and a glorious haven from the gloom and restrictions and Labour Government of postwar England. Before they sailed, Major Smythe showed Mary the gold bars from which he had chiseled away the mint marks of the Reichsbank.

"I've been clever, darling," he said. "I just don't trust the pound these days, so I've sold out all my securities and swapped the lot for gold. Must be about fifty thousand pounds' worth there. That should give us twenty-five years of the good life, just cutting off a slice now and then and selling it."

Mary Parnell was not to know that such a transaction was impossible under the currency laws. She knelt down and ran her hands lovingly over the gleaming bars. Then she got up and threw her arms around Major Smythe's neck and kissed him. "You're a wonderful, wonderful man," she said, almost in tears. "Frightfully clever and handsome and brave, and now I find out that you're rich as well. I'm the luckiest girl in the

world."

"Well, anyway we're rich," said Major Smythe. "But promise me you won't breathe a word, or we'll have all the burglars in Jamaica around our ears. Promise?"

"Cross my heart."

Prince's Club, in the foothills above Kingston, was indeed a paradise. Pleasant enough members, wonderful servants, unlimited food, cheap drink—and all in the wonderful setting of the tropics, which neither of them had known before. They were a popular couple, and Major Smythe's war record earned them the entrée to Government House society, after which their life was one endless round of parties, with tennis for Mary and golf (with the Henry Cotton irons!) for Major Smythe. In the evenings there was bridge for her and the high poker game for him. Yes, it was paradise all right, while in their homeland people munched their Spam, fiddled in the black market, cursed the government, and suffered the worst winter's weather for thirty years.

The Smythes met all their initial expenditures from their combined cash reserves, swollen by war-time gratuities, and it took Major Smythe a full year of careful sniffing around before he decided to do business with the Messrs. Foo, import and export merchants. The brothers Foo, highly respected and very rich, were the acknowledged governing junta of the flourishing Chinese community in Jamaica. Some of their trading was suspected to be devious—in the Chinese tradition—but all Major Smythe's casually meticulous inquiries confirmed that they were utterly trustworthy. The Bretton Woods Convention,

fixing a controlled world price for gold, had been signed, and it had already become common knowledge that Tangier and Macao were two free ports that, for different reasons, had escaped the Bretton Woods net; there a price of at least one hundred dollars per ounce of gold, ninety-nine fine, could be obtained, compared with the fixed world price of thirty-five dollars per ounce. And, conveniently, the Foos had just begun to trade again with a resurgent Hong Kong, already the port of entry for gold smuggling into the neighboring Macao. The whole setup was, in Major Smythe's language, "ticketty-boo." He had a most pleasant meeting with the Foo brothers. No questions were asked until it came to examining the bars. At this point the absence of mint marks resulted in a polite inquiry as to the original provenance of the gold.

"You see, Major," said the older and blander of the brothers behind the big bare mahogany desk, "in the bullion market the mint marks of all respectable national banks and responsible dealers are accepted without question. Such marks guarantee the fineness of the gold. But of course there are other banks and dealers whose methods of refining"—his benign smile widened a fraction—"are perhaps not quite, shall we say, so accurate."

"You mean the old gold brick swindle?" asked Major Smythe with a twinge of anxiety. "Hunk of lead covered with gold plating?"

Both brothers tee-heed reassuringly. "No, no, Major. That of course is out of the question. But"—the smiles held constant—"if you cannot recall the provenance of these fine bars, perhaps you would have no objections if we were to undertake

an assay. There are methods of determining the exact fineness of such bars. My brother and I are competent in these methods. If you would care to leave these with us and perhaps come back after lunch...?"

There had been no alternative. Major Smythe had to trust the Foos utterly now. They could cook up any figure, and he would just have to accept it. He went over to the Myrtle Bank and had one or two stiff drinks and a sandwich that stuck in his throat. Then he went back to the cool office of the Foos.

The setting was the same—the two smiling brothers, the two bars of gold, the briefcase—but now there was a piece of paper and a gold Parker pen in front of the older brother.

"We have solved the problem of your fine bars, Major——"

"*Fine*! Thank God," thought Major Smythe.

"——And I am sure you will be interested to know their probable history."

"Yes indeed," said Major Smythe, with a brave show of enthusiasm.

"They are German bars, Major. Probably from the wartime Reichsbank. This we have deduced from the fact that they contain ten percent of lead. Under the Hitler regime, it was the foolish habit of the Reichsbank to adulterate their gold in this manner. This fact rapidly became known to dealers, and the price of German bars, in Switzerland for instance, where many of them found their way, was adjusted downward accordingly. So the only result of the German foolishness was that the

national bank of Germany lost a reputation for honest dealing it had earned over the centuries." The Oriental's smile didn't vary. "Very bad business, Major. Very stupid."

Major Smythe marveled at the omniscience of these two men so far from the great commercial channels of the world, but he also cursed it. *Now what*? He said, "That's very interesting, Mr. Foo. But it is not very good news for me. Are these bars not 'Good delivery,' or whatever you call it in the bullion world?"

The older Foo made a slight throwaway gesture with his right hand. "It is of no importance, Major. Or rather, it is of very small importance. We will sell your gold at its true mint value, let us say, eighty-nine fine. It may be re-fined by the ultimate purchaser, or it may not. That is not our business. We shall have sold a true bill of goods."

"But at a lower price."

"That is so, Major. But I think I have some good news for you. Have you any estimate as to the worth of these two bars?"

"I thought around fifty thousand pounds."

The older Foo gave a dry chuckle. "I think—if we sell wisely and slowly—you should receive one hundred thousand pounds, Major, subject that is, to our commission, which will include shipping and incidental charges."

"How much would that be?"

"We were thinking about a figure of ten percent, Major. If

that is satisfactory to you."

Major Smythe had an idea that bullion brokers received a fraction of one percent. But what the hell? He had already as good as made forty thousand pounds since lunch. He said "Done" and got up and reached his hand across the desk.

From then on, every quarter, he would visit the office of the Foos carrying an empty suitcase. On the broad desk there would be one thousand new Jamaican pounds in neat bundles and the two gold bars, which diminished inch by inch, together with a typed slip showing the amount sold and the price obtained in Macao. It was all very simple and friendly and highly businesslike, and Major Smythe didn't think that he was being submitted to any form of squeeze other than the duly recorded ten percent. In any case, he didn't particularly care. Four thousand net a year was good enough for him, and his only worry was that the income tax people would get after him and ask him what he was living on. He mentioned this possibility to the Foos. But they said he was not to worry, and for the next four quarters, there was only nine hundred pounds instead of a thousand on the table and no comment was made by either side. Squeeze had been administered in the right quarter.

And so the lazy, sunshiny days passed by for fifteen happy years. The Smythes both put on weight, and Major Smythe had the first of his two coronaries and was told by his doctor to cut down on his alcohol and cigarettes, to take life more easily, to avoid fats and fried food. Mary Smythe tried to be firm with him, but when he took to secret drinking and to a life of petty lies and evasions, she tried to backpedal on her attempts to

control his self-indulgence. But she was too late. She had already become the symbol of the caretaker to Major Smythe, and he took to avoiding her. She berated him with not loving her anymore. And when the continual bickering became too much for her simple nature, she became a sleeping pill addict. And one night, after one flaming drunken row, she took an overdose—"just to show him." It was too much of an overdose and it killed her. The suicide was hushed up, but the cloud did Major Smythe no good socially, and he retreated to the North Shore, which, although only some thirty miles across the island from the capital, is, even in the small society of Jamaica, a different world. And there he had settled in Wavelets and, after his second coronary, was in the process of drinking himself to death when this man named Bond arrived on the scene with an alternative death warrant in his pocket.

Major Smythe looked at his watch. It was a few minutes after twelve o'clock. He got up and poured himself another stiff brandy and ginger ale and went out onto the lawn. James Bond was sitting under the sea almonds gazing out to sea. He didn't look up when Major Smythe pulled up another aluminum garden chair and put his drink on the grass beside him.

When Major Smythe had finished telling his story, Bond said unemotionally, "Yes, that's more or less the way I figured it."

"Want me to write it all out and sign it?"

"You can if you like. But not for me. That'll be for the court-

martial. Your old corps will be handling all that. I've got nothing to do with the legal aspects. I shall put in a report to my own Service of what you've told me, and they'll pass it on to the Royal Marines. Then I suppose it'll go to the Public Prosecutor via Scotland Yard."

"Could I ask a question?"

"Of course."

"How did they find out?"

"It was a small glacier. Oberhauser's body came out at the bottom of it earlier this year. When the spring snows melted. Some climbers found it. All his papers and everything were intact. His family identified him. Then it was just a question of working back. The bullets clinched it."

"But how did you get mixed up in the whole thing?"

"MOB Force was a responsibility of my, er, Service. The papers found their way to us. I happened to see the file. I had some spare time on my hands. I asked to be given the job of chasing up the man who did it."

"Why?"

James Bond looked Major Smythe squarely in the eyes. "It just happened that Oberhauser was a friend of mine. He taught me to ski before the war, when I was in my teens. He was a wonderful man. He was something of a father to me at a time when I happened to need one."

"Oh, I see." Major Smythe looked away. "I'm sorry."

James Bond got to his feet. "Well, I'll be getting back to Kingston." He held up a hand. "No, don't bother. I'll find my way to the car." He looked down at the older man. He said abruptly, almost harshly—perhaps, Major Smythe thought, to hide his embarrassment—"It'll be about a week before they send someone out to bring you home." Then he walked off across the lawn and through the house, and Major Smythe heard the iron whirr of the self-starter and the clatter of the gravel on the unkempt drive.

Major Smythe, questing for his prey along the reef, wondered what exactly those last words of the Bond man had meant. Inside the Pirelli his lips drew mirthlessly back from the stained teeth. It was obvious, really. It was just a version of the corny old act of leaving the guilty officer alone with his revolver. If the Bond man had wanted to, he could have telephoned Government House and had an officer of the Jamaica Regiment sent over to take Major Smythe into custody. Decent of him, in a way. Or was it? A suicide would be tidier, save a lot of paperwork and taxpayers' money.

Should he oblige the Bond man and be tidy? Join Mary in whatever place suicides go to? Or go through with it—the indignity, the dreary formalities, the headlines, the boredom and drabness of a life sentence that would inevitably end with his third coronary? Or should he defend himself—plead wartime, a struggle with Oberhauser, prisoner trying to escape, Oberhauser knowing of the gold cache, the natural temptation

of Smythe to make away with the bullion, he, a poor officer of the commandos confronted with sudden wealth?

Should he dramatically throw himself on the mercy of the court? Suddenly Major Smythe saw himself in the dock—a splendid, upright figure, in the fine bemedaled blue and scarlet of the ceremonial uniform that was the traditional rig for court-martial. (Had the moths got into the japanned box in the spare room at Wavelets? Had the damp? Luna would have to look to it.) A day in the sunshine, if the weather held. A good brushing. With the help of his corset, he could surely still get his forty-inch waist into the thirty-four-inch trousers Gieves had made for him twenty, thirty, years ago. And, down on the floor of the court, at Chatham probably, the Prisoners' Friend, some staunch fellow, at least of colonel's rank in deference to his own seniority, would be pleading his cause. And there was always the possibility of appeal to a higher court. Why, the whole affair might become a cause célèbre ... he would sell his story to the papers, write a book....

Major Smythe felt the excitement mounting in him. Careful, old boy! Careful! Remember what the good old snip-cock had said! He put his feet to the ground and had a rest amidst the dancing waves of the northeast trades that kept the North Shore so delightfully cool until the torrid months—August, September, October—of the hurricane season. He would soon be having his two pink gins, skimpy lunch, and happily sodden siesta, after which he would have to give all this more careful thought. And then there were cocktails with the Arundels and dinner at the Shaw Park Beach Club with the Marchesis. Then some high bridge and home to his seconal sleep. Cheered by the prospect of the familiar routine, the black shadow of Bond

retreated into the background. Now then, scorp, where are you? Octopussy's waiting for her lunch! Major Smythe put his head down, and his mind freshly focused and his eyes questing, continued his leisurely swim along the shallow valley between the coral clumps that led out toward the white-fringed reef.

Almost at once he saw the two spiny antennae of a lobster, or rather of its cousin, the West Indian langouste, weaving inquisitively toward him, toward the turbulence he was creating, from a deep fissure under a coral boulder. From the thickness of the antennae, it would be a big one, three or four pounds! Normally, Major Smythe would have put his feet down and delicately stirred up the sand in front of the lair to bring the lobster farther out, for they are an inquisitive family. Then he would have speared it through the head and taken it back for lunch. But today there was only one prey in his mind, one shape to concentrate on—the shaggy, irregular silhouette of a scorpionfish. And, ten minutes later, he saw a clump of seaweedy rock on the white sand that wasn't just a clump of seaweedy rock. He put his feet softly down and watched the poison spines erect themselves along the back of the thing. It was a good-sized one, perhaps three-quarters of a pound. He got his three-pronged spear ready and inched forward. Now the red angry eyes of the fish were wide open and watching him. He would have to make a single quick lunge from as nearly the vertical as possible; otherwise, he knew from experience, the barbed prongs, needle-sharp though they were, would almost certainly bounce off the horny head of the beast. He swung his feet up off the ground and paddled forward very slowly, using his free hand as a fin. Now! He lunged forward and downward. But the scorpionfish had felt the tiny approaching shock-wave

of the spear. There was flurry of sand, and it had shot up in a vertical takeoff and whirred, in almost birdlike flight, under Major Smythe's belly.

Major Smythe cursed and twisted around in the water. Yes, it had done what the scorpionfish so often does—gone for refuge to the nearest algae-covered rock, and there, confident in its superb camouflage, gone to ground on the seaweed. Major Smythe had only to swim a few feet, lunge down again, this time more accurately, and he had it, flapping and squirming on the end of his spear.

The excitement and the small exertion had caused Major Smythe to pant, and he felt the old pain across his chest lurking, ready to come at him. He put his feet down, and after driving his spear all the way through the fish, held it, still flapping desperately, out of the water. Then he slowly made his way back across the lagoon on foot and walked up the sand of his beach to the wooden bench under the sea-grape. Then he dropped the spear with its jerking quarry on the sand beside him and sat down to rest.

It was perhaps five minutes later that Major Smythe felt a curious numbness more or less in the region of his solar plexus. He looked casually down, and his whole body stiffened with horror and disbelief. A patch of his skin, about the size of a cricket ball, had turned white under his tan, and, in the center of the patch, there were three punctures, one below the other, topped by little beads of blood. Automatically, Major Smythe wiped away the blood. The holes were only the size of pinpricks. Major Smythe remembered the rising flight of the scorpionfish, and he said aloud, with awe in his voice, but

without animosity, "You got me, you bastard! By God, you got me!"

He sat very still, looking down at his body and remembering what it said about scorpionfish stings in the book he had borrowed from the Institute and had never returned —*Dangerous Marine Animals*, an American publication. He delicately touched and then prodded the white area around the punctures. Yes, the skin had gone totally numb, and now a pulse of pain began to throb beneath it. Very soon this would become a shooting pain. Then the pain would begin to lance all over his body and become so intense that he would throw himself on the sand, screaming and thrashing about, to rid himself of it. He would vomit and foam at the mouth, and then delirium and convulsions would take over until he lost consciousness. Then, inevitably in his case, there would ensue cardiac failure and death. According to the book the whole cycle would be complete in about a quarter of an hour—that was all he had left—fifteen minutes of hideous agony! There were cures, of course—procaine, antibiotics and antihistamines —if his weak heart would stand them. But they had to be near at hand. Even if he could climb the steps up to the house, and supposing Dr. Cahusac had these modern drugs, the doctor couldn't possibly get to Wavelets in under an hour.

The first jet of pain seared into Major Smythe's body and bent him over double. Then came another and another, radiating through his stomach and limbs. Now there was a dry, metallic taste in his mouth, and his lips were prickling. He gave a groan and toppled off the seat onto the beach. A flapping on the sand beside his head reminded him of the scorpionfish. There came a lull in the spasms of pain. Instead,

his whole body felt as though it was on fire, but, beneath the agony, his brain cleared. But of course! The experiment! Somehow, somehow he must get out to Octopussy and give her her lunch!

"Oh Pussy, my Pussy, this is the last meal you'll get."

Major Smythe mouthed the refrain to himself as he crouched on all fours, found his mask, and struggled to force it over his face. Then he got hold of his spear, tipped with the still flapping fish, and clutching his stomach with his free hand, crawled and slithered down the sand and into the water.

It was fifty yards of shallow water to the lair of the octopus in the coral cranny, and Major Smythe, screaming all the while into his mask, crawling mostly on his knees, somehow made it. As he came to the last approach and the water became deeper, he had to get to his feet, and the pain made him jiggle to and fro, as if he were a puppet manipulated by strings. Then he was there, and with a supreme effort of will, he held himself steady as he dipped his head down to let some water into his mask and clear the mist of his screams from the glass. Then, blood pouring from his bitten lower lip, he bent carefully down to look into Octopussy's house. Yes! The brown mass was still there. It was stirring excitedly. Why? Major Smythe saw the dark strings of his blood curling lazily down through the water. Of course! The darling was tasting his blood. A shaft of pain hit Major Smythe and sent him reeling. He heard himself babbling deliriously into his mask. *Pull yourself together, Dexter, old boy! You've got to give Pussy her lunch!* He steadied himself, and holding the spear well down the shaft, lowered the fish down toward the writhing hole.

Would Pussy take the bait? The poisonous bait that was killing Major Smythe but to which an octopus might be immune? If only Bengry could be here to watch! Three tentacles, weaving excitedly, came out of the hole and wavered around the scorpionfish. Now there was a gray mist in front of Major Smythe's eyes. He recognized it as the edge of unconsciousness and feebly shook his head to clear it. And then the tentacles leaped! But not at the fish! At Major Smythe's hand and arm. Major Smythe's torn mouth stretched in a grimace of pleasure. Now he and Pussy had shaken hands! How exciting! How truly wonderful!

But then the octopus, quietly, relentlessly pulled downward, and terrible realization came to Major Smythe. He summoned his dregs of strength and plunged his spear down. The only effect was to push the scorpionfish into the mass of the octopus and offer more arm to the octopus. The tentacles snaked upward and pulled more relentlessly. Too late, Major Smythe scrabbled away his mask. One bottled scream burst out across the empty bay, then his head went under and down, and there was an explosion of bubbles to the surface. Then Major Smythe's legs came up and the small waves washed his body to and fro while the octopus explored his right hand with its buccal orifice and took a first tentative bite at a finger with its beaklike jaws.

The body was found by two young Jamaicans spinning for needlefish from a canoe. They speared the octopus with Major Smythe's spear, killed it in the traditional fashion by turning it inside out and biting its head off, and brought the three corpses

home. They turned Major Smythe's body over to the police, and had the scorpionfish and the seacat for supper.

The local correspondent of the *Daily Gleaner* reported that Major Smythe had been killed by an octopus, but the paper translated this into "found drowned" so as not to frighten away the tourists.

Later, in London, James Bond, privately assuming "suicide," wrote the same verdict of "found drowned," together with the date, on the last page and closed the bulky file.

It is only from the notes of Dr. Cahusac, who performed the autopsy, that it has been possible to construct some kind of a postscript to the bizarre and pathetic end of a once valuable officer of the Secret Service.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Fleming was born in London in 1908, and was educated at Eton and Sandhurst and at the Universities of Munich and Geneva. From 1929 to 1933 he worked for Reuters in London, Berlin, and Moscow. The next six years he spent first with a firm of merchant bankers and then as a partner in a firm of stockbrokers. In the spring of 1939, Fleming went to Moscow as a special correspondent for the *Times* of London. In June of the same year he joined Naval Intelligence, became Personal Assistant to the Director, and served throughout World War II. Before his death, Mr. Fleming was a consultant on foreign

affairs for the London *Sunday Times*. He divided his time between Jamaica, where he wrote many of his books, and London.

As far as is known, "Octopussy" and "The Living Daylights" represent the last of the Ian Fleming-James Bond stories.

ALSO BY IAN FLEMING

The Diamond Smugglers
Thrilling Cities

THE ADVENTURES OF JAMES BOND

Casino Royale
Live and Let Die
Moonraker
Diamonds are Forever
From Russia, With Love
Doctor No
Goldfinger
For Your Eyes Only
Thunderball
The Spy Who Loved Me
On Her Majesty's Secret Service
You Only Live Twice
The Man With the Golden Gun

FOR CHILDREN

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang

[The end of *Octopussy* by Ian Fleming]