

Pray Action's jockey stood up, and had to slow his horse down. Angry shouts came from the crowd ...

Now Shy Smile was in front! Going faster ... faster ...

Moments later, Tingaling Bell took him past the finishing post.

He had won!

Or had he?

'Very clever riding, Tingaling!' thought Bond.

Some minutes after the end of the race, a voice came over the loudspeaker⁴¹. 'Attention please. Number ten, Shy Smile, has been disqualified. Number three, Pray Action, is the winner!' Bond smiled and walked towards the bar.

11

Mud Baths

The small red bus had the words 'Acme Mud and Sulphur Baths' on its side. It went down a short hill towards a group of dirty, grey buildings. A tall, yellow chimney stood up from the centre. Black smoke came from the chimney.

The bus stopped by the baths. There was a seat near the entrance, under some dead-looking trees. Bond sat there for a few minutes, trying to prepare himself. He was not happy. He did not like the look of the place, and he did not like what was going to happen to him inside.

But after a few more moments, he went inside. The bad smell of sulphur was strong. A woman sat behind a desk, reading a paperback book. She looked up. 'Yes?'

'I'd like a bath,' said Bond.

'Mud or Sulphur?' asked the woman.

'Mud,' said Bond. He paid for a ticket.

At the back of the room were two doors. One said MUD, the other SULPHUR. Bond went through the MUD door. He found himself in a long room with a window in the roof and changing rooms along the walls. It was hot and steamy in the room. Two men sat at a table playing cards. They were naked⁴² except for towels around their waists. They looked up at Bond.

'Ticket?' one of the men asked.

Bond gave him his ticket and the man gave him a key for one of the changing rooms. He pointed at the door at the end of the room. 'The baths are through there,' the man said.

There was nothing in the changing room except a thin towel. Bond took off his clothes and put the towel round his waist. He pushed the money into his coat pocket. Then he walked out and locked the changing room door behind him.

He went through the door at the end of the room. A large black man with no hair met him on the other side.

'Follow me,' said the black man.

The room was square and grey, and there were long tables against the walls. On each table was a heavy wooden box like a coffin⁴³. It had a wooden top that covered most of the box. Men's hot, wet faces showed above the sides of most 'coffins'.

Bond followed the black man to a wooden seat next to two shower rooms. Bond sat on the seat and the man went across to an empty coffin. He put a sheet into it. Next he went to the middle of the room and got two buckets. They were filled with hot brown mud. He poured mud into the empty coffin until the bottom was full.

He left it to cool and went to a bath full of it. From this he took several wet towels, then walked round the room. At each coffin, he stopped to put a cold towel around the head of the red-faced man inside. When he had finished, he walked across to the empty coffin.

'OK,' he said to Bond.

The man took Bond's towel and key. Bond climbed into the

coffin and lay down in the hot mud. The man put a cold towel under Bond's head, then took one of the buckets of hot mud. He put the mud all over Bond's body. When he had finished, only Bond's face and a very small part of his body round his heart was white. The man then pulled the sheet round Bond until Bond could only move his fingers and his head. He felt like a trapped animal.

'Twenty minutes,' the man said to Bond. He closed the lid. It was six o'clock.

Bond was uncomfortable and hot. At three minutes past six, the door opened and Tingaling Bell came into the room. The black man came across and put a towel around Bond's head. It felt wonderfully cold.

The jockey climbed into a coffin in front of Bond. The black man covered him in mud and put the sheet round him. Then he shut the lid over Tingaling's body.

Bond closed his eyes. How was he going to give Tingaling the money? In the changing room after the bath? On the way out? In the bus?

'OK, nobody move!' It was a hard, frightening voice and came from the doorway.

Bond opened his eyes. The door to the room was open and a man stood by it. Another man walked quickly into the middle of the room. They both carried guns and had black hoods⁴⁴ over their heads. There were holes cut in the hoods for their eyes and mouths.

'Where's the jockey?' the man in the middle of the room asked. He moved across the room and hit the black man with his gun.

The black man, afraid, pointed.

The man with the gun walked towards Tingaling. When he went past Bond, he stopped and looked for a few seconds. Then he moved over to the jockey.

'Hello, Tingaling,' he said, coldly.

'What's wrong?' The jockey's voice was high and frightened.

'Wrong?' said the man with the gun. 'Maybe you've never heard of a horse called Shy Smile. Maybe you weren't there when he was disqualified this afternoon.'

The jockey started to cry softly. 'It ... it wasn't my fault, Boss. It was an accident.'

'My friends think that it wasn't an accident.' The man put the gun to the jockey's head. 'They found a thousand dollars hidden in your room. Where did it come from?'

'I've saved it!' cried Tingaling. 'It's all the money I've got!' The man took the gun away. 'You've been riding too much, Tingaling. You need a rest. In a hospital, maybe.' He walked across and picked up one of the buckets of hot mud and walked back.

The jockey started shouting, 'No! No!' as the hot, brown mud came out of the bucket and onto his head.

When it was empty, the man threw the bucket across the room. 'Don't call the police,' he said as he walked to the door. He laughed and pointed at Tingaling's coffin. 'You'd better get him out before he begins to cook.' Still laughing, the two men went out of the room.

Some time later, Felix Leiter was sitting in Bond's room at the motel.

'What happened next?' he asked.

'The two ricket men came running in,' said Bond. 'They took the lid off Tingaling's box and pulled off the sheet. Then they carried him to the shower. He was half dead, and all of his face was burned.'

'Describe the two gunmen,' said Leiter.

'The man by the door was small and thin,' said Bond. 'The other man was big and fat. He had a ~~and~~ wart⁴⁵ on his right thumb.'

'Wint,' said Leiter. 'And the other man was Kidd. They

work for the Spangs and they always work together. Wint is always sucking that wart on his thumb. He's called "Windy". He gets sick in cars and trains, and he thinks that planes are going to crash at any minute. Kidd's got white hair, but he's only about thirty years old. I'll tell the police about them and about Shy Smile. I won't tell them about you, James. I'll be back in an hour.'

Bond got dressed, then went to find a telephone.

He spoke to Shady Tree. 'Shy Smile didn't win,' he said.

'I know,' said Shady Tree. 'Tell me where you are staying and I'll send you another one thousand dollars. You'll get the money in the morning. Now, listen carefully. Come to New York and get a plane to Los Angeles. Then get another plane to Las Vegas. There is a room booked for you at the Tiara Casino. At ten o'clock on Thursday evening, go to the centre table of the three blackjack⁴⁶ tables near the bar. Sit down and bet the one thousand dollars. Do this five times. Then get up and leave the table. Don't bet any more, but wait for more orders. OK?'

'OK,' said Bond.

Later, Felix Leiter returned and he and Bond went out to dinner.

'My boss wants me to go to Las Vegas,' said Leiter, when they were eating. 'He wants to know where the real Shy Smile's body is buried.'

'Then we're both going to Las Vegas,' said Bond. He told him about Shady Tree's orders.

'I'll be there by the end of the week,' said Leiter. 'Maybe we could meet sometimes. Listen, Pinkerton's have got a man there. His name's Ernie Curro. I'll tell him that you're coming and he'll look after you. But be careful, James.'

Bond smiled. 'I'll be careful. But I've got to get further down the pipeline. Also, I've got to get close to Seraffimo Spas⁴⁷. I really don't like the Spangs. I don't like what they did to that black man and Tingaling.'



The jockey started shouting, 'No! No!' as the hot, brown mud came out of the bucket and onto his head.

'Are you still an agent with a double "O" number?' asked Leiter. 'The number that means you're allowed to kill?'

'Yes,' said Bond, quietly. 'I am.'

'Good,' said Leiter.

12

Las Vegas

Bond came out of the airport building at Las Vegas. A voice said, 'Are you going to the Tiara?'

Bond turned and saw a short, heavy man with large, brown eyes. 'Yes,' said Bond.

'OK, let's go.'

Bond followed him to his car. It was a taxi. He threw his suitcase onto the back seat and climbed in after it. They drove out of the airport.

'I'm Ernie Cureo,' said the driver. 'I'm a friend of Felix Leiter. He told me to look after you. Are you staying long?'

'Maybe for a few days,' said Bond.

After driving for some time, the wide road went on through lines of coloured lights and signs until they were in downtown Las Vegas. The sun was uncomfortably hot.

'We're coming into the famous Strip, now,' said Cureo, after a minute or two. 'Here are all the big hotels and casinos. That's The Flamingo, and that's The Sands. And here's The Desert Inn and The Sahara. Over there is The Thunderbird, and across the road is The Tiara.'

He slowed down and stopped outside the Spang hotel.

'I guess you know all about Mr Spang,' said Cureo.

'I know a little,' said Bond. 'You can tell me the rest another time.'

'OK,' said Cureo. 'I am sure you'll be safe on your first night.'

Bond had lunch next to The Tiara's big swimming pool, then went to his room. It was very comfortable, with expensive furniture, a radio and a television.

He slept for four hours.

During this time, a secret wire-recorder⁴⁷ under the table next to the bed recorded complete silence. When Bond woke up, it was seven o'clock. The wire-recorder heard him phone the hotel desk.

'I want to speak to Miss Tiffany Case ...' A pause, then, 'All right, please tell her that Mr James Bond called.'

The recorder heard him move about the room. It heard the noise of the shower. And, at 7.30 pm, it heard the noise of the key in the lock when he went out and shut the door. Half an hour later, the recorder heard a knock on the door. A man wearing a waiter's uniform came into the room with a bowl of fruit. There was a note with it:

FROM THE HOTEL MANAGER

The man walked quickly to the table by the bed and removed the wire from the recorder. He put a new wire in the machine. Then he put the fruit on the table and went out and closed the door.

For several hours after that, the wire-recorder heard nothing.

Bond sat in the Tiara bar and slowly drank a martini.

'Has Mr Spang been in tonight?' he asked the barman.

'I haven't seen him,' said the barman. 'He usually comes in about eleven o'clock.'

Bond walked across to the blackjack tables. He stepped at the centre table – the table where he was going to sit at ten

o'clock. It was now 8.30. Eight players sat round the table, opposite the dealer. The dealer was about forty years old. He dealt two cards into the eight numbered spaces on the table in front of the bets. The bets were mostly five or ten silver dollars, or counters worth twenty dollars. Nobody spoke. The waitresses moved around in the space inside the circle of tables. From this space, two tough-looking men with guns at their waists watched the tables and players carefully.

Bond watched the game for a short time, then walked to The Opal Room restaurant. He sat at a corner table and ordered a steak and a martini. Then he ate his dinner and thought about the rest of the evening. He was becoming bored with this job. And he did not like taking orders from a cheap gangster, or trying to please Mr Spang.

Just before ten o'clock, he walked into the Casino.

'There are two ways of doing this job,' he thought. 'Sit and wait for something to happen, or *make* something happen.'

13

An Interesting Evening

The dealer now at the centre blackjack table was Tiffany Case.

'So that's her job at the Tiara,' thought Bond.

All the blackjack dealers at the tables were pretty women. They all wore the same smart Western clothes – short, grey skirt with a wide, black belt, a grey shirt and a black handkerchief round the neck, a grey cowboy hat and black boots.

'So Tiffany is going to help me to win five thousand dollars,' Bond thought. He sat down opposite her.

'Hi,' she said, smiling politely.

Bond put ten one hundred-dollar notes across the betting line on the table. One of the two tough-looking men walked across and stood next to Tiffany. He was called a 'pit-boss'.

'Maybe this man would like new cards,' the man said, looking at Bond. He gave Tiffany a new pack of cards, then he moved away.

Tiffany shuffled the new cards quickly, then 'cut' them – divided them into two parts – and put them flat on the table. But Bond saw that the two halves were not quite the same. When she shuffled them again, she was going to put the cards back into the same place. She put them in front of Bond to cut. He watched her shuffle them again, cleverly moving the cards just where she needed them. And so, the 'new' pack of cards was 'fixed'.

She dealt him two cards, then gave two to herself. Bond looked at his two cards. A jack and a ten. He looked up at the girl and shook his head. He didn't want another card. She turned her cards over. They added up to sixteen. She took another card – a king. Now the three cards added up to more than twenty-one. She had 'busted'. She had silver dollars and counters for twenty dollars next to her. But the pit-boss moved quickly to her side with a thin, thousand-dollar plaque. She pushed it across to Bond.

Bond bet again. She dealt him two more cards. Seventeen. Again, he shook his head. She had twelve, and took two more cards – a three and a nine. 'Busted' again. And the pit-boss was there with another thousand-dollar plaque. With his next bet, Bond got cards that added up to nineteen. She turned over a ten and a seven and had to 'stand'. Another thousand-dollar plaque came to Bond.

More people were coming into the gambling room now. Soon they were going to be round the tables. This was his last bet. After this he was supposed to get up from the table and

leave her. She dealt him two cards and he picked them up. Twenty. And she picked up two tens. Bond smiled. Both took another card and busted. She quickly dealt him two more cards, just as three more players came to the table. He had nineteen and she had sixteen. And that was the end. Bond took his last thousand-dollar plaque.

He got up from the table and looked across at the girl. 'Thank you,' he said. 'You deal beautifully.'

Tiffany Case looked hard at Bond. 'You're welcome,' she said.

Bond turned and walked away to the bar. So now he had his five thousand dollars. He remembered what Shady Tree had told him, 'Don't bet any more.' Bond smiled, then finished his drink and walked across the room to the nearest roulette⁴⁸ table.

'Five thousand dollars on Red,' he told the croupier.

The croupier looked closely at him, then put the five thousand-dollar plaques onto the Red. Bond saw him push a button under the table with his knee. A moment later, the pit-boss walked across to the table. At the same time, the croupier turned the wheel.

Bond lit a cigarette. He had a wonderful feeling of freedom. Nobody was going to tell *him* what to do any more. And he knew that he was going to win.

The wheel turned more slowly and the little ball fell into its red place.

'Thirty-six. Red,' said the croupier.

He pulled in some losing counters and pushed some money across to the winning players. Then he took a large, thin, five thousand-dollar plaque and put it next to Bond.

'Put it on Black,' said Bond.

Now several more people came to watch. Bond felt their eyes on him, but he looked across the table to the pit-boss. The man looked a little nervous.

Bond smiled at him as the wheel turned.

'Seventeen. Black,' said the croupier.

There were noises of excitement from the watching crowd. They watched the croupier push the big plaque in front of Bond.

Now there was another man standing next to the pit-boss. He was a big square-shaped man, and he was looking at Bond with hard, bright eyes. It was Seraffimo Spang. He looked a little like his brother in London.

'Now for the last throw,' thought Bond. 'And then I'm leaving here with twenty thousand dollars of Spang money.' He looked across at his employer. Spang's eyes were still watching him.

'Red,' said Bond. He gave the five thousand-dollar plaque to the croupier.

The wheel turned. The little ball fell into its place.

'Five. Red,' said the croupier. And there were more noises of excitement from the people around the table.

'I'll take my money,' said Bond. 'Thanks.'

Bond put the four plaques in his pocket and moved through the crowd. He walked across to the cashier's⁴⁹ desk. 'Three notes of five thousand and five of ones,' he said to the man. The cashier took Bond's four plaques and gave him the money.

Bond went to the hotel desk and asked for an air mail envelope. Then he moved to a writing-desk next to the wall. He put the three large notes in the envelope and wrote on the front:

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
UNIVERSAL EXPORT
REGENTS PARK
LONDON, NW1
ENGLAND.

Then he bought stamps at the desk and put the envelope

into the US mailbox. He hoped it would be safe. He looked at his watch. Five minutes to midnight. He looked round the room for the last time. There was a new dealer at Tiffany Case's table, and Mr Spang was not there any more.

Bond walked back to his room and locked the door. It had been an interesting evening.

14

Gunfights!

For most of the next day, Bond waited at the hotel for something to happen. When he got tired of waiting, he phoned Ernie Cureo.

'Let's meet for a talk,' he said.

Cureo came to get him that evening, and they drove away from the Strip.

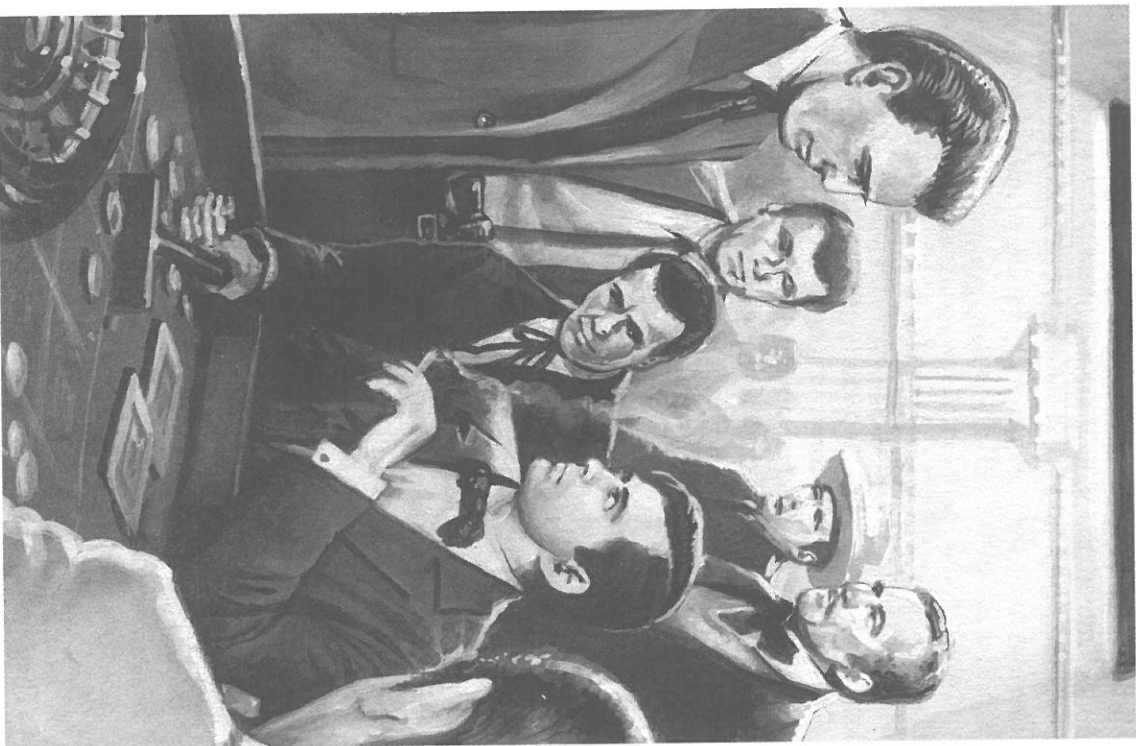
'What happened last night?' asked Ernie Cureo. 'Did you win anything?'

'I won some money at roulette,' said Bond. 'It won't worry Spang. He's rich. How does he spend his money?'

'He's crazy about the old West,' said Cureo. 'He bought himself a ghost town⁵⁰ out on Highway 95. It's called Spectreville. It has a Western saloon bar, a hotel and even an old railway station. And Spang bought one of the old trains. He keeps it in the station at Spectreville. At weekends he takes his friends for a ride to Rhyolite. It's another ghost town, about fifty miles away. It gets lots of visitors.'

'That's why I haven't heard from Spang or his friends all day,' thought Bond. 'It's Friday, so they'll be out playing trains.'

After some minutes, Cureo said, 'We're being followed, front and back. Do you see that black Chevrolet in front, with



He was a big square-shaped man, and he was looking at Bond with hard, bright eyes. It was Seraffimo Spang.

the two men? They've got two driving mirrors and they're watching us. Behind us is a little red Jaguar. Two more men, with golf clubs on the back seat. They belong to the Detroit Purple Gang, and they don't play golf. I'll try and lose them.'

Bond took a thousand-dollar note from his pocket and pushed it into Curo's shirt pocket. 'That's for any damage to your car. OK, Ernie. Let's see what you can do.'

He took his Beretta out of its holster and held it in his hand. 'This is what I've been waiting for,' he thought.

It was a straight road with not much traffic. Ahead, the tops of the mountains were yellow in the evening sun. They were riding easily along with the Jaguar behind them and the black Chevrolet in front. Without warning, Curo pushed his foot down hard and stopped the car suddenly. The Jaguar hit them from behind and there was a crash of metal and glass. Curo then drove away fast down the road.

Bond looked out of the back window. 'They're out of the car,' he said. 'The windscreen is broken - there's glass everywhere. They're trying to pull the front part of the car off the wheels. Good work, Ernie. It's stopped them for a little while.'

'Get down,' said Curo. 'The Chevrolet has stopped at the side of the road. They may try some shooting.'

Bond felt the car move forward fast. Curo was half lying on the front seat, driving with one hand. There were two loud cracks as they went past the Chevrolet. Glass fell around Bond. The car almost went off the road before Curo got it straight again. Bond pushed out the broken glass in the back window. The Chevrolet was coming after them.

'I'm going to turn suddenly and stop in the next side road,' said Curo. 'It'll give you a clear shot when they come round the corner after us. Now!'

The car went round the corner on two wheels and Bond held on to his seat. The car stopped suddenly. Bond jumped out, his gun in his hand.

The Chevrolet came round the corner fast. Bond fired his gun. Crack! Crack! Crack! All four bullets hit the car.

The Chevrolet went across the road, hit a tree, turned completely round and went slowly over onto its side. And stopped. Bond watched fire come from the front of it.

Someone was trying to get out of a window. Soon the flames were going to find petrol on the ground and the whole car was going to explode. It was going to be too late for the man inside.

Bond heard a sound behind him. He turned to see Ernie Curo fall from the driver's seat of the taxi and across the passenger seat. Bond forgot the burning Chevrolet and pulled open the car door. There was blood all over Curo's arm. Bond pulled him carefully onto the passenger seat and his eyes opened.

'Get me out of here,' he said. 'And drive fast. That Jaguar will soon be coming to find us. Then get me to a doctor.'

'OK, Ernie,' said Bond. He got into the driving seat and started the car. He moved fast down the road, away from the burning Chevrolet.

'Can you see anything in the mirror?' asked Curo.

'There's a car coming fast after us,' said Bond. 'It's the Jaguar.'

'We have to find somewhere to hide,' said Curo. 'There's a drive-in cinema near here. There! Turn right. See those lights? Get in there quick. That's right, between those cars. Turn off your lights. Stop.'

The taxi stopped in the back line of six rows of cars. They looked towards a large cinema screen. A man was saying something to a woman on the screen.

Two more cars drove in and stopped. Neither of them was the Jaguar. A girl came up to the taxi.

'That's a dollar, please,' she said. She connected a

loudspeaker to a metal post next to the car. Then she hung the speaker inside the window next to Bond. The voices of the man and woman on the screen filled the car.

The girl moved away to the next car.

'Turn the sound off!' said Curoo. He spoke with difficulty. 'Watch the entrance. We'll wait a little while, then you can get me to a doctor.'

Bond found a switch and the voices stopped. He looked out into the darkness towards the entrance, but could see nothing. Suddenly, a dark shape came up from the ground, and a gun was pointing at Bond's face. Then a voice from outside Ernie Curoo's side of the car whispered, 'OK, boys, don't do anything stupid.'



Bond looked at the face next to him. 'Get out, or we'll shoot your friend,' the man told him. 'You and the two of us are going for a drive.'

Bond turned and saw the gun pushed into Curoo's neck.

'I'll go with them, Ernie,' he said. 'I'll soon be back to get you to a doctor.'

'Sorry, friend,' said Curoo, in a tired voice. 'I think ...' There was a soft noise as the gun hit him behind the ear. He fell forward and was silent.

Bond stepped slowly out of the car, and the three men walked towards the entrance.

15

Spectreville

The red Jaguar was outside the entrance, its windscreen broken. They took Bond's gun before he climbed in next to the driver. 'Where are we going?' he asked.

'You'll see,' said the driver. He was a thin man with an unkind face.

They were soon driving along a moonlit road towards the mountains. There was a big sign which said '95'. Bond remembered that Spectreville was on Highway 95. So these men were taking him to Mr Spang.

Bond suddenly felt that he did not know enough of the answers. Did they know who he *really* was? He could say that he had not understood his orders about the gambling. But how to explain all the shooting? He could say that he thought the four men were from another gang.

'Well, now I'm about to get to the end of the pipeline,' he thought.

After two hours of driving, they stopped outside some high gates. There was a sign outside. It said: SPECTREVILLE. DO NOT ENTER. DANGEROUS DOGS. On the gate was a button and a speaking box. A small sign next to it said: RING AND SAY WHO YOU ARE. The driver pushed the button and a voice said 'Yes?' from inside the box.

'Frasso and McGonigle,' said the driver, loudly.

'OK, McGonigle,' said the voice. There was a 'click' and the gates slowly opened.

They drove through them and down a narrow road. The gates closed behind them. The road went on for about a mile, then there were lights in front of them. They went down a hill and suddenly there were brightly lit buildings. Past them, the moon shone down on a single, straight railway line. It went on as far as Bond could see.

The car stopped in front of grey houses and shops. One bigger building had a sign outside. It said: PINK GARTER SALOON BAR. From behind the Western swing half-doors, yellow light came out onto the street. The sound of a piano playing came from inside. It was all like something out of a Western film.

'Get out,' McGonigle told Bond.

The three men climbed out of the car and onto the wooden pavement. Bond stopped.

'Come on,' said McGonigle.

Bond slowly followed him to the door of the saloon. He stopped for a moment as the swing half-doors came back towards his face. He felt Frasso's gun pushing into his back.

'Now!' thought Bond. He jumped through the doors and threw McGonigle round and into Frasso. The two men crashed back onto the pavement. McGonigle was up on his feet first, with a gun in his hand. Bond's hand came down on the gun and knocked it to the ground. Frasso fired two shots at Bond. But the secret agent dropped to the ground and picked up the

gun at McGonigle's feet. He fired two quick shots at Frasso from the ground. Then McGonigle stepped on his hand and fell on top of him. Bond went down, but he saw and heard Frasso crash down onto the pavement outside.

Then McGonigle's hands were on him. For several seconds the two men fought silently, like animals. Bond got up on one knee and pushed the other man off him. As he did this, McGonigle's knee came up and hit Bond's face. Bond fell back but then stood up. McGonigle came towards him with his head down.

Bond turned away quickly. But the gangster's head hit him in the chest, and two fists crashed into his body. The gangster's head came up, and Bond hit him hard in the face. McGonigle fell back, but Bond went after him. He reached for the gangster's foot and pulled it away from the floor. Then he turned and threw the man into the room. McGonigle's flying body crashed down on top of the piano. The piano fell to the floor, with McGonigle flat on the top of it.

'Stop!' A girl's voice came across the room from the bar. Slowly, Bond turned round.

There were four people standing with their backs to the bar. Mr Spang stood in front of the other three. He was dressed like a cowboy, with shiny, black boots and two guns in holsters at his sides. Tiffany Case stood next to him. She wore a Western dress of white and gold. She stood and watched Bond. Her eyes were shining and she looked nervous. Then there were the two men in black hoods, the two from the Acme Baths at Saratoga. Each of them pointed a gun at Bond.

'Bring him this way,' said Mr Spang.

He left the room. Tiffany Case gave Bond a warning look as she followed him. The two men came close to Bond. The big one said, 'Move'. Bond walked slowly after the girl and the two hooded men walked behind him.

Bond pushed through a door behind the bar. He looked

around and saw that he was now in a railway station waiting room. 'Turn right,' said one of them. Bond turned and went through a door.

In front of him was probably the most beautiful steam train⁵¹ in the world. There were three metal, shining lights on the front of the big, old engine. The name *The Cannonball* was painted along the side in black and gold. Behind the engine was a dark blue carriage⁵². Bond looked at the train, but then he felt a gun in his back.

Bond climbed up into the carriage. First there was a small, but beautiful, dining room, then a narrow room with three doors at the sides. With the two men still behind him, Bond walked to the end and pushed open the door into a big room. It was a sitting room with bookshelves on each side and expensive curtains. A thick red carpet covered the floor.

Mr Spang stood at the far end of the room. In the middle sat Tiffany Case. She was nervously smoking a cigarette.

Bond walked to a comfortable chair. He turned it towards Spang and Tiffany and sat down. He crossed one knee slowly over the other, then lit a cigarette.

'Stay here, Wint,' said Mr Spang. 'Kidd, go and phone Detroit. Tell them to send more men.' He turned towards Bond and his eyes shone angrily. 'Now. Who are you and what's happening?'

Bond did not like Spang's question. 'I'll need a drink if we're going to talk,' said Bond. 'Bourbon.'

'Get it, Wint,' Mr Spang said coldly.

The big man walked out of the room. Minutes later, he came back and pushed a glass into Bond's hand. 'Thanks, Wint,' said Bond. He drank some of the bourbon then put the glass down on the floor next to him. He looked up at Mr Spang.

'I did my job and got paid,' said Bond. 'It was my money, and I decided to gamble with it. Then a lot of your men came after me. If you wanted to talk to me, why didn't you just telephone



me? When they started shooting, it was time for me to shoot back. So I did.'

Without taking his eyes off Bond, Mr Spang slowly pulled a piece of paper from his shirt pocket.

Bond knew that the piece of paper was bad news for him. Really bad news.

The Cannonball

'This is a message from a good friend in London. It says, "Peter Franks is held by the police. Find out if the job is in any danger, then kill the new carrier and send a report."' "

There was silence in the room. Mr Spang looked hard at Bond. 'Well, Mr Whoever-you-are,' he said at last. 'This looks like a good year for something horrible to happen to you.'

Bond tried to stay calm. He knew that they were going to hurt him – badly. But how? He reached down for his drink. Now he knew that the two Spangs were the beginning and the end of the diamond pipeline. He had completed his job. He knew the answers. Now, in some way, he must get the answers back to M.

'I took the job from Peter Franks,' he said. 'He decided that he didn't like it, and I needed money.'

'You're lying,' said Mr Spang. 'You're with the police, or you're some kind of private detective. I'm going to find out who you are, who you work for, and what you know.' He turned angrily to Tiffany Case. 'How did he trick you? Are you stupid?'

'No!' said Tiffany. 'ABC sent this man to me, and he seemed OK. Was I supposed to tell ABC to try again? And maybe this man is telling the truth.' Her angry eyes turned towards Bond, and he saw fear in them – fear for him.

'Well, we're going to find out,' said Mr Spang. 'Wint, get Kidd and the boots.'

The boots? Bond sat silently. He had to be strong now. He must tell them nothing. He had to think of Ernie Curoo and Felix Leiter, and maybe Tiffany Case.

He heard the two men come up behind him.

'Take him out onto the station,' said Mr Spang.

'OK, Boss,' said Wint.

The two hooded men sat down. They put football boots down on the thick carpet next to them. Then they started to take off their shoes.

'James!' said Tiffany Case. 'Wake up!'

After some moments, Bond's blackened eyes opened with difficulty. He looked up at her from the wooden floor. She shook his blood-covered arm, afraid that he might fall asleep again. He seemed to understand and slowly pulled himself up onto his hands and knees.

'Can you walk?' she asked.

'Wait,' he said. He could feel his feet and hands. He could move his head from side to side. He could see the moonlight. He could hear her. 'It should be all right,' he thought. But he just wanted to sleep. Or to die. Anything to stop the pain that was in him and all over him. Anything to kill the memory of those four boots kicking him.

'We're in the waiting room,' she whispered. 'We must get to the end of the station.'

She opened the door and Bond got up on his feet. With Tiffany's arm round him, he walked slowly out and to the end of the station.

And there was a railroad handcar.

Bond looked at it. 'Petrol?' he whispered.

Tiffany pointed to some petrol cans by the station wall. 'I've just filled it,' she whispered back. 'They use it to check the railway line. Get on it.' She smiled. 'Next stop, Rhyolite.'

'You're a great girl,' whispered Bond. 'But there'll be a lot of noise when we start that thing.' He turned and looked at the buildings behind him. 'I've got an idea. Have you got some matches or a cigarette lighter?'

She took a lighter out of her pocket and gave it to him.

'What's the idea?' she said. 'We need to get moving.'