

“THERE’S A CHAP I’d like you two to meet,” said Colonel Freeborn, the retired spymaster. “He’s not one of ours at MI6, more like a first cousin—he was with Naval Intelligence. He’s written a book as well, what one calls a spy thriller. You’ll have much in common, much to talk about. His name is Ian Fleming.”

Minutes later, Freeborn introduced Jake and his daughter Ilse to Fleming in a small conference room at MI6. Jake took note of the man’s thin brown hair, a high forehead, and that he looked to be in his mid-forties. His handshake was firm, his smile friendly.

Coffee was brought in and Freeborn excused himself, saying they might like to talk alone.

Ian Fleming, in a brown tweed jacket with a maroon ascot at his neck, sat across the wooden table from Jake and Ilse and said, “It’s so nice to meet the two of you. Colonel Freeborn has filled me in and he speaks highly of you. I’ve known the colonel for some time, going back to the war when I was personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence.”

“Great to meet you too,” Jake said. “What do you think may have happened to Churchill? Do you have any theories on that?”

“It’s difficult to say. It’s well known that the communists want to take over West Berlin. Perhaps the East Berlin mayor, Walter Ulbricht, has snatched Sir Winston to use as a bargaining chip: ‘Give us West Berlin and we’ll return your prime minister.’ ”

“I’ve considered that too, Mr. Fleming,” Ilse spoke up, surprising her father, who’d been about to speak. “It’s certainly possible but it would be such a dirty trick it could give world communism a black eye, bad publicity at a time when they’re trying to win over unaligned countries like Italy and Greece.”

Jake winked at his daughter and said, “Spain too.”

“You’re a perspicacious young woman,” Fleming said, nodding respectfully. “Your thought has merit. It’s difficult to read Moscow these days. Malenkov

hasn't been in the saddle all that long since Joe Stalin's death. We don't know how strong a hold he has on the Politburo."

Fleming picked up his coffee cup, put it back down, and said, "I understand you've coauthored a book that analyzes Allied decisions during the war, Weaver. I'd like to read it."

"I'd like to read yours as well," Jake said. "Tell us about it."

"First of all, I'm aware of your two incursions into Nazi Germany and your apprehension of the V-2 rocket developer, Wernher von Braun."

"Apprehension? You make it sound like I kidnapped him."

"Use whatever word you like but you found the man in hiding from the SS and got him into Allied custody. A marvelous achievement. You are among three persons who inspired my novel."

"Me?"

"Certainly. You and two British agents, one who operated in Yugoslavia and the other in Berlin, were models for the character I created. Their exploits were equally stunning."

Jake was taken aback. "I'm flattered," he managed.

"And I believe you'll be successful again, Weaver. But enough of that for now." Fleming gazed into Jake's eyes and then Ilse's. "I know that each of you is familiar with Berlin but the city is much changed since you were there."

He went on to describe Checkpoint Charlie, the Oberbaum Bridge, other east-west checkpoints, and the harsh strictness of the East German police, the *Stasi*. Jake and Ilse got out their notebooks.

Jake asked if he knew about the West Berlin neurologist Freeborn had mentioned. "No, but I'm sure the colonel can help you there." Fleming then gave the names of two contacts he had in Berlin who might be able to help. They'd been fellow naval intel agents, a man and a woman. Jake and Ilse wrote down the names.

“Many thanks,” Jake said. He sipped some coffee and added, “But tell us more about your book. It’s hard to believe I inspired you.”

“It’s called *Casino Royale*. I made my protagonist quite the dashing character, full of derring-do, even bolder than you. I’ve given him the code name of Double-Oh-Seven.”

“Double-Oh-Seven?” Ilse asked.

“Right. The double zeroes indicate he has license to kill.”

“License to kill?” Ilse uttered. “Jeepers, we don’t plan to kill anyone, do we, *Vati*?”

“You never can tell,” Ian Fleming said.