

James BOND

HAS RETURNED IN

Nine Lives Are Not Enough



BY

Scarlett Elizabeth Cooper

About The Author

Scarlett Elizabeth Cooper is a college junior who first became interested in James Bond in December 2005. Since then she's been formulating her own Bond stories. She first began writing original fiction when she was 7 and later became interested in fan fiction. Besides writing, she's also interested in classic movies, TV shows, reading and animals - in particular cats, and has four of her own.

Contents © copyright 2007 Scarlett Elizabeth Cooper
Cover artwork © copyright 2007 MI6.co.uk
Layout and typeset © copyright 2007 MI6.co.uk
Work reviewed and edited for publication by MI6.co.uk

First Edition – February 2007

All characters depicted in this novel are fictions and any resemblance to
real persons, living or dead is purely coincidental.

Published in Adobe® PDF Format, *www.adobe.com*

Publicly available courtesy of;
MI6.co.uk – *www.mi6.co.uk* February 2007
Typeset Garamond.

Based on Ian Fleming's

James Bond

007

Nine Lives are not Enough

Scarlett Elizabeth Cooper

She [the cat] knows that nine lives are not enough.

- Oswald Barron

Prologue

Summer 1961

A light, airy breeze blew through the open window causing the lacy, white curtains to flutter, kissing the cheek of thirteen year old Kisa McLaughlin. She was reclining on the dark green cushion of her window seat that her father, Jonathon McLaughlin, had built for her. In her right hand was a book she had borrowed from the library the day before and at her feet was a grey cat curled in a ball of purring contentment, blinking his eyes in the slight warmth of the sunlight that played across the twosome.

A movement on the residential Maryland street below caught Kisa's attention and she looked up from her reading, searching for the object. A pleased smile crossed her face when she recognized the figure sauntering up from the corner where his car was parked. He marched along the sidewalk and then paused before the wide oak door of her parents' townhouse. His pattern had varied each week, but it was with the same precision and poise that he stopped before it and rang the bell.

She didn't know what his business was that he discussed with her father each week, but she knew it was important because her father always shut the door to his mahogany decorated office and they were in there for several hours. When they had finished their business talk the visitor would move with her father into the parlor room where Kisa's mother, Sonja Dvorak McLaughlin would serve drinks, a dry vodka martini – shaken, not stirred, for their visitor and a scotch and water for her father.

On one of those visits when they had retired to this room Kisa ventured from the safety of her bed room to peek into the parlor to get a closer glimpse of the visitor. She stood with Sergei, her cat, at her feet, leaning heavily against the wood stained door jamb. The visitor was sitting directly across from the opening and she could easily make out his handsome features. He was tall, with dark hair and blue-grey eyes that were peering across the room amused. Kisa ducked back, afraid she had been seen, but when she ventured another peek he was engrossed in conversation with Jonathon. Quietly she tiptoed passed, but stood statue still when she heard her father's quiet "ahem."

"Kitten," he called and she willed the fluttering in her chest to be still.

"Come here," his Scottish brogue slipping through as he spoke.

"Commander Bond," he had turned back to the visitor, Kisa stood awkwardly staring at the gentleman, but trying her best not to. His blue-grey eyes were looking down at her with amusement and they intrigued her curiosity as she peered up at him shyly. "This is my daughter, Kisa."

"How do you do?" he had stood up and now extended his hand. Kisa tried to find words, but there was a lump in her throat and her knees felt weak beneath her.

"And Kitten," her father continued. "This is Commander..."

"Bond. James Bond," he interrupted in a voice that was deep and throaty. Her mouth felt dry and she forced herself to swallow around that continuous lump.

“Um, it’s, uh, a pleasure sir,” she curtsied and quickly retreated out the door where Sergei, was waiting. Kisa could not believe how fast her heart was pounding as she tried to control her racing heart. Her head hurt with the emotions that he had evoked in her young heart; emotions she did not fully understand or comprehend.

She was a practical child; she had always been. She had scorned the proverbial “love at first sight,” her peers flaunted. She had scorned the silly crushes they’d had on people who were far beyond their reach and their years. She had not, until this moment, even felt something remotely close to a “crush” that they would describe to the extent of obsession. Nor did she exactly feel an obsession now, just an indescribable connection that made her heart pound and her head swim with the feelings that swelled in her breast.

This was not, however, the reason she was an outsider to her peers. She blamed this little label on the fact that she just merely was not the same as other children her age. Kisa considered herself a freak of nature, a child with no childish thoughts or pursuits. It was not that she had never had a frivolous pastime; she had spent her time with dolls, makeup and dress-up, but hers were of a different nature and always by herself. She had never had to argue over what games she would play or places she would go. Kisa was the essence of individualism.

Perhaps it had been because of her parentage and the fact that she had been taught to be an individual. During the late 1940s her parents had first met in the Soviet Union. Her father, a second generation American Scotsman, was working for a peacekeeping organization and had met Sonja, a secretary to a Russian official. Their relationship blossomed and eventually turned to love and the problem of bringing Sonja back to America. That was when Jonathon had first met a man by the name of Ernst Blofeld.

Blofeld told Jonathon that he would make the arrangements for her to arrive in America and in return Kisa's father would have to do a series of jobs for him. Neither Jonathon nor Sonja knew what those jobs would be, but their arrival in Jonathon's hometown of Baltimore, Maryland brought them news of his first "assignment." Kisa had never known what the assignment was; all she knew was her parents spoke of it with shame. Every attempt for Jonathon to cut his relationship with Blofeld ended up with threats, so after the birth of their only child: Kisa, he meekly and humbly obeyed.

This had been the foundation for which they planted the seeds in Kisa for her to be loyal to her homeland and the mother homes of her parents: Scotland and Russia. Of course with the Cold War bursting all around her it was hard to be respectful to Russia, but she had made certain that she

remained true to American and have great respect for it. At her young age she didn't exactly know why they were so firm on this.

Kisa's thoughts returned to their visitor. He fascinated her, even as she sat thinking and those feelings of their first meeting returned in her breast. She picked up the purring cat and buried her face in his fur; she replaced him to the seat and quietly descended the stairs. She had reached the landing when the door bell rang again. Her father opened the door to the study where he and Bond had just retreated. Her mother brushed her long black hair from her face and peered out of the peek hole.

Sonja turned back to Jonathon, fear evident on her face. "It's Blofeld," she whispered. Jonathon turned back to James who slipped past him quietly to the back of the house with the agility of a cat.

Bond noticed Kisa standing on the landing. "You should go back upstairs my dear," he said it more as a suggestion than an order, but it was quickly reiterated by her father. Kisa was fearful, but obeyed without a word.

Once in her room she turned around and peered out towards the second floor, watching her mother open the front door and warmly greet Mr. Blofeld. "How do you do sir?" she was smiling.

"Good afternoon, Blofeld," her father's boisterous voice was welcoming. He walked in, his bald head shining in the overhead lighting. "Good morning," he replied gruffly, looking from Sonja to Jonathon. "Is everything all right?"

“Yes, everything’s fine,” Sonja replied a little too quick, trying to hide her fear.

“Why, you act as if you are guilty,” he grinned. Kisa didn’t like the grin; it frightened her. She withdrew further into her room. “Where’s the little Kisa?” he asked.

“She’s with a friend,” her father’s voice was steady, but Kisa knew him well and could hear the sound of fear from deep within. He’d also spoken truth. She was with her friend Sergei.

“I need to speak to you,” Blofeld replied, his ever present guard at his side. Jonathon moved away from the door to let him and the guard in. “Sonja too,” he added. Sonja’s eyes sought the second story of their home before she followed them into the study.

All was quiet downstairs for quite some time. Kisa ventured to her doorway again. She grabbed hold of the door jamb and stood on her tiptoes, straining to hear even the faintest whisper. But no sound came from down stairs.

Something brushed against her back; fear curled across her body as she swung around and came face to face with James Bond’s grey blue eyes.

“It’s all right,” he motioned for her to be quiet.

“You startled me Commander Bond,” she sighed in relief at a familiar and friendly face. He squeezed passed her in the doorway and stayed close to the wall. He was frightening her because he had his Berretta drawn and close to his body as he maneuvered quietly to the landing. She pressed her

self against the door, but she peered around the corner. She felt fearful at being left alone and silently followed him, keeping her body flat against the wall. At the bottom of the staircase Bond disappeared and Kisa gasped in fear. She stretched her body out where a corner turned at the landing and it provided a small amount of cover. Her heart stood still as she heard the creak of the mahogany door opening.

Blofeld walked through with a nonchalant expression plastered on his face, the guard walking behind him had something in his hand. Kisa stood perfectly still, not even breathing. The front door slammed and rattled the whole house; she jumped, something catching in her throat.

She tentatively peered around the corner. After a second's hesitation she rushed to the bottom of the stairs, almost colliding with Bond. She reached the door before he could stop her. She stopped, frozen just inside the door. Kisa wanted to look away but the sight was too horrible for her to move. She could only stare in frozen horror at the bullet riddled bodies of both of her parents.

Bond was now standing beside her and gently he led her out of the room. "I'm sorry," he said simply, his deep, throaty voice was far away, as if someone were speaking to her from the other end of a tunnel. Suddenly tears began to frantically fall from the corners of her eyes. She panicked. She never cried. She tried to run and turn away, but Commander Bond caught her up and held her as the tears ran freely down her face.

After a few moments she pulled away. Her eyes now dry. "Do you have a travel bag?" he asked quietly. She stared up into his eyes.

"Yes," she nodded.

"Go pack some clothes," he replied and returned into the room, securely closing the door after him. In her room, Kisa pulled out some clothes and her travel carrier for Sergei. Back down stairs Bond closed the door

behind him and took her out the back way and to his car. She was silent trying to grasp the meaning of all that had transpired.

She felt safe as they drove in quiet. After sometime they arrived at a building and Bond introduced her to Felix Lieter. He smiled kindly at her and they walked several feet away and talked in a low tone. Several minutes later a woman arrived and took her away.

Kisa suddenly felt insecure. She wanted her parents, but she didn't even want to think of them. The only other place she felt secure was with Commander Bond. She had felt an indescribable connection there, a safety that she'd only felt when she was with her parents.

"I'm an agent of the department of family affairs and you are now a ward of the state," the woman informed her as she led her away. She looked back one last time at James Bond and Felix Lieter. Bond was looking at her kindly, she bravely smiled at him and waved. She felt so alone.

They arrived at a home where there were several other children playing in a yard. They stared at her as if she was an alien and she felt even more uncomfortable. The foster parents were waiting for her, and they were kind. They let her have a room all to herself so that she could be alone. She was glad for Sergei's company. He was the one thing that was still with her and gave her some sense of security.

She sat down on the twin bed. Now the tears came again and they came in full force. She buried her head in her pillow and bawled like a little girl.

Sergei curled up against her side; his purring was a comfort to her. She rolled over and put both arms around him and cried into his soft fur. Supper time came and went, but she wasn't hungry. She stayed in her room with her cat. The foster mother came and tucked her in, telling her that if she needed anything at all to come to her. Kisa thanked her. When she was gone, Kisa tried to drift off to sleep.

She had been asleep for only a short time when she felt a presence in her room. Startled Kisa sat up in bed searching for the source of the feeling. Before she could find it a hand clamped over her mouth and her heart felt cold as it stopped beating in a second of fear. She tried to scream but the hand was firm. She struggled but the person continued to hold her fast as he dragged her to the window and passed her through to another waiting person. Kisa managed to squeal as the second person covered her mouth, but it was so faint that it disturbed no one.

“Come on,” the first person whispered. They took her to a waiting limousine, forcing her to walk between them.

They shoved her into the back of the limo, and hurriedly closed the door. As she swung around to get her bearings she caught sight of a familiar face. “Mr. Blofeld!” she cried in surprise and fear. She felt unsafe. He had killed her parents and now he wanted to kill her.

“Hello, Kisa,” he smiled warmly. “I do hope you don't think I had anything to do with your parents' deaths,” he seemed so calm and sure. She didn't like the way he was looking at her.

“Then who did?” she asked tentatively.

“Commander Bond of course,” he smiled a wide, hideous smile. Kisa shrank back, she didn’t believe him. She didn’t think James Bond would have killed her parents, but she wasn’t going to argue or provoke Blofeld either.

“Where are we going?”

“I have a nice little place on the Mediterranean that I think you and Sergei will like,” he petted his own white cat that was sitting in his lap patiently. Kisa made her self small on one corner of the limo seat. She was tired and scared and this had been a very long day.

Chapter 1

A Breeze of Hate

Ten Years Later... (Spring 1971)

The sun beat down on her back at an angle as the stinging itch of the evergreen tree rubbed against her bare skin. She licked her lips with anticipation and could taste the salt of her sweat. The strap that tied back at the nape of her neck, holding up her tight fitting halter top tingled with irritation from the heat. Her face was the image of concentration as the buzz of a bee that wisped past her face. She loosened the grip of her right hand and tested the weight of the weapon in it. It felt sticky with sweat; the metal that had been cool against the warm red flesh was now hot and slid down in the crook between her thumb and her other fingers.

The sun continued its relentless pouring over her body. She could feel the heat of it baking her fair skin; feel the curling of the flesh as it browned to a deep tan from weeks of sun drenching. Her hair that she had loosely pulled up and away from her face was now tickling her cheek as she waited, now impatiently.

Her mind was on one thing – hate. Hate she felt so intensely and so passionately for one man. She hated him even more that she loved her own life. As the minutes passed the heat of her anger and hatred boiled with the added warmth of the natural heat. It burned so great she could

almost smell it, her greatest desire to kill, to suck out the very life of a fellow human being. It was a sensation she had once thought foreign, but was now almost second nature.

She tapped an impatient foot in the dried grass that crackled. It was dead, as dead as she wished him to be. Her heart raced, she could hear him moving nearby and knew that the time had come. Perhaps he would kill first, but every ounce of her being cared not. Maybe she'd be better off dead. Her only desire was that he would die too. If only...

She grasped her weapon as she saw the dark head of hair looking in one of the other juniper bushes for a glimpse of her, hoping to gain his usual edge. Quietly, quickly and with precision she jumped from her hiding spot. "Bond!" she shouted, the figure whirled around quickly as she fired the weapon in her hand. A splotch of bright red splattered across the chest, arms and face of her victim. His brown eyes stared at her wildly as he grasped his chest at the wound and stumbled backwards. "Kisa!" he shouted, gasping as he tumbled against the ground, his body still and lifeless.

Had she killed him? Was it too much to hope? Was he finally dead, her most hated enemy? She approached him slowly, hoping that he would not move, that this time he would not resurrect. Her heart pounded with glad anticipation as her shadow crossed over the body, the red fluid now squishy and soaking into his clothes. But it was too much to hope. His

right arm was just now reaching out and grasping her leg, jerking her to the ground next to him.

“You have passed your test,” his dark brown eyes smiled down at her as he enveloped her body in his chiseled arms. His left hand reached behind her and tugged at the string holding up the halter, the smell of wet paint assaulting her senses.

“Jorge!” she vainly protested, only giving a half hearted attempt to push him away. She struggled backwards as he nuzzled her neck. She was still. She closed her eyes.

Jorge called Kisa his mistress. She called it slavery. She hated him for it. Hated him with a passion that could only be equaled to the hatred she felt for one other man, the murderer of her parents.

After her parents were murdered and Ernst Stravo Blofeld had taken her to Europe he had sent her through a vigorous training, a training that prepared her to kill. Her primary trainer was Jorge Gonzales, a former professional hit man. Jorge lived and kept the grounds of Blofeld’s estate in Barcelona. This was where Kisa underwent her daily training. She was strong, strong as a horse, but Jorge was stronger, as were some of the other men who worked under him.

Once she had tried to escape, when she was seventeen. She had climbed over the wall and made it as far as the village when Jorge found her and

brought her back. The ride in the limousine had been deathly quiet, quiet enough to hear a pin drop on the thickly carpeted floors. She had showed no fear as they drove along, hiding the slight tremor she had of anticipation of what was to come. She determined that he would not know she was scared nor would she give in to any pain he inflicted on her body. And inflict he did. He had bound her with thick ropes that irritated her skin and he had tied them tightly, cutting off the circulation. Before he had bound her he stripped every piece of clothing from her body, letting her stand in the drafty cellar. An involuntary shiver of humiliation and cold had crept down her spine and he had laughed. He'd stretched her arms out wide and picked up his leather horse whip, letting it fall across her bare back again and again. Each crack of the whip made her body convulse with pain; she'd clenched her teeth and willed her body still, but tears welled to her eyes, she blinked them off as the sting of cool air hit her open flesh. She wanted to cry, to scream, to do something to be rid of the pain, but it only continued.

When he had finished her blood slowly slid down her back, warm and sticky, it flowed freely. No one had tried to stop the blood, and when he cut her loose, several hours later, it gushed anew from the movement and she had tried her best to clean herself. It had stung horribly; she had slept for nights with a mild fever, shivering from the pain. When it was all over and she began her training again she swore that no one would ever see her tears. Never. Ever.

From the very beginning Blofeld made no secret of his intentions for Kisa. She would be trained, and trained well. She would be trained to kill, to kill with precision and expertise. Her target was to be Commander James Bond. From the beginning Blofeld had told her that it was Bond who had killed her parents and she was told this daily, to the point she almost believed it, but every time she believed it she relived the last day she'd seen her parents alive, even if she did unknowingly.

At night she would wake with sweat on her brow and her heart pounding heavily in her chest. She could see her parents their bodies bloody and still, lying on the mosaic carpet of her father's study. Then that hatred would once again rise from the pit of her stomach with bitterness. She would go to the bathroom and vomit the bitterness into the toilet, cleaning her mouth out with clear, clean tap water. She would stare in the mirror and silently pledge to herself that she would not forget who had really killed them that day. Never.

Jorge pushed her away from him, spitting on the ground with disgust. He swore in Spanish as he stood up. "You've reached the level Blofeld wanted for you," he sneered. "You are ready now."

She glared up at him. "And now you are ready for me to go," she spat.

He gave a swift kick in her side throwing her backwards, she grasping her side in pain. “Get up.” He ordered. “And shut up.” She obeyed; her eyes cold and determined.

She gathered up her weapon and handed it to Jorge who in turn snatched it from her hands. “Do you know Bond well enough?” his voice was harsh.

“Yes,” she said without timidity. Her hatred now out weighed her fear. Part of her training had been to observe James Bond, every aspect of his life, his likes, dislikes, tastes, his little quirks. In a word, everything. She couldn’t explain it but the more she observed, the more she could predict exactly what he was about to do, or what he wanted.

This was what Blofeld wanted her to know. How to react to him, how to anticipate what he would say, what he would want and most importantly, how to offer him everything he would want, including information or access to what he needed to solve his case. These were the tools she had been supplied with and now she would be able to use them.

Her mind raced ahead. She knew this day would come. Now it had. Blofeld would come to the estate and he would tell her what she would do, what Bond was working on and how to give him the access he needed, how to lure him in.

But she did not want to kill James Bond. She liked Bond. She remembered the day she had first met him. She remembered him on the day her parents were killed and his kindness and protection when they found them in the study. If anything she owed him something, at least his life.

When they arrived back at the main house Ernst Stravo Blofeld was already waiting out at the pool. In his hand was a chilled drink and he smiled almost warmly at her. She looked at him warily. She never trusted him. For that matter she didn't trust anyone anymore.

"Hello there my little Kisa," he smiled a broad warm smile. "Jorge tells me you are almost ready for your assignments."

"She is ready," Jorge's reply was gruff.

"Very good," Blofeld toasted the air and motioned for her to join him.

"That is very good indeed."

Kisa looked at him, waiting. "You will be going to Madrid soon," he answered as if reading her thoughts. "There you will meet Mister Bond."

"Very good," Kisa masked the sarcasm she felt, taking a sip of her own drink.

"I will give you further instructions on what he will be working on so you will know what to dangle as bait," he maneuvered so that he was closer to her. "I will send two of my men to make sure that the job is completed." "You do not trust that I will go through with it?" she was offended, even though in the back of her mind the thought had crossed it.

A smile crossed Blofeld's features, his forehead crinkling with humor. "I trust you my dear, it is Bond I do not trust. He is a crafty fellow and knows how to convince a woman to do what he wants. I just do not want you to fall into that trap," his smile was broad and warm. Kisa hated his smile. She wanted to reach across the table and snatch it off of his face. She returned her own, fake smile. "Of course. But that's why I've been observing Bond all these years."

"Of course," he still had the smile, but it was arrogant smile that captured something more, something bigger. She suppressed a shudder. She didn't like the way he looked at her or Jorge's sudden change in his treatment towards her. It was as if they knew something that she did not. Something they were not telling.

She tried not to think of it as Blofeld and Jorge began exchanging conversation related to the estate and its upkeep. She silently watched an insect land on the water in the pool and absently she thought of James Bond. What was he doing right at this very moment? Was he in some exotic harem in the Middle East? Hanging precariously from a jagged cliff in China with some important piece of information stuffed in his pocket? Was he in a warm and sticky South American port with a beautiful young girl at his side? She didn't know, but she certainly hoped that he would be able to get out of the jamb Blofeld had planned for him...

Chapter 2

Renewed Meeting

A soft, steady rain fell from the grey, overcast skies as Londoners passed to and fro, some of them tightly wrapped in their black overcoats, their hats pulled down tight over their heads, or brightly colored umbrellas dotting the dull landscapes like flowers poking through in the spring. This was the landscape in which M peered down at with disinterest. His mind was far away from the dull and depressing stage before him. Instead it was lying atop his frayed calendar tucked neatly inside a manila folder.

Part of it was resting there anyway. The other part was in what ever portion of the world 007 would be in at this bloody moment. It wracked at him the habitual disregard for punctuality of his best and most efficient agent. He shook his head with contempt and returned to his desk, opening the manila folder for the millionth time and resting a hand on his chin, peering down at the neatly typed script and colored photograph carefully attached with a gem clip. His bifocals slipped down the end of his nose; he sniffed as he pushed them back up to the bridge. He hated idleness and already he had wasted thirty minutes waiting for 007.

He pushed a button on his desk. “Miss Money Penny?”

“He’s still not here yet, sir,” she answered his unasked question.

M stood up and folded his arms across his chest and began pacing the length of the room. Where the blasted was he!? Didn't he know that valuable time and money were being wasted once again because of his lack of punctuality?

In the outer office Money Penny tapped the end of her pencil against her desk as she alphabetized a stack of files. The door creaked open and she pursed her lips in a critical smile as a hat was tossed onto the rack and the dark head peered around the corner at her. "Good morning Money Penny," he smiled broadly, cheerfully tossing his overcoat with his hat and tripping over to plant a small kiss on her cheek.

"Good morning James," her smile was now demure. "He's waiting for you."

Bond frowned. "I supposed he would be," he hurried to the door as Money Penny buzzed M.

"Send him in," was the gruff reply as the door opened simultaneously and the prodigal James Bond returned once more.

"You're late," M was short.

“Yes sir, held up in...er...traffic,” M eyed him critically. How many times had he heard that excuse?

“Your next assignment will take you to Madrid,” he wasted no more time by delving directly into the matter at hand. He buzzed the desk again.

“Send in Mr. Belfry,” he told Money Penny and within a second a tall, stately gentleman appeared. He was approximately six feet tall, with a bushy mustache that drooped on either side of his mouth and flared out to meet – but with about an inch’s distance – thick, curly side burns. His eyes were very dark and looked on with cool disdain, as if he was only here because it was absolutely necessary. Bond couldn’t help but compare him to an old, tattered portrait of a general.

“Mr. Belfry will give you a briefing on the device,” M nodded to let the man know that he now had the floor.

“Yes,” Mr. Walden Belfry began, his accent undeniably American. “The device is called a ‘Trooper 2,’ and it’s a large device about a foot square and a half a foot in height. It was originally designed by the Russians, with help from a German mathematician. Its purpose is to send out a signal, a signal much like that used to transmit radio or television frequencies.”

He paused, pulling out a handkerchief to wipe sweat from his brow. Bond was sitting with an air of boredom as the man’s monotone voice continued

with his explanation. “These signals can override these frequencies, or they can flow on different ones. If they are on the same frequencies they can transmit messages through a television or radio set. It can also be used to control other devices – computers primarily. It can then set up open connections with these computers and change the information stored in databases, erase data stored on disks and so forth.

“Originally we knew nothing of this device, but one of the operatives assembling it brought it with him when he returned to America. We, an NIA task force, intercepted him and confiscated the device.” He paused again, but for a longer time. Bond folded his arms across his chest and waited.

“And?” he finally prodded.

“It was then stolen from us,” he finished.

“By the Russians?”

“No, a man by the name of Jorge Gonzales.”

“Jorge Gonzales?” Bond turned to M, waiting for a further explanation.

“He manages an estate on the Mediterranean coast in Spain, near Barcelona,” he supplied. “We have information that he and this woman,” he handed Bond the picture from the file. “Will be having a holiday in Madrid in two weeks.”

Bond studied the picture carefully. “Who is this girl?”

“Kisa Lin,” M replied. “She is Jorge’s mistress at the estate.”

“Who does the estate belong to?” was the next question.

M was silent. He was trying to gather his thoughts on how to answer the question tactfully, without arousing Bond’s lust for revenge, at least not too much. M would not have admitted it to anyone, but he had worried about his agent. Since Bond’s wife had been killed by Ernst Stravo Blofeld James Bond had become a man who sought revenge, a rightful revenge.

Tracy had been the only woman in James Bond’s life who had meant enough to him that he would give her his name, and in return she would become his, but only for a day. It was a new side of Bond, and while, yes he was loosing his best agent, M still had secretly been pleased to see him settling down with someone he cared for.

“It belongs to Blofeld,” M replied quietly. Bond did not reply, he only stared at the picture. There was something faintly familiar about the face, but he could not place where he had seen her before. Perhaps the connection was Blofeld.

He handed the picture back to M who replaced it in the file. “So I am to recover the device?”

“Yes,” Belfry returned. “There may be more where they came from, but at least we will have an idea of what it is they are using against us and find some method of deterring their infiltration of our computer systems.”

“That will be all,” M told Belfry. He turned back to Bond. “Money Penny has tickets for you to Madrid,” he said. “You are to make contact with Jorge and find out as much as you can about him and his estate. There is a possibility that they may try to sell the device to the Russians, the Americans or us, but it would be better if we were able to retrieve it without the monetary disbursement. Or,” M paused. “Blofeld may be planning on using the device for himself.”

“That is quite the bigger possibility, unless this Gonzales fellow has plans of his own.”

With that Bond rose and walked to the door, got his tickets from Money Penny and went back to his flat to pack. Before night fell again he was on his way to Madrid.

Madrid was warm. Sticky and humid. Those who found life at night more enjoyable than in the day had come out of their houses and began milling about the nightclubs and gin joints. At one in particular, James Bond was sitting on the terrace, watching the scene before him. A thick halo of smoke hung in the dim lights. To his right the neon sign flashed off, on, off, on. A thick, dense scent of stale beer tingled in his nostrils as it wafted from the inner depths of the club.

He was watching, through the dance floor crowded with people, a girl, sitting at the bar, her drink in her hand. She was a pretty girl, her long, black-brown hair showed a hint of light red in the reflecting lights. Her dress was low cut, and black with little glittering beads sewn in the bodice. She seemed to be intent in the scene around her, her eyes searching for something in the throng of people.

Bond had seen her come in with a tall, dark haired man of Spanish descent. He had recognized her immediately from the picture, so he assumed that her companion was Jorge Gonzales. Kisa Lin, he thought to himself. Lin he almost expected to be Asian, but she was obviously not.

She had paused briefly in her search to take a sip of her drink, when she set it back down she let her pointer finger draw an outline on its lip, absently. Her eyes began again, roving over the occupants. She had started at one end of the room, and then after her pause, began at the other end. Next she followed the movements of the dancers. It was a fast beat that kept them moving, but she did not seem to be having trouble checking off each face as she continued. Finally she began her careful glances on the terrace. There were only a few other people on the terrace, catching the mildly cool breezes and stench of the passing automobiles. At the other tables there was more than one person seated, Bond was the only one in which he was the only visitor.

When her eye reached him she paused, then returned to her wandering, but before she returned her attention to her drink, she looked back carefully at Bond. He noticed the action and it disturbed him. She had obviously been looking for someone, but why would she be looking for him? How would she know who he was?

He bit his lower lip and made his decision as he stood up. It was a slow process to maneuver from the front of the club to the back, but he finally arrived at the bar. There was a thick line of people pushing in and around her, but he managed to slip through them and stand by her side. "Good evening," he spoke. She eyed him with caution.

“Good evening,” was her soft, but flat reply.

“I was wondering if you would give me the pleasure of this dance?” he bowed slightly.

She pursed her lips, looking him over from top to bottom and shook her head to herself. Bond noticed the gesture, but she answered, “I suppose so,” she was coy.

“Thank you,” he took her hand gracefully and led her to the dance floor. The dance was slower now and he held her at a moderate range.

“You’re a very forward man,” her eyebrows were raised and there was an assuming expression across her face. He didn’t like the expression; it made him think that she had the upper hand on him.

“Perhaps at times, when I catch a glimpse of a lovely woman,” he smiled at her with his best charm. Kisa mentally rolled her eyes.

“Please, sir, I am anything but lovely.”

“Ravishing then.”

Kisa stifled a laugh. Yes, everything she had suspected about 007 was correct. He was arrogant and a bit too charming, but...

The song ended and he led her to his table on the terrace. “May I buy you a drink?” he asked as the waiter stood expectant.

“Yes please,” she looked up at the waiter. “A dry vodka martini, please. Shaken, not stirred.” James Bond glanced at her with raised eyebrows before turning his gaze to the waiter.

“Make that two,” he added, holding up two fingers to illustrate.

“The name is Bond. James Bond,” he began tentatively.

“Yes, I know,” she replied, smiling.

“I see,” he nodded.

“I wasn’t sure if you still said it that way.”

“Said what, what way?” he demanded.

“When you introduce yourself, Commander,” she was smiling archly.

He looked at her again. Yes she was familiar, but where? “Have we met before?”

“Yes,” she said nothing else.

“I can’t seem to place it...” he was grasping for some kind of clue.

She grinned at him again. “Good!” she returned. “It was a long time ago.”

He racked his brain trying to remember. A long time ago? As in how long ago? He wanted to ask. Why didn’t she want him to know? His mind changed to a different train of thought. “You know who I am,” he began. “You haven’t introduced yourself.”

“I don’t need to,” she replied as if she were getting bored. “You already know my name.” His eyes flickered, it wasn’t exactly fear, but he was disturbed. “Except,” she added. “It’s not Lin; it’s McLaughlin.”

“I didn’t think you were a ‘Lin,’” he replied leaning back in his chair as the waiter served the drinks.

“I know. It was a name given to me by...” she trailed off. Her companion was walking towards them.

“*Buenos noche*,” he greeted, Kisa rose from her seat. He spoke to her rapidly in Spanish and she turned back to Bond.

“It was a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Bond,” she paused; he was staring at her with questioning eyes again. “But I’m afraid I have to go now.”

“Well, good night,” he stood up. “I do hope to see you again sometime.” She flashed him a knowing smile. He had a feeling, a feeling he didn’t like. As if she was trying to tell him something, but subtly.

The light from the window was dull in the darkened room. It smelled musty and old. It was a pungent odor that attacked the senses and overwhelmed them as Kisa felt her way to the chair. She could hear Jorge’s shoes scraping the floor. “Very good,” he said. “You did well.”

“Did I?” her tone was haughty.

“Yes, did you think otherwise?” he challenged her.

“No.”

“Very good,” he leaned down to kiss her cheek possessively. “You will have no problems convincing Bond that you will help him find Trooper 2.”

“Of course,” Kisa agreed with a hint of arrogance. She wanted to be through with the whole business. She only hoped that James Bond’s suspicions had been aroused. She looked through the darkness at the figure of Jorge Gonzales, a dark cloud passing over her eyes. In the back of her mind, just out of reach of her active consciousness she had been planning. She had a decision to make and she would only have an instant in which to make her final decision.

Her mind had been formulating it for years, because she knew that eventually the day would come that she would have to kill 007. That was her purpose. That was what all her training had led to and she had known it from the beginning. But in those months, those days of endless working, training, she had continued to think, to plan, to take what she had learned and develop it into a secondary game plan, one on a different plane than Jorge and Blofeld’s.

In this plan she had grasped the idea that she might have to accept death. If she succeeded in warning Bond, and he did not kill her, then she would have to face Blofeld’s wrath. There would be no mercy in him. It might

even be a death more than she could bear. But she had accepted that. She was American; she would not betray her own government, or its allies.

Jorge flicked on the lamp. She composed herself for his gaze. She pretended to be amiable. She pretended to be pleased with the imminent trap that would be spread for the untouchable James Bond. Jorge patted the bed next to him. Her eyes narrowed, but she stood up and walked towards him, sitting down. He touched her and his touch burned her flesh. Her hatred for him renewed.

Kisa's decision was made and sealed. She only hoped that Bond would kill her; she would rather be dead. She was satisfied knowing that even if he did, her own revenge would still be played out to Blofeld, and Jorge. She had no doubts that one day Bond would finally catch up with his enemy and would give him a fitting end. All of these things ran through her mind as she drifted into a fitful sleep.

Across the town in another, more elaborately furnished hotel, Bond was showering, getting ready for sleep. Tomorrow he would try to find Kisa and Jorge again. Something about her intrigued him. She was a lovely girl, beautiful even, but she was mysterious. He must find out more about them, find a way to get that device.

Chapter 3

Drinking in the Culture

The sunlight played on the wall of the shop nearby, reflecting from the window across the street as James Bond sat in his car watching the Hostel Brisas where Jorge Gonzales was registered. His watching paid off when Jorge, with Kisa on his arm, left the hotel and hailed a taxi. There were three men who followed them in a separate taxi. Bodyguards, thought Bond.

He followed the two taxis at a respective distance, finally arriving at the Museo Nacional del Prado. Kisa looked back discretely as Bond ducked out of his car. She saw him, she wondered if Jorge did. Smiling inwardly she followed him inside and they took a program and began gazing at the collections. Jorge leaned over to speak to her. “There he is,” he told her speaking in Spanish.

“You won’t fool him,” she replied, hiding the smirk she was feeling. “He knows your language.”

Jorge only glared at her, taking one last peer at Bond over his shoulder as he excused himself and walked towards the restrooms. One of the bodyguards followed stopping just outside the door. The other stood nearby Kisa, pretending to study a painting.

James Bond was in the room just before the one now occupied by Kisa and the bodyguard, but his senses were alert and focused on the activities of the proceeding room. Kisa watched the bodyguard with one eye while she thumbed a white piece of paper, neatly folded into a perfect one inch square, from the front of her blue silk bodice. She tripped gracefully over to a museum security guard standing erect, perfect, hardly breathing. She spoke in a low tone, passing the note to him, before moving into the next rooms. The bodyguard followed her like a puppy.

Bond entered the room just as they disappeared into the next, but as he passed the uniformed guard, a reached out hand stopped him. “The lady,” he pointed with his thumb, indicating the opposite door. “She ask me give this you,” he handed him the folded paper.

James Bond moved away and carefully unfolded the note, keeping one eye on the next room. “MEET ME AT EL RETIRO, TODAY, 3PM – KISA” He refolded the paper and placed it in his coat pocket. He continued, keeping the pace behind them as Jorge rejoined her with some comment. She had replied to him. But Bond’s mind was racing ahead, wondering what it was she wished to talk to him about.

Kisa and Jorge had moved to the exit, finished with their musing. The corridor was long and narrow with a sharp corner that led to the exit.

Expecting them to have already passed through the door, hurried to keep them in sight, but maneuvered the curve a bit too fast and collided directly with Kisa. “I’m terribly sorry,” he reached out to steady her as she caught her balance, absently shying away from his touch. He withdrew his hand.

“That’s quite all right,” she smoothed her matching blue silk skirt. “Jorge,” she called to her companion. Bond recoiled defensively. What if Gonzales knew who he was and what he was doing following them around?

“I would like you to meet the gentleman I met last night,” she spoke in distinct, even tones, a bright, friendly smile on her face. “Commander James Bond, this is Jorge Gonzales,” Gonzales took Bond’s offered hand and shook it with an unctuous smile on his lips.

“*Me gusto*,” he bowed slightly. “My dear Kisa spoke of you as a gentleman,” his voice was warm, but his eyes showed conceit, “We would be happy if you would join us for lunch.”

Kisa’s eyes widened. She had not expected this. This was not in the plan. Was Jorge up to something, some other variant of the plan she’d so studiously learned? She looked from Jorge to Bond, having recovered her expression of dismay. “It would be a pleasure,” Bond nodded, first to

Jorge and then Kisa. Bond had not missed the expression, and filed it away for future reference.

The three moved towards the exit as if they were old friends meeting after a long absence. They parted at the sidewalk, James Bond taking his own car, following them to a small café. It was not far from the museum, a quaint little place with outdoor tables, shaded with umbrellas of white and red striped canvas. Blackbirds flew around the tables with their feathers reflecting jeweled colors of blue, green, and purple in the dancing sunlight. Pigeons bobbed their heads as they walked confidently through the mazes of people and tables, cooing to the outspoken blackbirds.

Kisa observed both men quietly, while the waiter served them their menus. Bond felt her eyes on him, watching him. He glanced at her, but each time he did her eyes were focused on some other object – the waiter, the pigeons, the flapping of the fringe on the umbrellas. “It is a wonderful time for a holiday, no?” Jorge was saying.

“Yes, a very good time,” Bond responded reading over his menu, making note. He peered over the top, but Kisa was intent in her own. It was as if she knew every time he was going to look her way.

“It has been a long time since I took my little Kisa anywhere,” Jorge patted her leg; Bond noticed her body tense slightly, almost unperceivable.

“So I thought perhaps we would take a trip and ‘drink up some culture’ as they say,” he laughed waving out the palm of his hand, thinking he was funny. Kisa joined him politely, and Bond peered at them with a smile.

“Miss Lin seems to think we’ve met before,” Bond’s comment was casual. Kisa kept her heart still, afraid she would show a reaction. She wished she hadn’t mentioned it, afraid it would arouse Jorge’s suspicions.

“Of course I’ve met you before,” there was something teasing in her tone. Bond studied her carefully. She showed no sign of fear, no sign of irritation. “We met last night.” Her eyes were smiling, rueful. There was something, something hidden in her tone, her eyes, her voice, a message meant for Bond only. He didn’t know exactly, but he understood that she didn’t want him to pursue the issue further, at least not in front of Jorge. There was something about their former meeting that bothered her. Why couldn’t he remember her?

“Shall we order now?” he changed the subject. Kisa flashed a small, grateful smile. Jorge got the waiter’s attention and they ordered. While they waited, Bond and Jorge exchanged small talk over general world events.

Her gazpacho came and Bond watched as she daintily picked up her spoon and sipped the cold liquid. His own *lechazo asado*, roasted lamb,

came on a large steaming plate. Jorge had ordered some of the same. Bond had the distinct feeling that it was not only Kisa's eyes that were watching him like a hawk, but also Jorge, almost outright, sizing him up. It made for a very uncomfortable meal.

When they had finished, they said their goodbyes and separated. Jorge led Kisa to the curb where they hailed a taxi. Once in the taxi and on their way he turned to her, grabbing her arm. "What is this? Have you met Bond before?"

"Yes," she replied, calm, not letting any hint of apprehension creep into her voice. "Once, when he visited my parents, before he," she paused. She hated accusing him when she knew who the real guilty party was. She swallowed hard to control her emotions, "He killed my parents," she spoke the last with deep bitterness, knowing that this would hold the image Jorge and Blofeld wanted her to have for Bond.

"Hmm," Jorge replied, pushing her away. "You didn't tell me this before."

"It was never necessary," she returned. "Besides I couldn't bring myself to think of that meeting." It was true. She'd tried her best to block out those incidents, only reliving them when her beliefs were turning towards

the brainwashing through out those years. She looked at Jorge, his back to her in the seat, with contempt.

“He got the note,” she said tentatively.

“Good,” Jorge replied, turning halfway to face her. “He will be there?”

It was a half question, half statement, but Kisa nodded to affirm it. “I have no doubt,” she replied.

They had arrived back at Hostel Brias and Jorge left her to pay the cab while he ushered his bodyguards into the lobby. Kisa followed them to the room she shared with Jorge. “You will wear this,” he held up a black mechanical device in front of her. Her eyes crossed, studying it.

“Why?” she demanded, fear grasping her heart. What if Bond decided to pursue their first meeting? How should she respond? Tell him that it was before her parents were killed and that it was of no consequence? Well, perhaps that would satisfy him, and it would be the same story she had told Jorge.

“I want to know what Bond says to you and how you respond,” Jorge’s eyes were searching her face for any hint of betrayal. She feigned hurt.

“You do not trust me?”

“Frankly my dear,” Jorge’s grin was wide and mean. “No. I do not trust you.”

She swallowed. “You have not reason to fear my loyalty,” she insisted bravely. “I hate James Bond!” she directed the bitterness she felt for Jorge towards the one she wished to aid. “I still see in my mind!” she grasped her head with her hands as she conjured up the image of her parents in that study, and briefly, just briefly enough, she imagined that Bond was Blofeld. “They are lifeless, my parents!” she cried, shedding false tears.

A grin of satisfaction curled on Jorge’s lips. “Very good,” the smile spread. There was meanness in that smile. It made Kisa’s heart feel cold. How she wished she could grab hold of a sharp object and thrust it through his breast.

“One more thing,” Jorge added. “I am extending an invitation to Senor Bond to join us in Barcelona. I want him to be a guest at the estate.”

Kisa’s eyes clouded. “But I thought I was to kill him here?” she was confused. The game plan kept changing.

“You were, but changes have been made. We thought it would be better for Bond to be on our turf. It would make it easier for you to finish the job,” Jorge explained. “It would take longer before he would be found dead and his superiors to know about it.”

She took a step back, nodding. “I understand.”

James Bond was waiting at the park, El Retiro. He walked along the sidewalk, taking in the fresh air that filled his nostrils with nostalgic memories of days gone by. He finally paused before an empty bench and sat down.

His mind absently watched a young couple on the lush green lawn. They had their picnic basket and a large blanket spread on the ground. Between them was a chubby little child. The mother stood the child up and held his hands turning him towards the father who beckoned the child to take his first steps towards him. The child took a wobbly step forward, then another, aided at first by the mother who was smiling as she carefully released the chubby little fists, but keeping her hands near in case of a fall. Another wobbly step was taken, then another and finally the child fell forward in a tumbled heap into the father’s waiting arms. The proud parents clapped and smiled, looking around to see if anyone else had witnessed this great event.

The zing of a bicycle wheel clanged as it passed inches from Bond's toes. Two women dressed in jogging suits fast-walked past, chattering away to one another. Two teenaged boys tossed a Frisbee from one to the other, shouting and laughing. The air was still warm and thick, but it was pleasant to sit, soaking in the sun and enjoying the leisure break in his usual busy schedule. He enjoyed watching the normal comings and goings of people who did not worry about the security of the world, not unless there's was threatened.

A shadow fell off to his right, growing larger as he felt the breeze from a moving body. Bond touched the butt of his Walther, prepared for action. "Commander." He relaxed when he heard Kisa's soprano. He turned half round and smiled at her, standing up.

"I got your note," he said. She laughed. It wasn't a happy laugh. It was a kind of sad, sorrowful laugh. "What did you want to see me about?" he asked, wanting to get down to business.

"You want something from Jorge," she was blunt, walking around the bench and placing a hand on Bond's shoulder.

"Yes, I do," he didn't deny it.

“What is it?” she was playing with his collar, her finger began to gently rub his neck, tickling him.

“It’s called a “Trooper 2,”” he grasped her wrist while her finger continued to follow his neckline playing with his earlobe, while her eyes looked up at him, her face a soft expression that did not light in her eyes.

“It’s a big box?” her mouth spoke the question, but her mind seemed far away.

“Yes.”

“I can help you get it,” she stood on her toes, her lips pursed, touching his lips she kissed him seductively.

“How?” he asked as their lips separated, he returning her kiss.

“Jorge has invited you to the estate.” She kissed him again.

“Why?” he returned it again.

She pulled back from him. “He likes you.”

“He knows who I am.”

“No,” Bond caught her hesitation.

“You do.”

“Yes, I have sources.”

“That Gonzales does not?”

“Yes.” She was still hesitant and did not look him in the eye.

“Do you know where Trooper 2 is?”

“No, but I can find it. I have access to every room in the estate.”

“It’s still at the estate?”

“Yes.” Her answers had become short and simple. She was about to pull away from him completely, but he grasped her arm and brought her to his lips again. She told him that he would receive a note, probably before he got back to his hotel. “It will explain where to meet us.”

They separated, Kisa returning to the waiting taxi where Jorge smiled at her. His ‘very good,’ was not reassuring. She did not like to play games;

she did not like to play seductress, but right now she had to. She had to play with Bond's mind. She only hoped she could plant enough seeds of doubt to warn him of the approaching danger.

Bond had moved on down the path, going over her words in his mind. He remembered the last time he kissed her. He had felt the hardness of the mechanical object attached to her bodice. Was it a microphone? Had every word spoken between them been transferred to one of the bodyguards, or even Jorge or Blofeld? Was all of this some kind of trap? Even if it was, he still had to follow it. He would just have to be wary, alert. He had to try and get back that device.

He remembered her hesitation on some of the questions he asked. It was almost as if she wanted to tell him more but knew that she could not. Yes indeed. He was willingly walking head on into a trap. But, as he had already decided, he would go, but at least he would have an edge. He was on to them.

The next morning was raining, but that did not deter the travelers on their way to the coast. The note was waiting for Bond when he got back to his hotel, just as Kisa had said. He would meet them at the train station the next day and they would go up together to Barcelona.

Once on the train, Kisa sat between Jorge and Bond in their compartment. The two men exchanged casual conversation about business and the world in general picking up where they had left off the day before, and avoiding any topics that might lead to a heated discussion.

Kisa dozed from time to time, listening to the on going drone of their voices and their dull conversations with disinterest. The two guards across from them sat upright and still, neither making a move that would indicate that they were even alive. From time to time the eyes of one would shut and a soft, snoring-like sound would issue from his general direction, but was quickly stopped by a swift jab in the ribs by his companion.

The landscape passed by in the windows, changing from rural farms to populated cities. After lunch they arrived in Barcelona. Here a large, black limousine awaited them. The ride from Barcelona to the estate was quiet, and took over an hour. Their arrival was greeted by several burly servants, one of which directed Bond to his room.

Finally alone, Bond began unpacking his things in his room, reflecting on the events of the past two days. Something about it all smelled rotten. If he had not suspected a set up before, he did now. It was all too easy. Far too easy. He was practically being handed over Trooper 2. He didn't like it at all.

Two hours later a bell rang for their supper. One of the guards was waiting at the top of the stairs to guide him to the dining room. It was a large room, with a large, long table that reached nearly from one end of the room to the other. To the left of the room were several matching side tables, laden with various Spanish cuisines. Jorge came in from a different door that led to a patio, with Kisa on his arm. “We’ll eat outside to night. The food is buffet,” he smiled, graciously. Bond picked up one of the plates lying in a stack on the table and began to serve himself, Kisa waiting with patience behind him.

“I’m sorry, my dear,” he moved over to allow her to begin filling her own.

“You’re fine,” she was warm.

The food was delicious. With the surrounding outdoor setting, a gentle, salty breeze blowing off the Mediterranean made Bond relax. Perhaps he was being paranoid that things were not as they seemed, yet... He was not sure he believed Kisa when she had said that Jorge did not know who he was. Obviously Blofeld would know who he was, and would know that he would be sent after Trooper 2. Why had she lied?

Jorge sighed, wiping his mouth with a hint of elegance and dropping the napkin back in his lap. “I am afraid I will have to be a bad host,” he stood from his seat, motioning to a nearby servant to retrieve his coat. “I have

business to attend to this evening in Barcelona. But I am sure Kisa will not mind entertaining you.” He added.

“I believe I’ll just turn in,” Bond smiled standing up too and shaking hands with the man.

“I may still be gone by the morning; perhaps Kisa can give you a tour of the grounds?” Jorge suggested. Bond’s eyes passed from him to Kisa. Yes, indeed, something was wrong.

“I would be happy to,” she rose, smiling.

Kisa walked with Jorge to his office where he made a show of kissing her, with possessive passion. “Entertain him well,” he whispered, grinning. She masked a shiver.

On the patio Bond was waiting for her, and offering to walk her to her room. “Did you suggest we take a tour?” he asked.

“Yes I did,” she returned. “I can get Jorge to do what I ask him.”

“He’s not suspicious?”

“No.”

“Why do you want to help me if Jorge is so good to you?”

Kisa raised her eyebrows with an arched smile. “I will tell you soon enough, Commander.” They had reached the top of the stair where two halls joined. “I will see you soon.” Something in her voice made him search her face, but nothing signaled him.

He watched her retreating back as it disappeared down the corridor to where her room would be. He retired to his own. He went to the window and studied the landscape. He opened the French doors and walked onto the balcony. To the right was a trellis. It was sturdy. Sturdy enough he thought to hold a man’s weight. Perhaps he should chance it. But he might be looking in all the wrong places. The Trooper 2 might be inside the house itself. Nonetheless, when all was quiet in the house, he was determined to search the grounds himself.

Chapter 4

I Am the Bait

Kisa had waited, her ear against her door for the click of Bond's own room door before she quietly opened her own, peering first in one direction, then the other. The coast was clear as she tiptoed back down the stairs, avoiding a creak on the way down. She passed through the foyer and to the back of the expansive mansion to a series of rooms that were dedicated to staff, and Jorge's own, roomy office.

"You know what you're to do?" she could hear his voice from where she stood in the hall.

"Yes," it was one of the burly guards. She could hear the "pop!" of his balled fist hitting the palm of his other hand.

"Let her do her job first, if she fails, kill him, then kill her, regardless," Jorge's voice was authoritative and decisive.

"Yes sir," the guard replied.

"...Of course," there was meanness in his voice, a sneer on his lips. "You may do what you wish to her before you kill her."

Kisa's heart pounded. Her face blushed with fear and anger; a shiver grabbed hold of her very middle and shook her entire body. She retreated back to the foyer and back up to the cover of the hall. She raced through the corridor and to her room, closing the door quickly, but softly, leaning against it to catch her breath and regain her composure.

Her eyes glanced across the room where, waiting on her bed, lay a loose and thin, satin negligee. It was of mint green, silky satin, with see through nylon sleeves that flared out and hung down loosely. She measured the material in her mind and hurried to her closet. She didn't have much time so she would have to act fast. She searched among her things and found a low cut tank top, jerking it off the hanger.

She pulled off the silky top she now wore and replaced it with the tank top; she then rummaged through the rest of her closet, looking for a pair of cut off shorts she had worn last summer on the beach. She didn't find it in there, but she did find a jacket. She grabbed it and hurried to her dresser where she opened and closed doors, her heart pounding with excitement and fear.

Kisa found the shorts and replaced her skirt for them. Over all this she pulled on the negligee and looked at herself in the mirror. Good, nothing showed. She picked up the jacket and rolled it into a thin padding, wrapping it loosely around her waist. She licked her lips in anticipation,

her eyes glazed. Her plans might not work, but at least if she could warn Bond before...

There was a tap at her door. This was it. This was the day she'd been waiting for a large chunk of her life. She laughed to herself. Most girls waited for the day they would marry, Kisa waited for the day she would kill James Bond. But she would not kill James Bond.

The negligee's airy nylon sleeves hung loosely down her arms. The satin material connected to the nylon and made a large dip along the neckline, then drew up to the other side. The hem fell mid-thigh. She looked at her reflection in the mirror to double check for any sign of the clothes beneath.

Kisa took a deep breath, knowing that there was no longer any turning back, not that there had ever been, but this was the ultimate *IT*. How the next few minutes would go, the direction they would take, would determine not just her own life, but maybe even the safety of the world. She did not like to think of it, it was an overwhelming feeling on her shoulders and mixed with the heavy rhythm of her heart beat.

She gracefully moved from her room, down and across the hall. She leaned her head close to the door and tapped lightly. Inside Bond had loosened his tie and his shirt and was sitting on the end of his bed, shoe in

hand, wondering what he should do next. He looked up at the door.

“Who is it?” his voice was as deep as she remembered.

“It’s me. Kisa,” she replied in a soft tone.

He rose from his seat and opened the door. “Is something...” he paused as he took in her attire. “Wrong?” he finished.

“I had to see you, James,” she was breathless. She hated the way she sounded. It was silly, stupid. Ten years had not changed her practicality. It had not changed her disgust for women throwing themselves at the first man who could become their “savior.” She didn’t like playing this part, but for now she must, her life and James Bond’s depended on it.

She was in the room, the door closed behind her as she let her hands slide up to James Bond’s shoulders and she tentatively, seductively kissed him. He had seemed almost off guard at first, but now let his hands fall to her hips, resting there. She maneuvered letting his kisses follow a line across her jaw and then down her neck. Here her mouth was near his right ear, she breathed softly in his ear. But it was not her breath that tickled it, or made all of his senses become suddenly awake, alert and listening. It was what she whispered in those breaths. “This is a trap. I am the bait. Two men behind you. I will signal.”

There were no outward signs that he had heard her, no tensing of the muscles, no stop of his current occupation, but her hands, resting on his pectorals had felt the slight contraction of the muscle, so she knew he had received the message. She waited, heard the tiny creak of floorboard and her eyes shifted from him to the two guards that had been her faithful followers for so many years. Bond, who had been repeatedly caressing her lips saw the movement of her eyes and felt the gentle press of her hand, flipped backwards to meet them.

The first man had a knife that he had poised above his head ready to stab was caught off guard by his reaction. James Bond kicked upward flinging the man backwards, knocking him against a chair, his wind knocked out. The knife had clattered to the floor, but the second man dove to grab it, holding it out in front of him keeping Bond just out of his range. Bond ducked as he lunged forward, missing the jagged edge. It was slash, jump, slash and jump for several seconds while the first guard composed himself enough to sneak behind Bond. Seeing him, Kisa grabbed a glass ash tray from the bed stand. He had already reached James Bond and grabbed his arms, holding them behind him. Kisa rushed behind him, raising the tray above her head and with as much strength as she could muster brought it down on the back of his head. He groaned releasing Bond's arms, giving the latter time to jump out of the way of second man's lunge. The knife missed Bond, but not his companion.

Kisa had backed up, tripping over the bed, while the second man jerked the knife out of the chest of his colleague. The guard had not missed his mark, but now set his sight on Kisa. He plunged, but Bond intercepted, the man throwing the knife with precision, but it only caught Kisa's forearm. She winced in pain; she turned toward the wall so no one would see the contortion of her face as she jerked the metal from her flesh.

Bond grabbed the man's hands, charging him towards the wall, the man countered the action and, struggling, the two landed on the floor, first Bond was on top of the man, pulling his muscles against the resistance, then the man swung his feet, knocking Bond sideways, the two bodies rolling, stopping when the man was now over him. Bond stretched his hands up, beating slowly, his arms shaking, constantly fighting to overcome his opponent. His fingers grasped the flesh of the man's neck. Bond squeezed as hard as he could, curling his fingers around the curves. The man continued the resistance that was too powerful for even James Bond's fit body. Slowly he released his grasp, trying to find the weakness of the other man. As Bond's hands were forced downward a second knife slid from the man's shirt sleeve. The man palmed it, turning it towards Bond's neck.

The man's back was to Kisa, who had ignored the free flow of blood from her arm. She bounced the knife in her left hand, holding it in a firm grip. The knife the second man held was drawing, slowly, to James Bond's

jugular. She could see the beads of sweat forming on Bond's forehead. She looked down at the knife in her left hand, measuring her own strength and made her decision. She rushed across the room, heaving a deep breath that she held, she thrust it through the man's ribs. The man cried, his attention to Bond averted, and the latter taking the advantage of the distraction punched the man who tumbled backwards into a lifeless heap.

"Are you all right?" he asked her. She stared at him funny. No one had asked her that in years.

"Yes," she replied. "We have to get out of here."

"Not until I get Trooper 2."

"Jorge's still here," she was insistent. "And I'm not even sure that Trooper 2 exists."

"It doesn't exist?"

"It's a long story."

"You're bleeding." Bond noticed her right arm for the first time. She reached down to the hem of the negligee and ripped it off, Bond following her movement, surprised. She threw it over the dead man and jerked off a

sheet from the bed. Bond took it from her and began ripping it in strips about six inches wide, folding each strip long ways, upon itself to add thickness and to absorb the blood. Carefully he began wrapping it around her arm.

“It’s not bad,” she shrugged. He looked at her unbelieving, knowing it must hurt like hell.

“We have to get out of here,” she insisted. “Jorge’s going to know something is up when the men don’t return. He may be already beginning to suspect something.”

James Bond threw his things back into his satchel, opened the window. He looked at her critically. “I can climb,” she answered his unasked question.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.” She grabbed hold with her left and swung the rest of her body after, balancing with her right elbow. “See?”

He grinned at her as she clambered down faster than he could. He dropped his satchel over the balcony railings and followed her. She had already picked it up and was waiting for him. “Jorge keeps an extra car in

the back garage and,” she fingered the scoop of the tank top “I have the keys.” She was grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“Good girl,” they snuck across the lawn to the garage and sure enough, there was the car in its usual tip-top shape. “Let’s hope it starts on the first turn.” Bond was talking more to himself than to her.

“It did earlier,” she replied triumphantly.

And it did start, immediately. Slow at first, Bond pulled the car out of the garage, but right in front of them was a guard, his machine gun in hand.

“HEY!” he shouted. The rest was a blur of rapid chatter. Guards were coming out of the woodworks, bullets were flying. Jeeps were started and they played a merry chase as Bond revved the engine and put the car in high gear. They were gaining so he shifted to a side road off to the right. Two or three following missed the turn as he hoped.

“There’s another side road ahead,” Kisa told him. “It’s pretty overgrown; we can find cover there.”

Bond sped up to get around the bend and turn off without being seen. They came to an immediate stop. He cut the engine and they waited. The sound of the jeep engines buzzed closer and closer, then with a zing! they

were past, first one, then two, three, four. “Was that all of them?” Bond asked.

Kisa cocked her head, listening. “I think so.”

“Hmm,” Bond replied, starting the car again, shifting the gears. They went back to the main road and covered the distance in half the time it took for the limousine. “Keep your eyes open.”

“Don’t worry,” Kisa returned, hiding a shiver.

The lights in Barcelona were on; they ditched the car on a side road and Bond led her through several back alleys to the home of an older man. His name was Diego Garcia, when he saw James and Kisa standing in the doorway he looked pleased. “Come in, come in *mi amigo!*” he ushered them.

“Diego is a tailor” Bond told her after their introductions. The old man was careful as he unwound the bandages.

“Is a bad cut, but I can sew it up,” he nodded his head turning to retrieve his needle and thread. “I sewed up worse than this in World War II.

“I don’t have anything to numb you while I sew,” Diego added; he looked from the frail young girl before him to Bond. “Perhaps I should give her a bit of my whiskey.”

“No!” Kisa spoke up. “That will thin my blood too much and I’ll bleed worse.”

“But it may hurt worse.”

“I can take it.”

Bond looked at her. “Drink just a little. It’ll numb your senses some.”

“No,” she was firm. Bond walked across the room. If she wasn’t going to take it, then he surely was. He could almost feel the pierce of the needle in his own skin, the sting of oxygen hitting the open wound.

Diego had shrugged and stretched out her arm on a board he had warmed on his oven. He gently pulled the lower flap of skin up, to cover the wound. Bond’s back was to the ghastly scene but he turned half round when he heard a small gasp from her lips. Diego ignored it, continuing his work. He had already threaded his needle and pierced her skin, pulling the thread all the way through the three layers of skin, the first two was the

bottom flap folded under and then the top half. It took him forty-two very neat and tight stitches.

Bond had watched Kisa through the operation. She had breathed heavily, closing her eyes at times, but she tears did not form on her eyes, nor did she cry out or scream, but it was obvious she was in pain from her clenched teeth and hands, the knuckles white. Only small gasps of pain escaped her; she was tough, he had to hand it to her.

When all was finished Diego had poured alcohol around the area to keep away any infection, then wrapped it all in clean, boiled scrap cloths. “You two better get some sleep,” he nodded. “You can go through there,” he pointed.

The bedroom was small, with a very small, double bed, an armoire opposite the foot of the bed, reaching from the floor to the ceiling and one straight back, very uncomfortable chair to complete the suite. Bond had pulled back the covers, crawling beneath them dressed only in his pants. He was just about to get comfortable when he noticed that Kisa was standing, unsure at the other end. Bond patted the bed next to him. “Um,” she hesitated. “I’ll sleep in the chair,” she moved towards it.

Bond sat up complete, a frown clouding his face. “What the...?” he was confused. Only just a few hours ago she had thrown herself at him, and now her behavior had gone a complete 360.

“I did what I did before because I was told to do it,” she explained. “I was meant to kill you Commander, seducing you was part of that, but I didn’t want to.”

“I see,” he sighed, throwing back the covers. “But let’s not talk anymore about it tonight. I’ll sleep in the chair.”

“No, that’s all right,” she had already curled up in it uncomfortably.

“All right,” Bond cleared his throat. “We’ll both sleep in the chair.” She glared up at him, finally giving in she stood up and he tried to find a comfortable position, while she crawled under the covers.

Several minutes passed as a crick slowly crept up Bond’s neck and he squirmed to find a better position, but none existed. He moved again, turning over, but was miserable and he didn’t know when he’d be able to finally go to sleep.

“Commander?” Kisa’s voice called through the darkness.

“What?” he barked.

“How about a compromise?” her voice was timid, but she didn’t back down. He was silent, waiting for her to continue. “You sleep under the covers and I sleep on top?”

It was a bit silly, but at the moment he was tired and the bed would be comfortable. If it made her happy, well. “Of course,” he agreed, getting out of the bloody chair and crawling on top of the bed. “But I’ll sleep on top.”

“Good night Commander,” her voice was quiet, but kind.

“Good night Kitten,” he replied.

It was dark in the tiny bedroom when Kisa awoke the next morning. The ceiling was low, which gave the room the effect of being much smaller than it was. She covered a yawn and stretched her muscles, slowly sitting up in the bed. She took a tentative peek beside her. Bond was gone. She slid her legs over the side of the bed and her bare toes touched the floor. She stifled another yawn as she stood up, a twinge of pain throbbed in her arm.

She shuffled into the main room, where they had been the night before. It was cluttered with various materials, sewing machines and odds and ends. It too was dark, from thick curtains covering the two windows in the room. Boxes and baskets were stacked along the wall to the low ceilings to her right as she maneuvered along to the door opposite her. She could hear scraping coming from this direction and she briefly remembered it as being the kitchen.

A large oaken table sat in the middle of the room and Bond sat here drinking his coffee. “Good morning,” he greeted her with a kind smile. She returned it.

“Good morning. It is still morning?” she asked.

“*Si, si,*” Diego laughed as he plopped a rounded ball of dough onto the floured table. “You two do not sleep the whole day away!” Kisa laughed. “I have breakfast for you soon.”

“Thank you,” she said. Bond had stood up from his seat and motioned for her to follow him back into the main room of the house. Before he could ask she told him, “I was to kill you,” and she explained how the past several years Jorge was preparing her to eliminate Bond forever. “I was to know you better than anyone, to make you trust me enough that I could gain the edge, or in the case of yesterday, Jorge’s guards.”

“Why did you betray them? What was your motivation?” he was careful. He was not sure how far he should trust her, perhaps all of this was façade to drag him deeper into the depths of Blofeld’s twisted operation.

“I felt that I owed you something, Mr. Bond,” Kisa’s voice was steady.

“Have we met before? Was that why you owed me?” he was very confused. Kisa had a way of making him feel that way.

“Yes, and it was then. Beyond that, I hate Blofeld as much as you do Commander,” she said. “And I have reason to as well.”

Bond looked at her sharply. “I know,” her voice was soft. “You don’t like to speak of Tracy, but I do know you want him dead, and I do not blame you. That makes us allies.”

“Why do you want Blofeld dead? Because of Jorge?”

“Because he killed my parents.” So that was it, her parents. But who were her parents? Bond said no more, but rose from his seat and walked back to the kitchen where wonderful smells were abounding.

“Sit, eat,” Diego commanded, and the two obeyed. Kisa had not realized how long ago it was since she had eaten dinner and she was starved. The bread was casting an amazing aroma into the air and she could feel her stomach begin a rattling growl. Before them Diego set eggs, scrambled with tomatoes and cheese. The coffee was good and hot, slightly bitter, but still warming.

When he’d finished Bond rose from his seat and spoke to Diego. “I’m going to Madrid. Take care of her while I’m gone,” his voice was low.

“You are not taking her with you?” Diego asked.

“She’d be safer here,” he said, turning to her. “I’ll be back for you soon.” Kisa said nothing as he went into the bed room for the satchel. He left without another word, Kisa still warming her hands around the coffee cup.

“You just going to let him go?” Diego sounded as if he were chastising her.

“Hmm,” Kisa replied, standing up and stretching. “I was wondering *Senor*, could I borrow some money from you?” Diego raised a questioning eyebrow. “Enough to cover a train fare?” A smile replaced his question.

“Ahh,” he nodded, grinning, his match maker mind satisfied that perhaps something he’d said would bring this girl and Bond together. But that was not what was on Kisa’s mind as she took a taxi to the train station and paid for a ticket. Bond was walking into trouble. She knew it; he didn’t.

The station was crowded as she searched for Bond’s tall, dark figure among the many strange faces. Before the boarding call came, she finally spotted him. He was far away, through the crowd and there was no way she would make it to him before the train started. She went with the flow as they boarded, trying to keep an eye on Bond.

Just as she was thrust forward on the steps and into the seats of the commuter train she saw a man, a man she recognized behind Bond. Bond was standing, tight, his muscles tense as he was jabbed forward with some object, his head bent back slightly, as if he were listening to something the other man was saying.

Kisa’s heart pounded. She took a seat quickly, sliding to the window, peering out. No, the man was pushing him onto the train; he wasn’t going to keep Bond in Barcelona. The conductor passed and Kisa handed him her ticket. As soon as he was gone she jumped up from her seat and began walking through the cars. The train lurched forward. She grabbed the back of a seat to keep her balance. They were off, and she would have

to figure out which car Bond and Jorge's man were in before the train picked up too much momentum.

The train was leaving, picking up speed. She held on to the back of the seats as she made her way to the door that led to the next car. She walked out and suddenly realized that she would have to cross the connections. She didn't like the insecurity of it. She gripped the railings tightly, her knuckles turning white. Her heart was pounding against her ribcage. Her hand reached out for the handle of the next door and turned it. She stepped inside, slamming the door behind her, leaning against it trying to catch her breath.

She'd made it, but now she realized she might have several of them to go through. She took a deep, tentative breath. She had to hurry; she didn't have that much time. By the time they reached the maximum speed Jorge's man (or men, she suspected there were others on the train as well), would have already shoved James Bond from the train. The speed against the impact would kill him instantly.

The door opened and she peered out at the flimsy protection of the metal railing. She had to make it through it. She closed her eyes, grasping hold of the railing and she stepped forward, quickly. She reached out for the door handle. Number two, success. With a renewed sense of her duty Kisa somehow managed to make it through the next four or five cars –

she decided not to count them after the third. Her heart was pounding. The speed of the train had increased again; they were almost at the maximum speed. She could tell it in her bones.

She was at door number six when she heard a scuffle inside. This was it! She knew it. A feeling deep inside of her told her to wait before she opened the door. Then, as if on cue, she grabbed the handle and flung it open with all her might. Simultaneously a man flew out, his arms grabbing for something, anything to cling to. He screamed as he tripped, losing his balance and tumbling from the train, down the embankment. Kisa didn't let the horrified feeling that gripped her chest stop her, she jumped right into the room. There were three men and Bond, they had backed him up when the fourth had flown out the open door.

Bond's blue-grey eyes shifted from them to her for one brief second. She had moved behind a crate, searching for an object. Two of the men lunged for Bond, each grabbing an arm and ramming his back against the wall with full force. The third also lunged, head first, into Bond's stomach. There was a groan of pain as Kisa stood up now with the object she sought.

It was a long piece of wrought iron, rounded, with an end of about an inch in width. She held it up, biting her lower lip in anticipation. Kisa drew it forward, ramming it hard against the spine of the third fellow, whose body

tensed with fear. He backed up, his companions startled until they saw what it was, but when they had turned around Bond was ready for them, throwing a punch, first at one, then the other.

By now the third man had realized that she was faking and turned to attack, but she had thrown the iron back over her shoulder like a baseball bat and swung it like she was hitting a home run. A dull “thang!” rang out as the man slumped to the floor. “Come on,” Bond grabbed her arm as she let the rod clatter to the floor. “Let’s get out of here.”

He dragged her along after him back through the cars to his compartment, further back than even her commuter car. “I only paid for a commuter seat,” she informed.

“I ought to scold you for following me,” his voice was reprimanding. “I thought I told you you’d be safer at Diego’s.”

“You did.”

“Then why didn’t you stay?”

“I knew you would be in trouble,” she returned curtly. “We’re going to run into trouble when we get to Madrid as well.”

“How do you know?” he was almost condescending.

“Gut feeling,” was the only answer he could get from her.

Chapter 5

From Madrid to Paris France

The train was reaching Madrid. It had been nice to doze during the hours after their little entanglement with Jorge and Blofeld's men, but now Bond had to gear his mind towards his meeting with Felix.

That morning, before breakfast, he had checked in with headquarters and was to meet his CIA counterpart, Felix Lieter in the capital. Felix was working on this assignment from the American side and would have some missing links that would help them locate the device, if it existed.

He pondered what Kisa had said. This incident had been a trap, a clever and sophisticated trap, perhaps this Russian device was just part of the whole set up, but then, what if it really did exist and Blofeld was at this very minute working on improvements so that he could control the computer systems of every advanced nation in the world.

Bond was browsing a newspaper when a shadow passed by him. He did not look up to confirm who it was, but it had stopped, hovering over him. Finally he paused, looking up. "What do you want?" he asked. She held out a coffee mug towards him. His brow wrinkled as he accepted it. "What's this?"

She rolled her eyes. “Coffee. What else?” He studied her strangely for several minutes. How had she known he wanted coffee? He tested it, tentative, but found it exactly as he liked it. How had she known how he liked his coffee? Well, he’d had coffee at Diego’s. That was it. His mind logically concluded.

The speed of the train was beginning to slow. Kisa stood up to peer out as the scenery began creeping along. The wheels screeched and squealed, the cars rattling as it continued to slow and the station grew larger. The people on the platforms were flying by, slowing, slowing then with one terrific jolt they stopped.

Kisa peered at the dock. She had a feeling creep across her body and it grasped her heart that was pounding heavily, fluttering almost with fear and anticipation. “Commander?” His eyes shifted from the paper to her.

“Hmm?” he replied.

“Something’s not right. Someone’s waiting for you at the platform.”

James Bond peered out at the throngs of people waiting for their arrivals, or to board the next train. “Yes,” he said, seeing nothing out of the ordinary, but feeling somewhat cautious. He didn’t want to alarm her, so he said. “Someone I know is waiting to meet me.”

“Not on the platform,” she argued. She picked up his satchel. They both headed out together and to the doorway. Bond was about to step down when Kisa grabbed his arm. “Jorge’s guards,” was all she said. He glanced up and saw them at the same time they saw him. They were hurrying forward. Kisa had already backed up and was out of his way when Bond bounded back into the car. She had raced to the other end where she held the door open. Once Bond was through she slammed it shut and began turning the valve wheel to lock the door. Bond had moved halfway through the next car when he realized that Kisa was not at his side. He turned half round to find her at his elbow. “Let’s go,” she urged.

They had made it to the last passenger car and got off, hurrying now across the crowded platform. “They’re on our trail again,” she informed without looking back. Bond glanced at her, then back over his shoulder, then back down at her. He said nothing as they got separated when a large crowd of people thronged around them. James Bond had to make a quick turn to avoid being caught with the crowd and the men catching up to him. Kisa was at the other end of the station.

Outside she hailed a taxi and told him to wait. The throngs of people were thick, but Bond ducked into the bathroom; it had an exit separate from its entrance. He was able to duck back out and hang with another

crowd heading to the row of glass doors. Kisa saw him. “Back up,” Kisa told the driver.

“Where to?” the driver was puzzled by her request.

“Until I tell you to stop,” she said as he switched the gear and took off in reverse. “Stop!” she called when they were only a few yards from Bond. She slid out. “Commander!” Bond dove for the open door that was slammed shut after him. “Down town,” she told the driver who was beginning to think that his whole profession was getting just a bit too exciting.

“And step on it,” both Kisa and Bond added simultaneously.

“How did you know those men were there?” Bond asked her once they were well into the traffic of the city and had seemed to have lost their followers.

“I just knew,” she shrugged.

Bond peered behind them, satisfied that if the men had followed they were not still with them. Before he was able to turn around to tell the driver where he wanted to go Kisa spoke up, “Hostel Villagarcia,” she told him.

“I didn’t tell you where I wanted to go.”

“Woman’s intuition,” she shrugged again. Bond eyed her suspiciously. What was going on? How could this girl know what he was about to say, before it had even cleared his mind fully? He felt an involuntary shiver run down his spine at the thought of her knowing him so well.

The taxi stopped and they got out, Bond paying the driver. He walked up to the desk and registered. “Two rooms,” Kisa said softly behind him. He glanced at her then back at the clerk.

“Two adjoining rooms. Is that satisfactory?” he asked her. She glared back at him, nodding her head. They each took their respective keys and opened the door, then Bond knocked on the door that joined the room and Kisa unlocked it. He walked away from the doorway and began unpacking the few things in his satchel.

Kisa had plopped down lazily on the nylon comforter. It was a fleur-de-lis pattern on a bright red background that matched the picture above the bed. She closed her eyes reliving the day but waves of sleep began washing over her and she was asleep in seconds.

In his own room Bond had set out the few things and was opening the bar. He walked back to the doorway and looked at the sleeping girl. She

looked sweet, innocent with her eyes lightly shut and her face blank of any emotions.

About an hour's time had passed when he heard a tap at his door. He stood up, and walked over to close the adjoining door so not to disturb Kisa. He walked over to peer out the peep hole just as he heard another tap. He smiled when he recognized the familiar face and unlocked the chain.

"Hello, James," Felix Lieter greeted. "I see you got the message. Did you get Trooper 2?"

"No," Bond retreated back into the room and offered his friend a drink.

"It wasn't at the estate?" Felix asked.

"No...well," he admitted. "I really don't know. I wasn't able to do a thorough search of the grounds. I was forced to leave rather suddenly."

"I thought it was all going pretty well for you, at least that's what M said from your reports," Felix scratched his face, musing.

"It was going a bit too smoothly," Bond returned, noticing a movement in the line crack at the doorway between the two rooms. She opened the

door walking by, ignoring Felix's questioning gaze and Bond's irritated one. Felix looked questioningly at Bond, who shrugged his shoulders.

"Good evening, Mr. Lieter," Kisa smiled to herself.

"Have we met?" Felix was growing more puzzled.

"Yes, a long time ago," she was enjoying teasing them.

"The same time we met I suppose?" Bond interjected with sarcasm.

"Actually, no, it was a little after that," she was still teasing.

"I do wish you'd stop this and tell me when or where we met."

"I'll tell you where, it was in Baltimore, Maryland."

"Does that help you any?" Felix laughed. He didn't have a clue who the girl was, but he thought it was funny her having the upper hand on both of them. She remembered them, they didn't remember her. "You'll forgive me since I can't remember our first meeting, what is your name?"

"Kisa, Kisa McLaughlin," she replied, mixing a drink. Bond walked across the room and was about to reach for the bottle when she handed him the

glass. He looked at it and was surprised. It was his martini. His eyes shifted from the glass to her. She was definitely a mystery for him to figure out.

“Well Kisa,” Felix had rose from his seat and extended a hand. “It is a pleasure to meet you. Again.”

“Likewise,” she half curtsied. Bond and Felix had stopped talking and were waiting quietly for her to leave. She shook her head, laughing a little, a slight twinkle in her eye that told Bond she knew what they were going to talk about. Business of course.

“I’ll go take a shower,” she bounced off to her own room.

“She’s a strange girl,” Bond reflected as he turned to their business.

“Well,” Felix replied. “Do you have any idea where the Trooper 2 might be?”

“I beginning to wonder if it exists,” Bond leaned against edge of a dresser, taking a sip from his drink.

“I *know* it exists,” Felix replied. “I saw it with my very own eyes,” he gestured.

“Kisa seemed to think that perhaps it was just being used as bait,” Bond shrugged, setting down his drink.

“How well do you know her?” Felix inquired, peering at the crack between the jamb and the door.

“Well,” Bond admitted. “She did save my life.” He stared into space, thinking. Maybe there was more to Kisa that met the eye. How *bad* she known that Jorge’s men would be waiting for them at the station? Was she still working for Blofeld?

The thoughts were bursting in his mind like balloons. He stood, setting down his drink. “You’ll excuse me a minute?” he said absently as he opened the door to her room and closed it behind him leaving a confused Felix staring after him.

Without regard Bond burst into her bathroom, hoping to catch her off guard. “Yes Commander?”

She was standing with a large, white towel wrapped around her body; her legs peering out beneath were white and thin. She had loosened her hair and it fell across her bare shoulders in long tendrils. Her dark brown eyes

were gazing at him. So she knew he was coming! He cursed to himself. But how?

“All right,” he took a threatening step towards her, grabbing her left, uninjured arm. He jerked her into the main room and threw her down on the bed keeping a tight hold on her wrist, twisting it painfully. She bit her lower lip, tears forming at the edge of her eyes. “I want the truth. Who are you working for?”

Her breast rose and fell with heavy breathing. She swallowed hard, willing away the tears, making them disappear. “I’ve told you the truth, Commander,” she breathed out slowly as he tightened the pressure.

“Not all of it!” he clenched his teeth. He didn’t want to hurt her, but he had to. He had to find out what she knew.

“I don’t know anything,” her breathing was still deep, he was twisting harder, more than he thought she could bear, but she didn’t scream, didn’t cry. The only sign that she felt anything was her labored breathing. “I’ve told you what I know. I don’t know where the Trooper 2 is, maybe Blofeld has it, maybe Jorge had it. Blofeld would have been a fool to trust him though.”

Bond hadn't let up with the pressure, keeping her arm clenched behind her back. She was a tough young woman. "How did you know those men would be there? How do you seem to know everything about me?" he demanded, jerking a little while he spoke. She bit her lip harder to contain her pain, drawing blood.

"I just do," her voice was beginning to sound desperate. "I can't explain it. Blofeld made me know you, know your life, everything that has happened to you in the past ten years, I've read or seen. I've even read the reports you handed in to M," she stopped for a minute, each word an effort, her breathing coming in short breaths. She moved slightly to relieve some of the pressure. "I think Blofeld must have men in Universal Exports. I don't know how, or who. If I did I'd tell you, Commander. You have to believe me that I would."

"007!" it was Q. Bond had not heard him open the door. "You're going to break her arm!" he was appalled. Bond shot him a dart, but he did release her arm which she gratefully brought around to her front, holding it awkwardly with her bandaged right arm.

"No Q, only out of socket," she smiled, regaining her even breathing. She had remained on the bed, her towel still wrapped around her.

Q looked at her puzzled. "Have we met before?"

“No, but I have read your file.” Q pursed his lips, but turned back to Bond.

“Really 007, I do realize you have your job to do, but it is all quite logical,” he began. “It’s called ESP, you know extrasensory perception.”

“Yes, yes. I know what ESP is,” Bond waved him on. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m to supply you with what you will need in Paris. Anyway,” he went back to his previous subject. “In her case it comes from the over education of a particular person,” he pointed to Bond. “In this case, you. We’ve used the same method millions of times on people marked to investigate, tail or assassinate a particular person.” He crossed his arms, satisfied.

Bond looked angry. “All right, all right,” he said, brushing it off. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the dribble of blood from where Kisa had bit her lip.

“Do you want me to look at that arm?” Q asked, sympathetic.

“No sir,” she cradled it protectively. She knew Q and his experiments.

“Go get your shower, Kisa,” Bond didn’t look at her, shooin Q and Felix out of the room, but he stepped back for one second. “I’ll send you up some ice for that arm.” She smiled at him.

When the door was shut upon them she closed her eyes tightly, letting all the built up pain well inside of her. Gently she touched her shoulder, biting her lip again. She placed the ball of her right hand over the entire shoulder, spacing out the fingers. She massaged with her thumb until she could feel the bone, then with her last three fingers she found the spot opposite. She closed her eyes and with one swift grasp she put it back in socket. She fell back on the wiry cushion of the mattress and slowly let the pain and the tears out.

After a few minutes she made herself stand up and stumble to the bathroom. She turned only the cold water on and held up her right hand as she stepped in. The water was icy, the droplets hitting her sore shoulder heavily. She bit her lip again, forcing herself against the pain to bear it. She didn’t want to get the bandages on her right arm wet, but she had to use her right hand, at that moment she thought she would pass out if she dared to lift her left arm over her head.

Once she had gotten out of the shower she quickly dressed, then proceeded to change the dressings on her right arm. She was determined

that she was going to do it herself, but she had a hard time keeping the gauze in place while also taping it. A tap at her door was the bell boy. He had brought her a canister of ice which she gratefully accepted and wrapped a handful of it in a towel. She held the towel against her shoulder, letting the coldness block the pain from reaching her brain. She leaned back in the chair she was sitting in and just stayed there, letting her mind go blank.

Meanwhile, Bond was contemplating Q's explanation. "Psychic?" he was skeptical.

"I don't know that psychic is the word I would use," Q was happiest when he was discussing some subject in which he knew much about. "I think a better description for your friend Kisa would be *habit*. She's made a habit, by studying your life, what you do, the way you do things, the people you associate with, the things you like, and what you dislike. All part of her training, do doubt."

"I see," that wasn't even a half truth, more like one-sixteenth. Bond thought back. He was sorry he'd treated her roughly, but it was business, he brushed it off. There was one thing he remembered and stored away for future reference. Across her left shoulder there had been a deep, white groove in her skin. It was only about an eighth of an inch deep and quarter of an inch wide, but had begun at the collar bone going over the shoulder

and down her back. The white was from scar tissue. Some one had once beaten her, he mused.

By now she let the ice numb her some and she forced herself to join them all in the other room. “I think you should take her to Paris with you,” Q was saying.

“Yes,” Felix was teasing. “She might keep you out of trouble.”

“You have two votes for you to go. What’s yours?” Bond eyed her darkly, but with a faint smile.

“What ever you say Commander,” she said meekly.

“Yes, and then I’ll find you three seats behind me in the plane before we leave the runway!” he accused with a hint of tease.

“No sir. If you tell me this time to stay,” she nodded. “I’ll stay.”

Bond laughed to himself, almost in frustration. “You’re going with us,” he said. “With Q actually.” She smiled at the one mentioned. She liked Q.

“I’ve never been to Paris,” she said. “I’ve never been anywhere but America and now Spain. I haven’t even been to London!”

“What a crime,” Bond shook his head sarcastically.

The next morning all four of them were at the airport. Felix and Bond were each taking separate seats, and Q and Kisa would be flying together. Q was happy because he’d found a willing ear for all of his knowledge. He even gave her an animated detail of his latest project, which she thought was ingenious, and she told him so. She was sincere, but knew that it was also make him a valuable ally.

They landed in Paris and were quickly escorted to the hotel. M was supposed to visit Bond in half an hour. That gave him just enough time to set out his satchel and wash up. Two double bed rooms were reserved, so Q was staying with Bond, Kisa next door and Felix on the floor above them. Like the room in Madrid there was an adjoining door between Bond and Q’s room and Kisa’s.

He had just opened the door between the rooms and spotted Kisa. She was staring out at the view before her. There wasn’t really much to see except a ghastly parking lot, but it was Paris no matter what part you were looking at. He looked at her, starting with her tattered tennis shoes. It was the first time he’d noticed them. They had no shoelaces and were caked with dirt and goodness knows what else. Her legs were bare to the hems of her ragged shorts that fell to the upper thigh. One of the back

pockets was torn and hung limply down by a few threads. They were dirty too, from wear and sleep. Her top was dirty too; she'd dropped jam down the front that morning at breakfast, and some gravy two nights ago. It was starting to look a bit ragged too.

“You need new clothes,” Bond commented. Kisa jumped, turning half around. She looked down at her attire, frowning. “I’ll see if Moneypenny can take you shopping. She’d be delighted.”

Kisa said nothing as Bond disappeared back into his room. Pursing her lips she sank down into the seat nearby. She was exhausted and only wanted to crawl in her bed and sleep for the next several months. But that was impossible.

Someone knocked at Bond’s door. Then they knocked again. There was a pattern to their knocks. Kisa counted them and heard the exchange of greetings as the Commander opened the door. She went to the doorway and stood quietly, shyly against the wall. Two people had come in, the first was a aged British gentleman whose silver hair was beginning to thin at the back. With him, carrying a portable typewriter was a taller woman. Her hair was a dirty blonde color, and her eyes friendly, flirting with James Bond.

Everyone had sat down in their places, M taking his seat at the table near the window that overlooked the parking lot, Money Penny sitting at the edge of it with her typewriter, ready to type anything Bond or M directed her to. Q was sitting on the edge of the bed, absently fiddling with his latest device. Bond was standing, his hands resting behind his back, waiting for whatever lecture M might decide to lay upon him. M had folded his hands front of him, waiting. “Well?” he asked.

Bond shifted his weight and licked his lips. Kisa immediately pushed herself away from the wall, where she had been leaning and walked across to the bar. M’s eyes shifted off Bond to the girl, following her across the room to the bar where she began mixing a drink. Bond had not spoken, he’d shifted his eyes to Kisa briefly, but had his full attention back on M.

“I’d like you to meet Kisa,” Bond introduced her, but did not introduce his superior. A second later Kisa handed Bond the drink. “Thank you,” he took it without a word and threw it back. Kisa shook her head as she took it back to the bar and refilled it.

“Would you like anything sir?” she asked. “Money Penny?” Both declined, and neither questioned how she would know who they were.

“We have business to discuss,” M was stern. “And I do not wish to continue with reserve.”

Kisa did not say a word, but returned to the other room. The next few minutes consisted of Bond's report, and M adding details to what they had dug up in other parts of Europe. The Russians had admitted that they had been working on a top secret project code named Trooper 2, confirming its existence, primarily because they had not been contacted for its return. M had also been contacted by the French government that they suspected Blofeld to be stationed somewhere within their borders.

After all of this information had been passed along, Bond had a suggestion. "While we're investigating this lead, I was wondering if Moneypenny could be prevailed upon to take Kisa shopping? I'm afraid she's in need of a new wardrobe," he said.

M raised a suspicious eye brow. "How much do you know about the girl?" he asked.

"Just what I told you in my report," Bond responded. M pursed his lips, glancing at Moneypenny who was eager at the word "shop."

"All right 007," he agreed. "Moneypenny you may take Miss McLaughlin to the shops."

Money penny grabbed her purse and tapped on the door. Kisa called a “come in.” Money penny wasn’t sure why she had felt the desire to get to know the girl better; after all she did consider her one of the many competitors she had to fight off for James. But she was pleased when Kisa also seemed a bit eager to find some new clothes.

“I’ve never bought clothes for myself,” she said, puzzled at the prospect. “When I was little my mother all ways chose what I would wear. When I was grown Jorge bought my clothes.”

“Well,” Money penny linked arms with her. “You shall choose what you will wear now. And if you have any questions I’ll be happy to help you.”

Kisa smiled at Money penny. The elder woman was motherly, but yet she was also sisterly. Kisa liked her too.

Chapter 6

Double O

The Eiffel Tower was pointing upward in the bright Paris sunlight. It was indeed a unique and unusual piece of work. Kisa remembered a time when she had constructed a model out of popsicle sticks, but that was years ago. Now she could see it first hand. It was more interesting in person than she had ever imagined.

She was carrying a paper bag with a twisted paper handle hanging loosely from her hand. It swung back and forth with each step she took. A cool breeze flowed around her, whipping at the loose strands of her hair that had fallen from the sloppy pony tail she'd put the bulk of it up in.

Money Penny was chattering about Paris and the interesting shops they'd visited and Kisa was listening absently. "Let's get lunch," Money Penny said after glancing at her watch.

"Anything but snails!" Kisa returned adamantly.

"How about escargot?" Money Penny raised an eyebrow, teasing. Kisa grinned.

"That too."

The sidewalk café they chose for lunch was shaded by an arbor made of grey beams. They made zebra stripes on the checkered tablecloths and the floor. Their waiter was a Frenchman of medium build and height. He had dark black hair that fell into his eyes as he wrote down their order. His smile was charming and displayed a dimple on his left cheek, his blue eyes twinkling with delight. He was very polite and seemed to be trying very hard to impress them.

Kisa and Moneypenny spent their time while they ate talking. Kisa asked about London, what it was like on an average day, if she enjoyed her work with Universal Exports, where she lived. Moneypenny told her about Gram. “Gram’s my mother. My brother’s children started calling her Gram and I just sort of picked up on it.”

“You have a brother?” Kisa was a little surprised. With everything she knew about James Bond, she had somehow missed out on some important facts about Moneypenny...and perhaps others as well.

“Oh yes, George Moneypenny,” she smiled. “Of course you know Moneypenny isn’t really my name.”

“I knew that,” Kisa smiled. “But does anyone really know your real name?” That was something that even she didn’t know.

“I’m sure it’s on file somewhere, but no body has called me by my real name in years, not even Gram and George,” she lamented. “Somehow everyone calls me Money Penny now!”

Kisa laughed. “So what is your real name?”

Money Penny ducked her head and smiled. “Do you promise not to tell?” she said, as if she were a school girl sharing a most sacred secret with her best friend.

“I promise,” Kisa crossed her heart with her pointer finger, leaning closer to hear. Money Penny leaned close to Kisa’s ear and whispered the name. Kisa drew back looking puzzled. “But it’s a pretty name!” she protested. “Why wouldn’t you want anyone to know it?”

Money Penny shrugged. “I just never cared for it much. When I was in grade school my friend and I decided we would go by our last names from now on. Mine of course was Money Penny and hers was Cakroche,” Money Penny pronounced it similar to ‘cock roach.’

Kisa raised an eyebrow. “She wanted to go around with a name like ‘*Cakroche*?’” she couldn’t stifle a chuckle.

“Only for a day,” Money Penny was laughing. “After that she decided that Mariane would be just fine.”

“I don’t blame her!”

An hour slipped past without their notice; they were enjoying each other’s company and the quiet, calm, and leisure of the afternoon. “I suppose we should be getting back,” Money Penny was saying, gathering up some of the bags that Kisa had been carrying. They had bought several things, but Kisa’s practicality showed through when she bought jeans, shirts, and casual blouses, walking shoes and only a few fancier things for going out at night or an expensive gathering. Money Penny paid the check and the two began their leisure walk back to the hotel.

They had gone several blocks in silence, having run out of things to discuss and feeling a bit tired. They had just passed an alley where a high pitched sound issued from it. It was short and pitiful, almost weak. Kisa cocked her head to the side and listened for it again. “What’s that?” she stopped.

Money Penny listened too, but she had not heard it the first time. “I don’t hear anything,” she shrugged. Kisa stepped into the alley. “I don’t know if it’s a good idea to go in there,” Money Penny warned. It was rank with the stench of garbage and the pungent odor of a long since dead animal

hung on the wind. Paper littered the ground and flies buzzed around cans and bags, converging on the spoils of humans. The high pitched sound was louder this time, off to her right. Kisa bent down to find its source. It was a distinct sound; a frightened sound.

“Kisa?” Moneypenny didn’t like the place. It was not safe; burglars, rapist and rabid animals lurked in these kinds of alleys.

Kisa stopped, leaning back on her heels and smiled at Moneypenny. She had found the source. She clicked her tongue soothingly. “It’s all right,” she held out her hand and a small, scrawny creature ran to it eagerly.

“What is that thing?” Moneypenny asked from her station at the entrance.

“A kitten,” Kisa replied, still speaking softly to it. It was licking her fingers, tasting the residue of her lunch. Gently she picked up the thing, all trembling and frightened. “It’s all right,” she was saying, still in the soothing, calming voice. Once back in the sunlight the kitten blinked its eyes, adjusting to the brightness. It mewed pitifully.

Moneypenny looked at it. It didn’t look healthy at all. You could count each one of its tiny ribs; its hair was coarse and thinned. Its whiskers were bent and broken, but its eyes looked eager, inquisitive. Its fur was light

grey with the faintest hint of tabby stripes alternating in a darker grey color. It was not a true tabby cat, but it did have the tabby blood in it.

“May I have your bag?” Kisa asked Moneypenny. She looked at her puzzled but handed it to her. Kisa opened it and gently, still talking softly to the creature, placed it on top of her wallet and lipstick.

“What are you going to do with it?” she asked.

“Take him up to our room,” Kisa smiled.

Moneypenny didn’t protest, she only sighed and followed Kisa along the sidewalk. They reached the hotel and walked through the lobby, Kisa with the bag resting on her shoulder as if it belonged there. She pushed the button to the elevator with confidence. They boarded it and went up to their floor. When they arrived to their room Kisa unsnapped the bag and the kitten walked out, as if it were expecting the bag to open right then. It wasn’t frightened, but explored the bed, sniffing the little lumps of the pillows and then walking around its edge, his tail pointing straight up in the air, occasionally the tip flipping from side to side.

Kisa dropped the rest of their shopping bags on the floor at the foot of the bed as she opened the door to Bond’s room without knocking. Bond

and M were at the table studying several pieces of paper spread out before them.

“Enjoy your shopping?” Bond smiled at her.

“Yes, I did,” she replied, going behind the bar and ducking where they couldn’t see her. Money Penny had come to the doorway, her hand resting on the door frame.

“Find everything you wanted?” he inquired further, puzzled at her behavior. There was a clattering of glass from the ice box that was nestled in one of the cabinets under the bar. She set something on the counter, then suddenly appeared. Bond gave a questioning glance to Money Penny who shrugged.

“Yes, everything,” Kisa was resting her chin in her hand, thoughtfully looking over the glasses hanging by their stems from the cabinet above. “I suppose this’ll have to do,” she sighed taking down one and setting it by the object she had just placed on the counter and filled the glass. When she walked back around the bar the glass was filled with a white substance.

“Milk?” Bond questioned, turning to M, who was just as much puzzled by her behavior, and had less reason to be than Bond. “What on earth are you doing?” he demanded.

“Aha,” Money Penny finally understood. Bond was furious with his curiosity and stood up, letting the chair scrape against the carpet and followed them both into the other room, M, giving up on getting anything accomplished for now also following.

“Where the devil did you get that?!” James Bond demanded when he saw the pitiful creature.

“While we were shopping,” Kisa replied innocently.

“Do you realize it is against hotel policy to have animals in these rooms?” M was now furious. He didn’t like frivolous things and a cat, to him, was frivolous, especially a scrawny one like this one. Cats were to be kept in barns when you were out in the country. They could catch mice, so they were useful. Anywhere else they were a bother and not needed. “What do you want a thing like that for?”

“My parents did not name me *Kisa* for nothing,” she said. “Besides I have always had a cat, at least until Jorge killed my last one. He won’t be a bother, sir. I’ll make sure of that,” she had stood up after placing the glass on the floor and setting a book under the kitten so it could reach it. The kitten stood on its back paws, with its front ones balanced on the rim, and took tentative laps from the glass.

“He’d better not be,” M clenched his teeth together. They had so much to do to find Blofeld before he used the Trooper 2 for his own gains, and here their progress was being thwarted, by a cat of all things!

Bond had not said anything. His mind was busy trying to make a connection. Kisa=Kitten or Kitty in Russian. Why was that familiar? He could almost see Kisa’s former cat, the one she’d said Jorge had killed. It was grey. But that was as far as his memory would go. He paused and looked at her, trying to remember.

Shaking his head he followed M back into the other room where they continued their discussion, mapping out where to look for Blofeld. They had ruled out all major cities. that left the rural country side of France – that is if he were still in France – which was a lot of territory. It did help that Bond would be working with Felix and one of Q’s devices.

The device was small enough to fit in the hand, but it had a special computer screen that showed up a radar signal. The radar signal was set to find a small component of Trooper 2 if he was within a 100 mile radius of it. This would at least get him to the device, even if it did not hand him Blofeld.

There was a drawback to the device however, if there was another component, exactly like the one in Trooper 2 he would be led on a wild goose chase. But that was a chance they would have to take. It would be better than blindly going from town to town, not knowing where to begin looking.

That very afternoon James Bond took his car, decked out with all kinds of secret gadgets, from a smoke vent in the back, oil slick, turbo charge and a dozen other buttons that even he didn't quite know what to do with.

He sped out of the city of lights and along the rural roads, stopping now and again to try out the gadget. Every stop yielded nothing. Bond wondered if Felix was having any luck in the northern portion of the country. They did at least have the cooperation of the French government, who was also conducting their own search in all the cities for Blofeld.

Bond had stopped again, leaning against the car, pressing the buttons on the device and waiting to hear the computerized zing when it found the Trooper 2. The road was a desolate one, only an occasional car passed by, whipping at his clothes and blowing his hair in all directions.

There was a stand of woods along the road that bordered a large pasture fifty feet to his left, so Bond walked the distance and stopped. The field

was open, the green, lush grasses lifting their strands toward the sun, a spot here or there that was darker than the others, fertilized by the cattle that grazed the field. He had brought with him enhanced field glasses and he now lifted them to his eyes, adjusting the lenses. He could see nothing, not even the cattle or the farm house that would be connected to the pasture.

The device was still in his hand, set to on, but he still did not get a reading. Frustrated, and wondering if they were going to get anywhere, he turned back to his car. The crunch of gravel made him look up. A car was coming towards him, fast. It was a red car, and by the flapping of a pink head scarf, he guessed a woman was driving it. The car came closer, then zoom! Passed him. Yes it was woman driving. Her dark black hair and dark sunglasses made her resemble Audrey Hepburn. Bond smiled as she passed, waving his hand slightly. She ignored the gesture and seemed to speed up her car.

Bond raised an eyebrow as he slid into his seat. He would be reaching Orleans in a few hours and he would stay there for the night. He made only a couple more stops along his way, trying out the device, but still received no signal. It was just beginning to grow dark when he arrived at Orleans and found a nice restaurant to eat at. He had just sat down when he noticed the Audrey Hepburn girl from earlier. “*Monsieur, si vous plait?*” her voice was warm, friendly.

“*Omi?*” Bond replied.

“You speak English?” she asked.

“Yes,” he cleared his throat, leaning back as she helped herself to the seat across from him.

“You are British, no?”

“Yes,” Bond eyed her carefully. The sunglasses were disposed of and only her dark, brown eyes glowed with warmth.

“I do so like Englishmen,” she smiled. Bond eyed her. She was wearing a low cut black silk dress. It had black lace straps on each shoulder, and the material was a perfect fit along the bodice, tightest at the waist then flowing down in waves along her hips and down to her ankles, only revealing the black straps of her high heel sandals.

“Are you a Frenchwoman?” Bond asked, his eyebrow raised, wondering what this girl’s purpose was.

“*Omi,*” she nodded. “But I spend much time learning English. That was my major,” she grinned. “I hoped to go to America or Great Britain.”

“Ah,” Bond lifted his glass before taking a drink. “The latter I think you would find most enjoyable.” Her eyes lit up with excitement. “By the by, you haven’t told me your name?”

“*Cherie, Cherie De Lona,*” she replied.

Back in Parie Kisa was peering out the window down at the ugly parking lot. The kitten had leaped up to the sill and was searching the scene with interest as well, its little nose leaving a streak of wetness in an erratic pattern. Kisa sighed and turned back to the room where Moneypenny was typing on the typewriter. She could type 150 words per minute, not counting errors.

Kisa was bored. She had nothing to do since Moneypenny was busy and Bond was gone, and since she’d had not premonitions about his escapade turning sour she had to find ways to entertain herself. She tripped into the other room, the kitten bounding off the sill and following at her heels, just like a puppy. M was buried in a mountain of papers, his glasses kept slipping down his nose and he appeared frustrated. Q, on the other hand, was busily connecting wires on his latest “toy.”

The object in his hand was small, circular; the wires were long and complicated. Kisa sat on the bed next to him and peered down at the intricate workings. “So what is it?” she asked.

Q smiled. His favorite question. It meant he could go into the exaggerated explanation of not only what the device was, but also the details of how it all came about. From M’s general direction came a frustrated sigh, but Q ignored it and began. “Look,” he showed her the front of the device that looked just like a watch. Q pushed the exposed wire into little slots in the back of the watch, all the way to the insulation, until he could hear a tiny “click.” He then replaced the backing on the watch and adjusted the straps. “Now,” he said, demonstrating as he spoke. “These buttons would ordinarily be for changing the time, the date, or using the watch as a timer or stopwatch,” he pressed each button to demonstrate each function. “But that is not what they do,” he pressed them a second time.

The button that would have displayed the digital numbers for the time instead made a tiny click. Q opened the back of the case and showed Kisa a miniaturized roll of film. “I can take this to any drugstore and have it developed just like any other kind of film.” He proceeded to press the next button, the one for the date. This time a beam of red light streamed across the room and made a perfect circle on the floral wall paper.

The kitten, who, until this point had been playing with M's shoelaces, much to the latter's disgust, bounded across the room leaping into the air to catch the beam of light. Kisa and Q chuckled at the antic. "You don't want to play with that," Q scolded. Kisa leaned forward to pick the kitten up by the flabby flesh at the back of the neck while clicking her tongue and calling it, "Double O, come." Q eyed her quizzically as the kitten's body relaxed, its hind feet folding against its stomach, his front feet dangling in the air and its head bobbing from side to side limply, its eyes annoyed, but obedient.

Kisa sat the kitten on the bed beside her and forced it to sit down, its tail wagging impatiently. "Now," Q continued and pulled out a small, ceramic object from his brief case and placed it on the table before them. Kisa had held her hand over the kitten while whistling two notes that resembled the last two notes of a whip-poor-will's call. Q had aligned the beam of light with the object and pushed the final button.

Poof! Kisa jumped back in alarm, the kitten had also jumped under her hand and darted behind her, peeking curiously around her. Where the ceramic object was now lay a neat pile of powder. "It can work on machinery, melting buttons, controls," Q paused. "And it can burn flesh in the same manner a lightening strike would. And," he flicked a button on the back of the "watch" to return it to a mode that would tell time. "It would probably kill an animal the size of...Double O?"

“Yes,” Kisa nodded, pleased with her choice. “He has a license to kill,” she grinned at her own private joke. “Mice.” Q laughed quietly, while she heard a smothered snort from M’s general direction. “Oh,” she spun around. “Laugh now, but one day you’ll find that Double O is a valuable animal.”

M turned back to his work unbelieving. Q was interested, however. “How do you plan to make a cat valuable for anything but catching mice and your own pleasure?”

“By training him,” Kisa replied with all sincerity.

“How do you make a cat do something it doesn’t want to do?” M was defiantly skeptical, but if Kisa and Q were going to continue talking while he was working he might as well join the conversation.

“I have my methods,” she grinned mysteriously and returned to the other room. She felt rather useless, except for Double O. M, Q, and Money Penny all had tasks to do; the only thing Kisa was good for was predicting James Bond. Yet, it was something she was good at. She thought a moment, peering back out the window, Double O having returned to his position at the window sill.

There was a pool below and it happened that Money Penny had had the foresight to insist she buy a bathing suit. She found the bag and tore off the tag hurrying to the bathroom to put it on. She covered it with an airy, black, beach wrap. She picked up a towel and told Money Penny where she was going.

Before she got to the door Double O was waiting so she scooped him up and placed him on top of the towel, holding him against her bosom. The sun was bright and warm when she was pool side. She looked around where the life guard was stationed before she placed the towel on the reclining pool chair. Double O sniffed the air happily. He liked being outside where it was fresh. Kisa pulled off the wrap and threw it down next to her towel and the kitten and she made a running leap into the deep end of the pool.

She made a terrific splash, droplets of water flying up on either side of her body like the parting of the Red Sea. Once her body hit the water she began reaching each arm up high in the air, grabbing a handful of water and pulling it downward to repeat the process with her opposite arm. Within second she had spanned the length of the pool, touched the edge and swam for the other end. She repeated this process three times before she pulled herself out of the water and sat on the edge. Her breathing was heavy as she swiped the water from her eyes.

Double O was running along the edge proudly, his tail standing straight into the air. The children who were playing nearby in the shallow water stopped their activity and pointed at him, laughing and chattering in French. He reached Kisa and plopped down next to her hand, picking up a paw to clean it thoroughly.

The life guard jumped down from his chair and was walking towards her. He was tall, with unruly, sandy blonde hair. The muscles of his arms bulged and his chest stuck out to show off the chiseled muscles. He squatted down next to her. “You are English?” he asked.

“American,” Kisa specified.

He nodded. “We do not allow cats at the pool,” he said simply.

“I’m sorry,” Kisa said. “But he wouldn’t stay behind.”

“You are guest in hotel?”

“Yes,” she admitted. The children had moved closer to listen to what the life guard would say.

“I have to report you,” he said, almost sorrowfully. “No pets allowed at hotel or pool.”

“But this kitty is an orphan,” Kisa returned, picking Double O up by the neck again. “I found him starving in an alley trash can.”

“Awww,” one of the children cooed.

“I picked him up because I like cats and I felt sorry for him,” the kitten was curled up in an irresistible ball of fur.

Before the lifeguard could reply the youngest of the children tugged at the bottom of his bathing suit shorts, “*Monsieur, monsieur*” the child’s eyes were wide and pleading. “*Si vous plait*, no make *mademoiselle* rid of kitten!” she pleaded.

The other children joined in the fray, speaking a myriad of English, French, German and a couple others unfamiliar to Kisa. The lifeguard looked back at her, a little irritated, but ready to give in. “All right, all right,” he held up his hand for the children to stop. “*Mademoiselle* may keep kitten.”

“*Merci, monsieur*,” Kisa nodded her thanks, the children cheering and clapping until their parents came to see what was wrong. The lifeguard eyed Kisa, interested, but returned to his post. She noted the look and made a short whistle to Double O who followed her, the children giggling

at the sight. Kisa gathered up her towel and her wrap and decided to return to her room.

Meanwhile, James Bond was still searching. He had awoke that morning, early. He'd spent several hours with Cherie the night before and she had given him some important information.

She had been seeing a man. A man of Spanish decent in Toulouse. What had captured Bond's attention was the man's name: Jorge Zales. Perhaps it was a stretch of the imagination, but Bond thought not. Cherie had given him just enough information that he though he could find Jorge and maybe even the device.

Chapter 7

Driving Through the Country

Wind whipped through the open roof and tore at Bond's hair. He swerved as he passed another sharp curve. He would be arriving in Toulouse soon. He had a friend there who would direct him to find Jorge Zales. This man knew every aspect of the country side, for Cherie had told him that it was far off in the country where Jorge was staying. She couldn't give him an exact location since she had always been inside a dark limousine.

He could already see the houses and lights of the town as dusk was falling. He should arrive in the city. It was busy. The head lights and tail lights of cars were backed up as commuters were heading back home, or out to eat.

Within an hour Bond arrived at a tall, official looking building. It had several columns across its front entrance veranda and tall windows set in from the red brick overlay of the front. The door was a pure white with tarnished brass doorknob. Bond adjusted his jacket before he pushed the little white, rounded button and heard the echoing "ding-dong" issue from the hall.

The door was opened by a tall, rather frail looking elderly gentleman. He was dressed in a black and white tuxedo with tails. He bowed politely and

listened quietly to Bond's introduction. Then he stood upright and shook his head. "*Je ne comprends pas l'anglais.*" Bond sighed and repeated his request in French.

The man nodded, understanding and led him into a large, dark office room. Red velvet curtains hung from the tall windows that overlooked the lawn. Dark brown book shelves lined one side of the room. Glass wood trimmed doors protected the books from dust and the elements. On the opposite side of the room was a small side table with various cut glass pitchers and glasses filled with various colored liquids. Above the side table were large portrait paintings of three men, each portrait resembling the other.

Bond peered across the large oaken desk that had several necessities to running an office. There sat the live version of the last portrait. He was chomping on a huge Cuban cigar and his pudgy hand was counting several stacks of bills. The butler bowed slightly at the waist and announced Bond.

The man rose from his seat, his pudgy body moving slowly across the room to pump Bond's hand vigorously with friendly affection. "How are you my friend?" he chuckled.

“Quite well, thank you,” Bond’s deep voice responded while he shook some life back into his hand. “But in need of your assistance, Alexis.”

The man nodded. “I thought as much. You’re still looking for Blofeld?” But before Bond could respond the man continued. “I knew you were. I do keep up with what you’re doing from time to time. Knew about all the filthy business the man’s been up to. So I already have a car waiting for you in my garage so you can go up to a little place in the country. I understand one of Blofeld’s men is there.”

Bond raised a curious eyebrow. Not much got past his friend Alexis Dieudonne. “I guess you save me the trouble of going into all the details,” Bond smiled.

“Quite,” Alexis agreed. “I’m always glad to be of service to you,” he nodded. “Shall we waste no more time and be off?”

“Yes,” Bond rose from the red leather chair he had just sat down in.

“I’ve already gathered the gear you will need. I believe I have everything,” he was mentally checking off the items he had packed into the trunk of his car. “It will be better if we arrive there while it is still night.” Bond agreed. Whatever and where ever Jorge Zales, or rather Gonzales was

holding out at it would give them an edge to arrive there undercover of darkness.

Darkness had fallen like a curtain as the headlights shone on the crumbles of rocks and moss that lined the roadway. Alexis filled Bond in on the details he'd picked up on Jorge Zales. "Is he the same man you were looking for?" he asked.

"He sounds like him," Bond nodded, pulling out a cigarette and placing it between his lips, noting a pair of headlights behind them. The car had come up on them fast, then slowed, leaving quite a bit of distance between them. Alexis had continued talking, about the road that led them up to a club in the mountains.

Bond had lit the cigarette and turned half round to catch a glimpse of the car that was still several kilometers behind them. "I think it's a red convertible," Alexis said.

"Hmm," Bond replied, turning again. "Did you recognize it?"

Alexis shook his head, "No." Bond flicked his cigarette tip on the window. Alexis depressed the accelerator and the car behind them sped up to keep the pace. "Aha," he said. Bond only nodded, the increased speed of the car having proven his suspicion of their follower.

They continued on the road for some time. It curved and snaked, finally coming to a stretch of open lane in a small valley. There were several side roads that led to a small town in the valley. Alexis took one of these and turned off his head lights. They went on for some distance, passing several farm houses.

“How far are we from Zales?” Bond asked when they returned to the main road and Alexis turned the lights back on.

“Not far,” he replied. Bond reached down to the satchel at his feet and pulled out the device switching it on. Once the screen warmed it began beeping and the map showed the location, somewhere off to their north east.

“What is that?” Alexis asked.

“That,” Bond turned off the device and returned it to the satchel, satisfied. “Is where the Trooper 2 is located.”

“Very good!” Alexis was pleased. He liked gadgets and machinery. “That is the approximate location of the club.”

The road was desolate now. They seemed to have lost the car. Within the hour they reached the crest of another hill and Alexis turned down a long, winding drive. It was the “club” he had mentioned earlier. “Jorge Zales’s home adjoins it, or so I’m told.” He had said.

A friend of Alexis’s had membership at this club and had arranged for them to use it for the night. There were excellent accommodations. Bond was impressed with the extravagant measures taken to make all guests comfortable.

Once alone in his room he again turned on the device to ensure that he was still picking up a signal. Indeed he was, much stronger now and coming in almost a straight line from his current position. He walked to the window and peered out at the darkness that cloaked the club. The drive was well lit, circling a large concrete fountain that was spewing forth clear, crystal water.

Bond glanced up suddenly. A red car was approaching the entrance where the valet met them, greeting them warmly and inviting them inside. There were two men. One was tall, a bit overweight, but impressively built. The other was thin, spindly, and a bit fragile. Bond recognized him immediately and grabbed his Walther PPK. He ducked out of his room and hurried down the hall to Alexis’s room and tapped on the door. His friend called a cheerful “Come in.”

Quickly, Bond explained the visitors downstairs, Alexis's eyes growing wide with disbelief. "Pierre has been with me for quite some time," he lamented.

"Yes, but we must move on," Bond urged Alexis, feeling the need to be going before Pierre and his friend found them. He had a feeling that behind that frail exterior was a tough old man.

Alexis had grabbed his things and they went down a back stair case that led them to the kitchen. Unfortunately Pierre and the other man were sitting at a table taking their dinner. Bond, who was descending the stairs ahead of Alexis, saw him first. He jumped back into the shadow, holding his gun pointed towards the ceiling. He sighed, looking back at his friend. Alexis peered around him, catching a glimpse of the two men. He nodded.

They would have to face them. It was their only chance of escape. Taking a deep breath Bond peered tentatively around the corner to check their positions, and then jumped, landing on one foot and firing a round of shot. Alexis had followed, but Pierre and his companion had anticipated their arrival. They were already out of sight and returned fire. Thankfully the cook and other domestics had gotten out of the way.

Bond had made it to the back door with Alexis to cover him then he kept the two busy while Alexis ducked and leaped for the door. The night air was damp. Bond could feel it in his very bones. The two men had worked their way to the door, backing Bond and Alexis each to a column for protection on the low porch. While the men were still busy keeping them in check, Bond poked his head around to catch Alexis's attention.

“Do you think we can make it to the woods?” he nodded over his shoulder, while whispering the words loud enough for Alexis to hear. Alexis peered at them. There were a dozen or so meters between them and the darkness of the underbrush. If they could distract the men long enough perhaps they could make it to the trees.

“*Oui*,” he nodded. “I think perhaps we could.”

Bond reloaded the Walther PPK. They would have to act fast. He started first, firing and backing up. Once in the trees they had a chance to keep low, hopefully. Alexis had started backing at an angle, they were even with one another, their guns spitting forth round after round of cartridges.

He felt the trees and underbrush before he saw them. With one quick jump he darted into their obscurity, flattening his body against the damp ground. He felt the ground vibrate as Alexis's body hit it with a thud.

“Made it,” he said.

Bond only nodded as he reloaded his Walther. Above them machine gun fire decimated the leaves of the underbrush and trees. The pungent odor of fresh cuttings attacked Bond's nostrils as he lay still, flat against the ground. He looked up, realizing that the line of fire was getting lower with each successive shot. He nudged Alexis who followed his gaze and the direction his finger was pointing.

With his right hand Bond reached out and found a depression nearby. He pointed to it and Alexis nodded. With one swift movement they both rolled into the depression, keeping their bodies as flat as possible. The debris from twigs and leaves still splattered across his body. Bond could even feel the breeze of the gunfire whistling past his head. He kept low.

Suddenly the ground burst alive as the sand and loam spurted into the air with a muffled blast. Now that the two men had destroyed the bushes they were going to make sure they found their targets by firing into the ground. Bond and Alexis were still.

All was quiet. They had stopped firing. It was deathly. Bond could hear his own heart pounding with anticipation. His adrenalin was pumping his body, ready to strike out, his Walther resting cradled in his hand. He could hear Alexis's labored breathing. He wanted to ask if he were all right, but he dared not speak.

A crunch near his ear made Bond freeze. They were checking to see if they'd missed their target or not. In a moment the man would be standing on his back. Bond's body stiffed, waiting. The man had stopped and turned half round. He said something in French to his companion, but Bond had risen on all fours. He reached out and grabbed the man at the knees, jerking him backwards. The man screamed but Alexis was already moving as well.

Alexis moved closer. The man was strangling Bond; his two large paws gripped his neck with a concrete force. Alexis tried to pry them off while Bond rammed his knee into the man's stomach. The man didn't budge, or even flinch, only one arm loosened from its grasp. The coolness of metal touched Bond's cheek. The man had a knife. Alexis fumbled to grab it. Bond's elbows were locked reaching for the man's neck, but the man had pulled his head back, beyond Bond's reach. Alexis had both hands on the man's right hand. The man brushed him away as if he were merely a weed.

Bond used the movement to catch the man off balance and grasp the knife. He held it, pointing upward, towards the man. His arms were shaking from the strain. The man was powerful. His arms like reinforced steel. Bond was moving, gaining fractions of an inch towards the man's chest. Just when he'd moved, the man flung his hand back, still holding

his grasp around his neck. Bond gasped for breath. He didn't know how much longer he'd be able to hold him. Alexis was back. He kicked the man's side, causing him to sway slightly. Bond took all his strength and energy and thrust the knife into the man's flesh. He groaned, stiffed, his arm holding out, grasping the air, his left hand's grasp tightened, but it was losing its grip, his fingernails scraped across Bond's neck, leaving four distinct scratches.

He fell into a lifeless lump. Bond tried to regain his breathing, his mind searching over the events of the last few seconds. Somewhere in the midst he'd lost Alexis. He had been right there beside them. He remembered his intense concentration, but then he remembered something through that haze. A gunshot. He searched the ground.

There was another lifeless lump. Bond's eyes rose from it to the tall figure standing over it, his machine gun pointing downward. Bond reached for his Walther that was lying a few feet away. He grabbed it and fired. The tall figure gasped, dropping the gun and sliding slowly to the ground.

Bond moved to the other lifeless figure and rolled it towards him. In the dimness of the night he made out the features of Alexis Dieudonne. He felt for a pulse. There was no life left in him. Quietly Bond laid him back on the ground and gathered his weapons and the packs they had both carried. He hefted them to his shoulder and set out into the woods. He

couldn't go back to the club now. He felt sweat trickle down his face and stopped to wipe it away with his sleeve. He hoped he could find Jorge's dwelling without Alexis's assistance. Alexis had been a good friend, Bond reflected.

Kisa squinted in the bright sunlight, splashing her feet in the cool water and lifting her ankles out, watching as the droplets fell. A little girl came over and smiled at her. She had befriended Kisa since the day the lifeguard had threatened to report her for having the kitten. The little girl's name was Carrie.

"Bon jour Mademoiselle," she greeted.

"Bon jour Carrie," Kisa smiled back.

"How is your kitty?" she asked. Kisa didn't answer but nodded to where Double O was sitting, perched on the edge of the pool cleaning his ever dirty paw. He looked up briefly as if he knew he was the topic of discussion. "What will you do with him when you leave?" she had folded her arms on the concrete ledge and peered up at Kisa. Her dark eyes were hidden under long, dark lashes. She flung dark, wet hair over her shoulder and pursed perfect little lips. Her skin was a dark olive color.

“Keep him,” Kisa replied, pulling the strap of her bathing suit back up on her shoulder. The sun was warm, comforting. She liked the smell of pool chemicals mixed with the baking of the earth around them. It was a lazy smell. Kisa looked back down at Carrie and smiled. “Why?”

“I’d like to have a kitten like that,” she sighed.

“Why don’t you ask your parents for one?”

“Mama would never let me have one,” the sigh was deeper now. Kisa pursed her lips together.

A shadow passed them, then stopped. Then two long, hairy legs plopped into the water beside them. Kisa glanced up. It was the lifeguard, whom she now knew as Sacha. “Hello,” his voice was thick with French accent.

“Hello,” Kisa replied, not looking directly at him. She had a feeling that he liked her. That perhaps he wanted to ask her out or something.

“Pretty day, no?”

“Yes, very pretty,” she replied, still not looking at him. He sighed and stepped out of the pool, returning to his post.

“He likes you,” Carrie reiterated Kisa’s thoughts.

“Hmm,” she replied, slipping into the water. It felt cool as it crawled up her legs and then covered her entire body as she sank to her knees in the shallow water. “Want to race?” she asked her little friend. Carrie giggled.

“Of course!” she shouted and took a running leap forward. What ensued was terrific splashing as they both frantically reached the opposite end of the pool.

“No fair!” Kisa teased. “You started first!”

“But you touched first!” Carrie’s eyes were accusing.

“I did, didn’t I,” Kisa laughed. She had purposely tried to stay back and let the little girl win, but somehow she had touched before she’d intended to.

“Well, I have to go now,” Kisa pulled her body out of the pool and sat on the concrete leaving a wet imprint of her bottom when she folded one leg at a time out of the water to push herself up. She hurried to the lounge chair and dabbed herself with a towel. Moneypenny removed the dark sunglasses that were shading her eyes.

“Have a nice swim?” she asked.

“Ye..ah,” Kisa’s voice was suddenly distant. She stared into space, an overwhelming feeling starting in her middle and spreading through out her body. It covered her like a cloud, shadowing her whole being. She ignored the curled furry ball brushing against her legs. Money Penny had sat up and now looked at her with a peculiar stare.

“Are you all right?” there was genuine concern in her voice. Kisa shook her head.

“Yes fine,” she replied quickly, forcing herself to sit down in the chair that bowed from the weight of her body. She tried to ignore the urgency that kept throbbing from her tightened chest. There was nothing she could do.

Money Penny had tanned nicely in the French sun. So had Kisa. She could see every outline of her bathing suit when she changed each night. “I think I’m ready to go in,” Kisa said, keeping her voice even. She didn’t want Money Penny to be alarmed. She had to deal with that nagging in her middle by herself. Besides she didn’t know how to explain the feeling to her.

In the last couple of days she and Money Penny had just spent their days relaxing...against M’s better judgment. He thought they should continue

to work, but that left Kisa out of any activities. She didn't feel comfortable enough to go sight seeing on her own, although she had one day.

Double O had been her only occupation, and now M had said it was time for them to return to London. At first Kisa wasn't sure if she was included, but Money Penny had rested all her fears.

"Of course you're coming to London!" she'd said. "Where else could you go?" Kisa shrugged. She'd never really thought about it. She didn't really know how to do anything. The only training she'd gotten was from Jorge, she shivered involuntarily. How would she ever support herself? And *where* would she go now? She had no home, not even in the United States.

"You'll come stay with me and Gram for now," Money Penny had said as if reading her thoughts. Kisa had smiled.

"I think I'll like that," she had nodded her approval. There would be plenty of time later to discuss what she would do. Q seemed to think she would be good at creating devices and other do-dads for the benefit of the British Government. She wasn't as sure as he was.

Money Penny sighed. "All this skiving is making me lazy," she yawned. "M will be furious when I don't want to do my work."

“You’ll get back to it,” Kisa assured her. “Shall we go back up?”

Money Penny gathered up their things while Kisa put on her wrap. Double O was already ahead of them, his tail in the air. He didn’t like to be carried upstairs now, but Money Penny and Kisa would always scoop him up before they entered the lobby. He was also beginning to balk when she picked him up by the back of the neck. Her little frail kitten was growing up.

During the last few days Money Penny had made good use of the washer and dryer services downstairs and now all of their clothes were laid out on the bed. They were going to leave by plane the very next day. Their tickets were already bought. “What about Commander Bond?” Kisa had asked M when he’d set out the tickets.

“He’ll continue to send in his reports,” he’d said shortly. She’d wanted then to ask him when the last report had been sent in, but she dared not in the mood he was brooding in.

Now she thought was a good time to ask. She had to know. The feeling in the pit of her stomach was growing, larger and larger. She swallowed. Her emotions never showed through when she didn’t want them to. She refused that they would. They weren’t going to now.

She wouldn't have admitted it to anyone, perhaps not even herself, but she was worried. Worried because that feeling meant only one thing. She held back when she neared M's desk. She was still wearing her bathing suit and wrapper. M's head was down, busy. She waited.

He looked up at her. "Yes?" he was impatient.

"I was wondering if you've heard from the Commander?"

M looked her over with cool eyes. She could feel him measuring her and she wasn't sure she liked it. "Why do you want to know?" he returned. Kisa bit her lower lip.

"Never mind," she turned away with a sigh. She helped Money Penny pack their things. Two other objects Money Penny had had the foresight to buy were two suit cases. They packed Kisa's things in these two and then Kisa helped her pack Money Penny's things in the one's she'd brought with her.

The rest of the day was quiet. The preparations for their departure in place, they ate their supper and retired. Kisa tried to ignore the growing apprehension that welled up from her middle in waves. They would rise, slowly, then crash with an unbearable...she didn't know what to call it. It was almost a guilt feeling, as if there were something she could do, and should do.

She knew what the feeling was. She'd had it before. It was the same feeling she'd had when Bond was boarding the train and then again when they were leaving the station. She knew what it meant. It meant that Commander James Bond was in trouble. Yes, he could probably get himself out of whatever trouble it was, but she felt the innate need to help him, as if it were her duty, her calling.

She listened for the even, heavy breathing of Money Penny. Quietly she sat up in bed and glanced over at the figure in the other one. She could see the lump that was Money Penny rise and fall in rhythm with her breathing. She picked up her wrapper and walked over to her suitcase. She quietly unzipped it, trying to muffle the sound by keeping her hand over it. She pulled out a pair of jeans and a blouse. The blouse was a dark green.

Kisa opened the bathroom door and closed it behind her; she quickly undressed and donned on the jeans, then buttoned up the blouse. She looked in the mirror while she gathered her long, thick hair that sparkled a glimmer of warm red tones in the florescent lighting. She used a rubber band to hold the hair in the messy bun she'd rolled it into. Satisfied that her attire and hair were practical she quietly reopened the door.

Cocking her head to make sure that Money Penny was still asleep she tiptoed to the door that would lead to the other room. She pushed it open

and listened. Both M and Q's breathing was even. She could hear a faint snore coming from M's bed and she wrinkled her nose to avoid the chuckle that had gripped her. She straightened her face and walked through. The day Q had showed her the watch device she had seen a knapsack near his brief case. Now she gently picked it up. It felt rather light as she unzipped it and removed the small masculine toiletry items stored within. She hated to "steal" Q's things, but she thought he'd be more forgiving than M.

Once she'd placed them all on the dresser in a neat row she fumbled along to find the watch. She held it up to the dim light that filtered through the course grey curtains. A snort from M's direction made her duck. He was muttering something. Her heart stood still.

"Bloody cat!" he'd murmured and she heard a small thud as Double O landed on all four paws. He twitched his tail, offended. Kisa pursed her lips. Why hadn't she given him the little whistle signal to stay in her bed? She waited, hunched over with the knapsack held tightly against her bosom. She was still as a statue, despite Double O's body that rubbed against her. She waited until she could once again hear M's even breathing and the slight snore.

She stood, rushing to the door and then quietly called Double O to her. She went back to her suitcase and took out a second pair of jeans and

another blouse. She pulled out socks and her tennis shoes and then snatched Money Penny's first aid kit. She returned to the bathroom, taking Double O with her. She sat down on the toilet seat and rolled her clothes. First she stuffed the kit in the bottom, then her clothes. She pulled on her socks and then her shoes, tying them quickly. She counted out the money that the Commander and Money Penny had given her. It would be just enough.

She picked up Double O and set him on the top of the other things in the knapsack. She whistled low, the last two notes of the whip-poor-will's call. The kitten's tail wagged in irritation, but it obeyed. She picked up the knapsack and put it on her back. She opened the door that would lead to the hall and looked back sorrowfully. She hated to leave them like this, especially Money Penny and Q. She only hoped they would understand.

James Bond turned on the device. The reading was louder, stronger. This had to be it. He searched for a place to begin on the dark, jagged cliff. He took a deep breath and began, first placing his foot hold; he positioned his hooks and carabineers at proper intervals in case he lost his grip.

Within a few hours he had scaled about three quarters of his way to the top. It wouldn't take too much longer. He was glad as he wiped the sweat from his brow.

Suddenly he felt something give on his line. His eyes widened as he saw another figure scaling down across from him, but quickly making up the distance. Bond swallowed as the man used a mallet and hit the hook that Bond had so carefully pushed in only a few minutes before. The line gave again. He suddenly felt the fear grip his heart. He was going to have to do something and quick.

A shadow above him made him cringe. There were two of them! The line gave a little more. Was the man at the hook cutting his cable? Bond clung to the side of the cliff, hurrying to drive his next hook inside. The line gave again, this time it gave completely. He felt it jerk on him. He trust his hand onto his foothold, but it was taking him down. Slowly, he could feel his body rushing towards the earth. His heart had stopped. He was suspended. He was in limbo.

Chapter 8

Hanging By A Thread

The line jerked to a stop, a terrific jolt ringing through his body. He quivered with the impact, glad that it had not broken with the severity of the snap. The line had twisted, and now spun him around, making him dizzy. He stretched out his right leg, trying to gain footing on a narrow ledge. He could just barely touch it with the tip of a toe. He held his breath as he used that little bit of leverage to hoist himself back against the jagged cliff. With one burst he threw himself forward and landed, clinging to a rock that jutted out a few inches. He let his cheek rest against the cool and smooth surface, catching his breath.

He glanced up as a shadow passed over him. The figure that had loosened his hook was approaching the other figure. He squinted. The second figure was familiar. The first was rather tall and he grabbed for the second who batted him away, letting out the line a little. Bond thought he saw a pair of clippers. He braced himself for the tension to drop from his line as he quickly began twisting another hook into the hard surface. He glanced again, trying to keep an eye on the location of the two figures. She was now at his hook, but she wasn't cutting his line. *She...!*

He looked again. It was a girl, her dark hair falling in loose strands around her face, escaping from the loose bun at the back of her head. The man

was near her again as she tapped the hook once more and secured it with a carabineer. He grabbed her arm, but she let out her line putting a few feet of distance between them, but the man was not to be deterred. He let out his own, reached for her again, but this time she kicked out her right foot, right in the middle of his stomach. He grunted in pain, doubling over as she let out more of her line.

She was nearing Bond now. He had already confirmed that it was indeed Kisa McLaughlin above him, but how had she known where he was?

He looked up again, squinting in the bright sunlight that filtered down on them. The man was climbing back up. He had reached halfway and was fiddling with another hook, Bond could hear the click of the carabineer, and he saw the quiver of Kisa's line. His eyes widened with realization.

“Kisa!” he was urgent while simultaneously her line went slack. It was slow motion as it fell downward passing her, passing Bond. She was about to tumble a couple hundred meters to be crushed into solid rock. He reached out, teetering on the edge of the ledge. It seemed an eternity as her body began to fall, slowly, surely reaching him. He reached out, grabbing her arm and both their bodies jerked with a terrific jolt that sent a searing pain up his arm. He could hear his shoulder socket pop. He'd heard Kisa's too. She didn't scream, she only gasped. He knew what she felt.

The knapsack that had been so securely stationed on her shoulders was being magnetized towards earth by gravitational force. Frantically she fumbled with her free hand to grasp it. She grunted, gripping the straps that had held it over her shoulders. It swung back and forth, dangling from her fingertips. Bond could feel his grip slipping.

“Let it go!” he ordered, but she didn’t listen. Instead she whistled a short note and the zipper ripped open. Out popped a little grey head, the ears twitching forward and backward, catching the tone of the whistle, its paws appeared next as it scrambled up the material and onto Kisa’s arm that was dangling with the knapsack still in her fingertips. The kitten scampered up the rest of her arm with terror in its clear blue eyes. Once he had reached her shoulder and was secure on it she let go of the knapsack. It fell, twirling, slowly dwindling towards earth. She could hear the soft thud as it hit the ground.

Using the weight of her body, she swung so that she could lift a leg onto the ledge. Bond swung alternately to help her. With her leg on it she swung forward, jutting her shoulder against the jagged rock face. Her breathing was heavy as she tried to recover. She clung to the crevasses with her fingers while Bond used the slack of her line to secure it with another hook and carabineer the side of the cliff. “Do you have any more

hooks?” he asked. She looked at him with a grimace and peered over the shoulder free of the kitten at the ground beneath them.

“Excellent,” he muttered. James Bond was angry. She had nearly gotten herself killed, not only that but him too. All for some cat. He’d buy her a dozen kittens if it were so important to her! And how *had* she known where he was?

He tried to cool his rising temper, wondering why it upset him so. He’d lost friends before. Good friends who’d risk their lives for him. He’d lost one last night. Of course the difference between Kisa and Alexis was anatomical, but still. He’d lost female allies as well. He couldn’t say it never bother him, but for some reason she bothered him more.

“Double O is special,” Kisa said, tying her line a little tighter. “It would take me another week to train one like him.” She paused, Bond eyed her carefully. Had she read his mind? How could she? “And I followed the road from the village past the club. It leads straight up to here.”

He stared at her. She had read his mind! “Double O?” he asked, deciding not to pursue how she’d known what he was thinking. She didn’t answer as she peered upward. Their friend at the top had disappeared.

They now began their ascent a second time. It was slow going and Bond had to be sparingly on the hooks and carabineers. He kept one eye on Kisa, keeping close to her. They'd divided his remaining hooks between them, Kisa had insisted that he take more, but he wanted to be close enough that if she slipped he could help her.

The going was slow and depressing, but it seemed that their friend above them had assumed that they had been killed for no one returned to check. At least they hoped he was gone.

There was one last hump before they reached the top. It was a large boulder of smooth red rock that was difficult to find a hold on. Bond began, using the path Kisa had taken earlier. She followed behind him.

Suddenly she stopped. "Commander?" she was peering up at him, squinting in the bright sunlight.

He looked down at her, her dark brown eyes clouded with concern, the grey kitten curled around her neck and keeping himself balanced. "Yes?" he blinked, speaking softly.

"They're expecting us." He didn't bother to ask her how she knew. He only sighed and adjusted his line. So their "friend" hadn't gone far, just to bring back reinforcements.

Before they crested the rock Kisa moved beside him. There was a concern in her eyes that Bond couldn't read. It was not merely concern for their safety, but something else.

With one last heave he rolled onto the flat surface of the stone and looked up. Straight into the barrel of a machine gun. Kisa followed, having already resigned herself to the fate before them. Bond stood up and she stood next to him.

“Well, well, well,” it was Jorge, he pounded his balled fist into his hand. “If it isn't my dear Mr. Bond and...” he grinned at Kisa. “Kisa.” He reached out and brushed the back of his thumb across her jaw bone. Kisa backed up, glaring at him. The kitten, still clinging to her neck and shoulder, bowed his back and hissed. He jumped from Kisa's shoulder onto Bond's, disturbing the latter a little.

Jorge swore in Spanish. He spoke sharply to a guard who tried to reach out for the cat who leaped back to Kisa's shoulder and then to the ground. She whistled to it and it disappeared in a clump of brush. The guard started his machine gun fire at the brush. “No!” Kisa shouted, but it was too late.

Bond looked at her, his blue-grey eyes sorry for her. But Kisa glanced at him and winked. Bond covered a small smile. How the cat had gotten away that fast, he didn't know. But there were other, more pressing matters at hand. Like their well being.

Jorge looked angry as he turned back to them. "Well, now Mr. Bond, all my attempts to be rid of you seem to have been thwarted," he glanced at Kisa. "So you shall be dealt with first." He motioned for him to follow him while he spoke some command to one of his men who in turn grabbed Kisa's hair. The man jerked her backwards, making her lose her footing.

She didn't cry out as the man took her to a dark room. Once he shut the door she trembled. She had to do something. Both her life and Bond's depended on it, not that her life meant much to anyone anyway, but she didn't like the idea of having to live through whatever punishment Jorge or Blofeld would dish out to her. She would rather die quick and be over with it. And if in the process she could help Bond that would be a greater bonus and make her feel that she had done something worth while.

Standing up, she paced the length of the room. There had to be a way out. She felt every inch of the wall with her hands, pressing now and again to find a weakness in the wall. She searched the ceiling and found a small narrow vent, but the ceiling was far above her reach. She peered out the

small window in the door. No one was around. She pressed against the door and it gave, just a fraction of an inch. She pushed on it again, but it still only gave the small distance. She knelt down and peered through the tiny crack it afforded.

She slowly rose from her knees until she found the spot that was darker, where the faint light was blotted out. She dug into her pockets for Q's watch and flicked on the red beam. Carefully she aimed it at the chain that secured the door and fired it. Zap! She heard the rattle of the chain as it clattered to the floor.

Pleased with herself she stepped out of the room and peered down the cold, dark corridor. She had to find Bond quickly, before Jorge realized she had escaped. She found the stairs that would lead to an upper level and listened. No sound came from behind the door of the cellar she was being held in. She quietly, cautiously opened the door. Standing only a meter away sat a man, statue still. Her heart skipped a beat. His body had not moved, but his eyes were on her, she could feel them.

Boldly she stepped out. She took another brave step, his eyes following her every movement. She paused, but continued to pass him. He made no move to stop her. She had to act before he did. As fast as lightening she rammed her elbow into the pit of his stomach. He cried out in pain, but before he could yell for help she used the pistol he had dropped to

clobber his head. He fell to the floor in a heap. She breathed a sigh of relief, hoping that no one had heard his cry. She secured the pistol in her waist band and hurried on.

The next room was the kitchen. No one was in the room except a chef busily moving from one pot to the next, adding spices. He wasn't paying any attention to anything, or anyone else so Kisa was able to slip past him.

Once she had made it to another corridor she leaned heavily against the wall and tried to regain her breath. She sucked in the air, taking in deep breaths, trying to calm her frazzled nerves. Her heart was racing as she took off again. She ducked into a doorway just in time as two men left another room. They were speaking low in Spanish.

They were walking towards the kitchen. Right past her! Her heart stood still. She couldn't breathe. She flattened her body against the doorway, hiding in the shadow. They were still talking, arguing. The shadow of their bodies danced across the plaster wall.

Kisa was thankful for the dim light cast by the small lamps on the side of the walls. She was also thankful for her dark clothing that blended well with the dark, stained wood of the door. Their shadows now passed over her body. They were still engrossed in their own topics, paying no attention to anything around them.

They passed. They had arrived in the kitchen. Kisa could hear complaints from the chef as her body slowly relaxed. Her legs felt weak. She heart was having trouble regaining its normal beat. She let the breath she'd been holding escape from her lips.

Suddenly her body fell backwards. She was falling. There was nothing between her and the ground beneath. Frantically she grasped for anything, but instead she felt two arms encircle her waist. She could feel the fear crawling up her body. Her middle shook with fright as her heart stopped once again. A hand was pressed against her mouth to prevent a sound from escaping.

“Shh,” it was Bond’s voice. Kisa’s heart leaped for joy. She swallowed and nodded to let him know she wasn’t going to scream. He released his hand from her mouth.

“You scared the dickens out of me,” she gasped for breath.

“For once you didn’t anticipate what I was going to do!” Bond taunted her playfully. Kisa only glared up at him. She suddenly became aware that his arms were still encircled around her waist.

“You can let go of me now,” she informed him. They had been in an awkward position, Bond landing on his knees to catch her before she fell to the floor after he’d opened the door. He now grinned down at her.

“All right,” he replied letting go and moving away from her, standing up. She landed on a rug with a dull thud. She didn’t look at him, only rolled over and stood up, ignoring his offered hand.

“Have you found the Trooper 2?” her voice was in hushed tones. Bond shook his head.

“The light is rather dim,” he said, searching through a nearby desk. Kisa walked across the room and grasped a gold braided rope suspended from the top of dark red curtains. She pulled on the rope and light flooded into the room. Bond squinted at her, letting his eyes adjust to the brightness. “Thank you.”

Kisa joined him and began her own search. “What does it look like?” she asked. Bond held out his hands indicating a box shape that was only a couple of inches in width. She pursed her lips together, but before she resumed her search she cocked her head to one side, listening.

“Commander?” she said.

“What is it?” he asked ready to spring into action.

“Someone’s coming.” Bond nodded just as the door to the study opened. They both leapt behind the couch that was facing the doorway, the back of the floral print faded from the sunlight that streamed through the open windows. Kisa didn’t breath. Her heart was racing again. Bond was huddled next to her, close, his Walther PPK poised and ready for action.

Whoever was at the door must have been satisfied because their footsteps could be heard echoing away from them, and the solid clank as the door fell shut behind him. Bond was about to peer over the back of the couch, but looked at Kisa fist instaed, waiting. She tentatively nodded and Bond slowly rose from his position.

He stopped, almost stunned. “Your bloody cat,” he was disgruntled.

“Double O?” Kisa’s head popped up over the back of the couch. Sure enough the kitten was sitting on the arm of a winged back chair. He was oblivious to his surroundings, intent in the cleaning of his soft grey fur, which now shined healthy from the special diet Kisa had been feeding him.

At the same time the door was flung open again. Double O’s eyes squinted with disgust at the intruder. The intruder was Jorge and one of

his men in tow. The man was carrying a pellet gun. Kisa gasped, and before Bond could catch her she had leaped from the safety of the couch to a table, at the same time sounding a sharp whistle. Double O immediately disappeared, while Bond cursed to himself.

The pellet gun was aimed for the table. Bond was intent on the other man, ignoring Jorge, but Kisa's sharp, "Commander!" brought his attention to her, forcing his eyes to pass over Jorge. Sure enough there was a machine gun pointed straight for him.

Bond jumped away from the couch at the same time the gun peppered the material, stuffing flying through the air like falling snow. He had rolled over and flattened himself on the carpet, aiming for Jorge, but getting the other man instead. At least that was one last person he had to worry about.

He fired again, but missed. He adjusted his position, trying to get a better aim, but lost his focus on Jorge. When he'd repositioned himself he realized that Jorge had moved, but before he could find him again he heard a click above his head. "Now, the great James Bond is in a very vulnerable position," he said.

Kisa's heart raced from her vantage point. She had to do something, but she had no weapon. Her mind raced. This is what she had wanted for

years, what she had been waiting for. She remembered back to the day Jorge had told her she was ready to kill James Bond. She had never wanted to kill James Bond, but Jorge Gonzales...

She clenched her hand, praying for a weapon. Her hand touched the watch. Q's watch. She wondered if it would work twice in a row without a reload. Her heart pounded. She'd have to chance it and find out.

Kisa rose from her spot. The past few seconds had seemed to play out in slow motion. Jorge with the gun cocked, aimed straight for Bond's head. "Goodbye Mr. Bond." Jorge said.

Bond stared up at him, frozen still, ready to make a move to escape the inevitable. The seconds were years. Time ticked at unimaginable increments. He saw movement, but his mind could not comprehend it. He heard Jorge's words.

Suddenly, with a burst, time began to fly again. Jorge's body stiffened. He screamed. His eyes rolled back with excruciating pain. They were fixed with an unearthly glaze that made Bond's hair stand on end. He uttered a sound that Bond had heard from neither man nor beast as his eyes rolled back, lifeless, and his body slowly fell forward. Bond jumped out of the way of the moving force.

He was still sitting on the floor as his gaze moved from the man at his feet to Kisa who was standing, her arms held out in front of her and a small, watch-like device in her hands. She was staring with a peculiar expression on her face at the limp body lying still. She approached it, cautious. She stared at the seared flesh that ran straight through his body and his heart. He had died, standing up.

Bond stood up and was about to reach out to her, but stopped as she turned to him. “He taught me everything I know, about killing.” Her voice was low and steady. “And he taught me how to hate him.”

He said nothing, but stared at the form before them. If only they had gotten Blofeld as well, he thought. That would make this a perfect day. As it was, it was a fitting end to an evil man. “Now let’s see if we can find the Trooper 2.” He moved forward, trying to help Kisa to leave behind the scene.

“Double O’s already found it,” she replied absently, but turning her full attention to Bond. He looked at her quizzically, so she pointed to an object at the far end of the room. Sure enough the kitten had come out from hiding and was sitting primly on a box, resuming the cleaning that was so rudely interrupted before. He raised his head as if he knew he was the subject of the sentence, an arrogant expression on his face, as if to tell them that he had to do all the work and find the device himself.

Bond smiled and picked up the kitten by the back of the neck as Kisa had done. Reluctantly he rolled into the ball, his eyes rolling back. Bond picked up the box and handed the kitten to Kisa. He opened the box and found the electronic device inside it. “Just what I expected.” Bond nodded his approval. “I believe your cat just used up his nine lives.”

“Didn’t you know Commander? Nine lives are never enough for cats or secret agents,” she smiled. Before Bond could reply the door burst open and two men dressed in black, tight fitting suits leaped into the room, their Uzis drawn, searching the room. One of the men drew his Uzi up, pointing it towards the ceiling. “I see we weren’t needed again, 007,” he said. “M’s waiting for you.”

“Ah, it’s about time. How did you find us?” he asked.

“Miss McLaughlin.”

“Me?” Kisa was surprised.

“There was a tracking signal in Q’s watch,” the man replied. Kisa palmed the object with a sheepish grin. Bond raised a questioning eyebrow to her and she shrugged. “M’s in the limo down the drive,” the man pointed. “He wants to see you as well,” the man was now referring to Kisa.

She followed Bond through the door and down the corridor, but before they had reached the end he stopped, leaned over and planted a kiss right on Kisa's lips. When she didn't respond he pulled back. "I thought you knew what I was going to do before I do it."

"I do," she replied coyly. "I just thought maybe you'd just be satisfied with a kiss," he eyed her. "You ought to look up Cherie," she added. "She might want to see you again."

Bond only sighed. She really did know what he was up to, and he wasn't going to get anywhere with her at the moment. Outside M was impatiently waiting for them, Moneypenny at his side and Q sitting across from him.

"Now, I'd like to know where my knapsack is," M demanded of Kisa once he'd given Bond his lecture. Kisa's eyes widened. She'd thought it was Q's knapsack! She looked at Bond.

"Um, sir, you see," she began.

"It's at the bottom of the cliff, sir," Bond cut right to the point. "I gave her the order to drop it."

“I see,” M glared at them as if they were naughty children. “You might as well get in,” he said finally. “We’ve got to get back to London. It’s time for reports.”

Bond groaned, wondering how he could manage a side trip to Orleans.

James Bond will return . . .