

# **Thunderball Study Guide**

## **Thunderball by Ian Fleming**

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# Plot Summary

James Bond, agent 007 with Her Majesty's Secret Service, is sent to a health clinic to recover from over-drinking and over-smoking. During his stay, he tangles with a criminal who, unbeknownst to Bond, is involved in an international blackmail scheme. Soon, Bond is whisked off to the Bahamas in search of SPECTRE, a criminal organization threatening to explode stolen nuclear bombs. Bond finally foils these modern-day pirates in a spectacular underwater battle.

The novel opens with Bond in a depressed state. With nothing but paperwork to do, he has given in to drinking, smoking, and gambling. M sends him to Shrublands, a natural health clinic, to recover. While there, Bond detects a criminal named Count Lippe. Bond does not know much, but apparently it is too much. Lippe attempts to eliminate Bond, and in retribution, Bond badly burns Lippe in the Turkish bath.

Meanwhile, the international organization SPECTRE, run by the sinister criminal Ernst Blofeld, has stolen a plane carrying two nuclear warheads. SPECTRE threatens to detonate them unless the western world pays them 100 million pounds in gold bullion. On a slim lead, Bond is sent to the Bahamas to track down the criminals and find the nuclear bombs.

Bond finds Largo, a smarmy criminal, and his beautiful mistress Domino. Largo's cover is perfect. This modern-day pirate and his crew of SPECTRE operatives are disguised as treasure hunters, seeking a sunken ship full of pirate treasure. Bond is joined by CIA operative Leiter, and they discover Largo's expensive hydrofoil yacht has a secret compartment for underwater work. Then, they find the crashed plane and the dead bodies of its crew. The pilot who brought in the plane was Domino's brother, and Largo had him killed in a double-cross.

Faced with the news of her brother's death, Domino agrees to take a Geiger counter on board the yacht and signal the watching police when she detects the bombs on board. She is caught and tortured. Meanwhile, Bond and Leiter attempt to intercept Largo's yacht in a nuclear-powered submarine and stop the first bomb from destroying a British base on Grand Bahama.

Bond and Leiter lead a team of U.S. Navy men armed with makeshift spears to ambush the SPECTRE men on their way to plant the bomb. As the underwater battle rages, Bond is locked in a fight to the death with Largo. Their weapons are lost, and finally the two face each other among the coral reef. Largo blinds Bond with an octopus, and Bond retaliates with a rock.

Largo gains the upper hand and is choking Bond in a stranglehold, when Domino appears with a spear gun and spears Largo through the neck. At the verge of death, the Domino and Bond make their way to the surface. When the weakened Bond awakens, he learns both warheads have been recovered and Domino will be fine. However,

Blofeld has escaped. Still drugged, Bond makes his way to Domino's room and collapses by her bedside. The world is saved, for now.



# Chapter 1, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond'

## Chapter 1, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond' Summary

James Bond, agent 007 with Her Majesty's Secret Service, is sent to a health clinic to recover from over-drinking and over-smoking. During his stay, he tangles with a criminal who, unbeknownst to Bond, is involved in an international blackmail scheme. Soon, Bond is whisked off to the Bahamas in search of SPECTRE, a criminal organization threatening to explode stolen nuclear bombs. Bond finally foils these modern-day pirates in a spectacular underwater battle.

As the novel begins, Bond wakes up with a nasty hangover after a night of losing at bridge, because he was too drunk to play well. He feels awful, and he does not have much to look forward to except more paperwork. Then his telephone rings, a call from Headquarters.

Bond rushes to headquarters to meet with his superior, M, but the urgent call is not about a new case. The results of Bond's regular checkup have come in, and M is not pleased. Bond smokes too much and drinks too much, and the doctors are concerned about the long-term effects on his health. M begins lecturing Bond on diet and healthy living. Bond is appalled. At first he thinks M is crazy or joking. M, though, is serious. He orders Bond to a health clinic called Shrublands.

M's secretary, Miss Money Penny, explains to Bond that M has been on a health kick ever since coming back from Shrublands and Bond is his unfortunate victim. She flirts with Bond, but he is in a bad mood and leaves in anger.

## Chapter 1, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond' Analysis

In Chapter 1, James Bond sets off on an adventure, but not the type he is used to. Instead of ordering Bond out into the field to complete a dangerous task, M orders Bond to Sussex to attend a very unexciting health clinic. This takes the typical James Bond adventure and turns it around. How will James Bond adapt to routine living and health consciousness? Does adventure await him despite the contrasting humbleness of his destination?

James Bond seems stuck in a rut. His drinking and smoking have escalated, and these habits combine with a dreary life of paperwork. His whole temperament is poorly adapted to his current situation, and the trip to Shrublands pushes James Bond toward an even less appealing lifestyle.



## Chapter 2, Shrublands

### Chapter 2, Shrublands Summary

A personable young taxi driver shuttles James Bond to Shrublands. At first, Bond thinks the boy is arrogant because the driver combs his hair haughtily after Bond gets in the taxi. The boy turns out to be an excellent driver, and the two begin talking. The driver gives Bond the low-down on Shrublands, explaining how the clients cheat on their diets by binging at the local tea-shops and how the local prostitute, Polly Grace, made a small fortune on the clients and is now too expensive for local boys.

Bond arrives at the clinic and meets Joshua Wain, the head naturopath. Wain looks over Bond and his medical records, noting the scars Bond has accumulated in his life of adventure. Bond passes them off as accidents or results of war duty. Wain outlines a plan of diet, massage, and other treatments, including traction, a technique to stretch the spine that the patients call "the rack."

While exploring the clinic, Bond narrowly saves a woman from being run over by a car. The woman's name is Patricia, and she works at the clinic. Bond finds her quite attractive. The man driving the car is Count Lippe, a patient. He apologizes for nearly running Patricia down. He is a man who would be attractive to women, but a hard-looking man.

Bond goes in to get his massage. Count Lippe gets a massage at the next table. The count makes a fuss about taking off his watch, and Bond looks over curiously. The man has a tattoo under his watch, some sort of symbol in red.

### Chapter 2, Shrublands Analysis

One thing sure to be a sign of a respectable person to James Bond is good driving. Good driving is a sign of competence and sound thinking, and once the taxi driver shows his worth as a driver, Bond befriends him. The driver becomes a source of information for Bond and the reader.

Count Lippe and the incident with Patricia is the first inkling of adventure to come. When Bond saves Patricia from the count's car, he is acting out a traditional story: the hero saving the woman from the villain. Although Patricia will not truly be in danger from Count Lippe and the incident with the car is only an accident, it fits into a familiar formula. The count will become the villain of the next chapters.



# Chapter 3, The Rack

## Chapter 3, The Rack Summary

Bond is exhausted at the end of his day's treatment, but he takes the time to call Headquarters and discover that Count Lippe's tattoo marks him as a member of a Macao-based criminal organization called The Red Lightning Tong. Lippe overhears Bond on the phone.

Bond continues to go through his treatments and live on a starvation diet of vegetable soup and tea. After a few days, Bond feels awful, but the workers assure him it is the poisons leaving his system. After three days, Bond goes in for osteopathic manipulation. He finds the osteopath is the woman he saved from the car, Patricia. He finds her objective, professional treatment of his body difficult to tolerate. Finally, he kisses her. She nearly slaps him.

Count Lippe is Patricia's next patient, and she and Bond pass Lippe as Patricia leads Bond to the traction table. Bond is suspicious about the spine-stretching contraption the patients call "the rack," but Patricia assures him it is safe. She hooks him up to the table, and he finds the sensation tolerable and perhaps even pleasant. Then, Bond notices a movement and opens his eyes. Count Lippe's hand, recognizable by its tattoo, is turning the machine's dial up to maximum. The pleasant stretching becomes torture, and Bond passes out.

## Chapter 3, The Rack Analysis

In this chapter, Shrublands becomes a mini-adventure of its own, complete with an attractive female for Bond to conquer and a villain for Bond to fight. Bond meets Patricia by saving her from a passing car, and he is immediately attracted to her. She is a beautiful woman and also an independent, professional woman. Bond cannot treat her as just a professional however. His sexual drive cannot ignore the close physical contact of an osteopathic session with her. In this masculine fantasy, Bond's inappropriate advances are only hollowly objected to, for formality's sake. Patricia clearly finds Bond attractive as well.

Count Lippe is Bond's villain. Like Bond, he is attractive to women, but his attractiveness is painted with an air of villainy. He is too slick. He is clearly a hardened criminal, and Bond can see this in Lippe's face and manner. When Bond finds out too much about this villain, Lippe decides to silence him, using the "rack" as his weapon. Patricia comes to his rescue after Bond loses consciousness. This mini-adventure foreshadows the larger adventure to come, wherein Bond will again be rescued at the last minute by a woman.





# Chapter 4, Tea and Animosity

## Chapter 4, Tea and Animosity Summary

Bond awakes with the memory of pain already dim. He overhears Patricia Fearing explaining how she found him at the machine with the dial turned all the way up and did everything she could for him. Mr. Wain speculates Bond must have turned it up himself, possibly by accident. Bond passes out again.

When Bond wakes again, he is being gently massaged with fur gloves by Patricia. She gives him some brandy. Bond pretends he turned the dial by accident, and he promises to keep the affair secret.

After two days, Bond is back to normal. At least, he is back on his treatment, but he can feel it changing his body. He feels intensely healthy, but has he lost what makes him James Bond? Still, Bond is obsessed by three familiar desires: the desire for a woman (Patricia Fearing), the desire for food (Spaghetti Bolognese), and the desire for revenge—against Count Lippe. Bond carefully gathers information and plans his counterattack.

Bond searches the count's room but finds nothing revealing. He knows the count has something to hide, or why attack Bond? Bond will not report what happened because he is ashamed at being caught off guard with no recourse.

By the end of Bond's two-week stay at Shrublands, Bond is in excellent health and his plans for revenge are matured. Bond waits until Count Lippe is in the Turkish bath and the workers are at lunch. He goes into the bath and gets his revenge. He turns the heat up in the bath, not enough to kill but enough to burn his victim. Lippe offers Bond fifty thousand pounds for his freedom, and Bond wonders what is so important that Lippe would pay so much to avoid a painful hospital stay. Unbeknownst to Bond, his actions put off, by a little bit, a massive international plot.

## Chapter 4, Tea and Animosity Analysis

Bond wraps up both his revenge and his stay at Shrublands in Chapter 4. Revenge is an important part of James Bond's character. Just as Bond must move his relationship with Patricia Fearing from the professional to the personal, Bond must move his relationship with Count Lippe to the realm of personal vengeance. He does not tell anyone what has happened because he wants to be the instrument of revenge. He does not report this criminal who clearly has a scheme brewing to his superiors and let the machinery of the Secret Service take over. Bond is an independent agent, and he is more concerned about personal revenge than anything else. If Bond reported Lippe, would the Secret Service have been able to track SPECTRE's plot through him?

The end of Chapter 4 hints at the main plot of the rest of the book, tantalizing the reader with the knowledge there are greater trials to come. This whole episode becomes a

prelude to the greater plot, which will be similar to this minor encounter, but expanded in scope and consequences.



# Chapter 5, SPECTRE

## Chapter 5, SPECTRE Summary

On a respectable boulevard in Paris, there is an organization called FIRCO, the *Fraternité Internationale de la Résistance Contre l'Oppression*, an association purportedly in place to assist resistance movements around the world. Everything about this organization looks genuine and above board.

A day after Bond completes his treatment (and beds Patricia), the principles of FIRCO meet. There is a FIRCO agenda, but it is just a cover. The chairman, known for the month as No. 2, is Ernst Stavro Blofeld, a man with great magnetism and intelligence. Blofeld is a born leader. He makes a fortune for himself during the war by selling intelligence information to both sides. At the end of the war, he settles down into criminal plots. Finally, he forms SPECTRE, the organization now meeting.

SPECTRE is the Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion. Its board of directors is made up of groups of three men. Each group is from a major criminal organization: the Italian mafia, the French mafia, the former Soviet black ops agency SMERSH, the now defunct German Gestapo, Yugoslavia's secret police, and Turks who worked with Blofeld during the war.

## Chapter 5, SPECTRE Analysis

Once Bond's escapade in Shrublands concludes, the setting and point of view change. The reader moves away from James Bond and into a new realm, the ranks of the criminal organization SPECTRE. Ernst Stavro Blofeld is the mastermind behind SPECTRE, and Fleming details his background in espionage and crime. Blofeld sold secrets at a premium price to both sides during World War II, clearly placing him as an independent operator without affiliations, loyalties, or conscience. Blofeld is an intelligent, calculating man whose only desire is to make a fortune for himself. This is a super-villain, someone who operates behind the scenes.

The secret organization SPECTRE is tantalizing and romantic. The players are international hardened criminals working undercover and undetected by the police. The acronym SPECTRE seems unduly fanciful for someone as hard-edged and no-nonsense as Blofeld, but the name is calculated to give the reader a thrill. SPECTRE is an invisible organization, working for evil and impossible to pin down. It is a specter, a ghost, to the forces that try to fight it.



# Chapter 6, Violet-Scented Breath

## Chapter 6, Violet-Scented Breath Summary

Blofeld finishes looking over his cohorts in crime, noting the one member of SPECTRE who evades his glance. He takes a violet-scented breath freshener, as is his custom before saying something disagreeable. Blofeld reviews SPECTRE's crimes of the last few years, including drugs, espionage, and blackmail, netting a healthy profit to the criminal organization. The current undertaking is Plan Omega, a much more profitable venture.

Blofeld moves on to discuss the last undertaking, a kidnapping. He has No. 7, one of the French mafia men, stand. Blofeld recounts how the kidnapped girl was molested during the kidnapping. Perhaps it was consensual, perhaps not, but it violated SPECTRE's promise to return the girl untouched. As a result, Blofeld has returned half of the million-dollar ransom. The standing man, No. 7, knows he is innocent and No. 12 is guilty, but he trusts Blofeld and remains standing. Blofeld presses a button that electrifies No. 12's seat, executing him on the spot. Blofeld thanks No. 7, explaining he wanted to keep No. 12 calm.

Sitting at the table with the dead body, the men continue their meeting. They go over the plans for Plan Omega. Sub-operator G, clearly Count Lippe, is incapacitated with burns, so the plan is delayed for a week. After he has served his purpose, Lippe will be killed for his poor behavior.

An agent of SPECTRE, No. 1, has a cover as a treasure-hunter in the Bahamas. All of the SPECTRE men except Blofeld will join him there, under cover as businessmen investing in the treasure hunt. A drop location on the volcanic top of Mount Etna has been chosen to recover dropped gold bullion, and the mafia is assisting with the recovery under a dual motivation of threatened violence and promised money. Plans are in place to change the bullion for currency and divide the proceeds into Swiss banks. Blofeld makes it clear that in the field, No. 1 will be the unquestioned leader.

## Chapter 6, Violet-Scented Breath Analysis

Blofeld shows his character in Chapter 6. The man is a hardened criminal, but he governs by strict rules. No lack of discipline is tolerated. No mistakes are allowed. Blofeld does not find it inherently wrong that the kidnapped girl was raped (at least statutorily, since she is 17). He only sees that it goes against the strict policies of SPECTRE. The integrity of the organization must be paramount to all operatives.

The gruesome scene of the electrocuted man underlines the hardness of all the criminals. Their colleague is fried before their eyes. The lights dim. The smell fills the room. The criminals do not flinch and proceed with their meeting, even though the same thing could happen to any one of them.



The death of Count Lippe is forecasted in this scene, for similar reasons. Lippe has gone beyond the bounds of SPECTRE. He has compromised the mission by becoming involved in a feud with Bond. Although Lippe's actions will have only minor consequences for Plan Omega, Lippe is condemned to death. The organization is completely ruthless.

The name "Plan Omega," much like the acronym SPECTRE, has a sinister sound. The details of the plan are not yet revealed, but this chapter does give important information about certain aspects of it. A cover has been established in the Bahamas, the search for pirate treasure. This exotic setting will appear later in the novel.



# Chapter 7, 'Fasten Your Lap-Strap'

## Chapter 7, 'Fasten Your Lap-Strap' Summary

James Bond is a new man. He has learned all about proper diet, and he has never felt better in his life. He has got more energy, and he no longer finds paperwork annoying. He even gets to the office early and only smokes low-tar cigarettes. His secretary Loelia Ponsonby is increasingly irritated, but she is reassured by Miss Money Penny that as soon as something stressful happens, Bond will be back to normal.

May, Bond's Scottish housekeeper, tells Bond it is not good for him to eat only yogurt and whole wheat bread. She guesses he is a secret agent or something similar, and she says that with his life, he needs real food to sustain him. Bond dismisses her concerns as the onset of menopause.

Another phone call arrives from Headquarters. This time, when Bond arrives, everything is in an uproar. M shows Bond a letter addressed to the British prime minister. The letter gives the details of a missing RAF aircraft that was carrying two nuclear weapons. The letter demands payment of 100 million pounds in gold bullion for return of the weapons, otherwise the blackmailers threaten to use the bombs to destroy civilian targets. The first target will be a property worth at least 100 million pounds and the second will be a major city. The deadline before the first nuclear explosion is seven days. A copy of the letter has been sent to the U.S. president as well. The specifications of the bullion drop are detailed in a separate memo—it is to take place on Mount Etna.

## Chapter 7, 'Fasten Your Lap-Strap' Analysis

Chapter 7 alludes to Chapter 1. However, instead of feeling horrible with a hangover, Bond begins the chapter in exactly the opposite condition—feeling wonderful because of his new diet and health regimen. Bond receives a phone call, just as in Chapter 1. Again, the result is the opposite. In Chapter 1, Bond goes in to the office and finds nothing exciting. In Chapter 7, the whole office has pounced into action.

Bond, and the reader, learn the details of what is hinted at in the previous chapter. SPECTRE has stolen two nuclear weapons and is using them to blackmail Britain and the U.S. The situation resonates at the highest levels. Miss Money Penny assures Bond's secretary that, at the first real stress, Bond will revert to his old habits. In Chapter 1, the result of Bond's early morning phone call is being sent off to Shrublands and cleansing his system of alcohol and poor eating habits. Miss Money Penny's comments foreshadow that Chapter 7 will have the opposite results. Bond's early morning call will push him back into his normal routine.



## Chapter 8, 'Big Fleas Have Little Fleas...'

### Chapter 8, 'Big Fleas Have Little Fleas...' Summary

No one knows who SPECTRE is, but M knows of some indications of an independent organization at work in Europe. The letter's details about the aircraft are accurate, and the government believes SPECTRE does have the nuclear weapons. The plane was manned by a small crew and a NATO observer, an Italian pilot with a good war record. It disappeared off the radar and was not picked up by DEW, the U.S. Distant Early Warning system. Perhaps it flew lower, in the flight streams of commercial aircraft. There is some indication of a plane turning south off the commercial aircraft track toward Idlewild, but it is a thin lead. The plane could be anywhere.

M explains the bombs would not go off if the plane crash landed. To convert the bombs to their use, the terrorists would need a scientist who could attach a timed detonator to the device, which could then be transported to a crowded location in the back of a truck or some other unnoticeable way.

The blackmailers must be stopped, otherwise similar attempts will follow. The British government is calling the effort Operation Thunderball. The details are being kept completely secret. M believes the plane that turned south is the best lead. He has a theory it headed for the Bahamas, where the U.S. coast is an easy target. He is sending Bond to the Bahamas to investigate. Bond does not hold much hope for the idea, but he is ready to go.

As Bond leaves in his car, he is followed by Count Lippe. Lippe has a gun and looks for the opportunity to use it and end his feud with Bond. Lippe himself is also being followed by a man on a motorcycle. As they approach an area where the traffic is clear for an escape, Lippe gets a shot off. Bond turns his head at just the right moment to avoid being shot, and slams on the brakes. The motorcyclist throws a grenade at Lippe. His assignment is to kill the count. The grenade is successful. The count's car explodes.

Bond is delayed and needs to catch a later flight. He gets his car taken care of and returns home to eat before taking off. He apologizes to May and tells her he needs a real meal of bacon and eggs to sustain him.

### Chapter 8, 'Big Fleas Have Little Fleas...' Analysis

Chapter 8 gives the reader technical information about how the bombs can be used and how the theft took place. This serves as an introduction to Bond's adventure in the Bahamas. Before Bond can take off, though, he must finish off the adventure he began at Shrublands. This marks the passage of Bond from one story to the next.



Oddly, the final conflict of the Shrublands story does not take place between Bond and Lippe. Bond is a mostly passive part of this violent event. His quick reflexes allow him to avoid Lippe's gunfire, but the main action is instigated by Lippe and his pursuer.

Count Lippe is overtaken by the larger organization of SPECTRE. As the title says, big fleas have little fleas. Lippe is a small part of the large villainous organization. In the book, Bond is passing from the small adventure at Shrublands with the little flea to the larger adventure and its larger flea, SPECTRE. With Lippe's death, the role of villain is passed on to the large organization.





# Chapter 9, Multiple Requiem

## Chapter 9, Multiple Requiem Summary

Giuseppe Petacchi is an Italian pilot. During the war, when it becomes clear which side will win, he kills the two other men on his aircraft and flies his plane to an Allied base, pretending he has been harboring Allied sympathies all along. As a result, he is a war hero. Petacchi's real motivation is his own self-interest. He has had a good career, but he wants out now, and he wants money. His current material desire is an extravagant Maserati.

Petacchi is carefully chosen by SPECTRE to steal the plane that contains the two nuclear weapons. Petacchi gets on the flight as a NATO observer. He waits patiently for his opportunity, and then he puts on an oxygen mask and sets off poison gas in the plane. After a few minutes, the crew members all begin choking and dying.

Petacchi takes over the plane. He lowers it to just above the commercial flight paths so it will not be detected. He flies it out toward New York, and then, at the right moment, he turns off to the south to join the flight path toward the Bahamas. He daydreams about the fortune he will earn, changing his name, relocating to South America, and seducing women in his Maserati. Finally, it is time for the landing. Petacchi successfully brings the plane down in the shallow waters off the Bahamas. He is met by a boat of serious-looking men. Instead of his reward, though, Petacchi is knifed to death.

## Chapter 9, Multiple Requiem Analysis

Chapter 9 is a story in its own right, the story of Giuseppe Petacchi's theft of the aircraft loaded with two nuclear weapons. Petacchi is a criminal. He looks after his self-interests, changing sides in the war to suit his own success. He murders his companions without a thought, both during the war and while stealing the plane.

In many ways, Petacchi is similar to James Bond. He is interested in fast cars and wants the best things. He desires women to seduce. He thrives on excitement and excels at what he does. What separates Petacchi from Bond is his disloyalty, his interest in serving his own needs above the needs of his country or organization. Still, Petacchi is a likeable crook, and because the reader engages with Petacchi in this chapter, the reader later understands why Domino wants to avenge her brother.

The subject of loyalty and self-interest versus society runs throughout the novel. Ironically, the head of SPECTRE demands complete loyalty from underlings. They must remain dedicated to SPECTRE as Bond is dedicated to his own government. Meanwhile, Blofeld himself is more like Petacchi, a man of skill but out for his own ends. SPECTRE exacts a discipline from his underlings that he, himself, lacks.



The chapter again shows the ruthlessness of SPECTRE as well as revealing to the reader how the planes were stolen and confirming, as the reader suspects, that M's hunch is accurate. The bombs are in the Bahamas, and surely James Bond will locate them.



# Chapter 10, The Disco Volante

## Chapter 10, The Disco Volante Summary

No. 1, Emilio Largo, oversees the recovery of the two nuclear weapons. The weapons are taken on board his extravagantly expensive yacht, the Disco Volante. It is a hydrofoil yacht that travels just above the water at high speeds, making it difficult to follow and detect. The yacht can also navigate shallow waters, making it well suited to the Bahamas. Largo reports the successful recovery of the weapons to Blofeld by radio.

Largo is a handsome, athletic man, but his good looks are hard and smarmy. Attractive to women, Largo has satyr-like lips, oiled hair, and a hooked nose. He is a ruthless, successful criminal who womanizes and lives the high life among wealthy companions. This makes Largo's cover as a seeker of sunken treasure perfect.

Largo talks to Kotze, the physicist. He has run into no problems. The bombs will be rewired with timed detonation devices so they can be left in public areas to explode while the criminals escape. Largo dislikes Kotze, but he needs the scientist.

All the members of SPECTRE, with the exception of Blofeld, are gathered in the Bahamas. Their cover is as investors in Largo's scheme to recover pirate treasure. Largo himself is compared to a pirate. The SPECTRE men, led by the champion swimmer Largo, hide the bombs in a coral cave near a dangerous reef. Largo reports success to Blofeld. Nothing can go wrong now.

## Chapter 10, The Disco Volante Analysis

The Disco Volante is bleeding edge technology for the time. Using hydrofoil to raise up out of the water at high speeds, it can sail in shallow water through the treacherous seascape of the Bahamas. The high-tech aspects of the recovery, modification, and concealment of the nuclear bombs show SPECTRE is a formidable enemy, using its wealth for the best technology and manpower available. Bond is handicapped against them, forced to use skill, intelligence, and ingenuity to fight SPECTRE's superior machinery.

Chapter 10 also introduces yet another villain. First, the reader is introduced to Count Lippe, a small villain for a small adventure. Then, the reader meets Blofeld and SPECTRE, the mastermind and his well-oiled criminal organization. Now, No. 1 is the villain in the field, who is in charge of Plan Omega. Bond will need to work his way through Largo before he can reach the core of SPECTRE, Blofeld.

Largo is reminiscent of Lippe. Both are handsome and attractive to women, but the description of each marks them as villainous. This similarity is another way the Plan Omega adventure is a larger, more spectacular version of the Shrublands adventure.

# Chapter 11, Domino

## Chapter 11, Domino Summary

Dominetta Vitali, known familiarly as Domino, drives her blue MG expertly along the streets of Nassau and stops at a tobacconist's to buy tasteless cigarettes, so she will be motivated to smoke less. Bond goes into the shop and buys her a carton of low-tobacco cigarettes, flirting with her. He offers to buy her a drink, and they head off to a bar.

Bond is thrilled to have picked up Domino so quickly. The authorities described her as an "Italian tart," but Bond can see she is an independent woman. She is also an excellent driver, garnering Bond's respect. She tells him Largo is engaged in hunting pirate's treasure with the *Disco Volante* and Largo's investors have arrived to oversee the recovery. Bond knows Domino is Largo's lover, but Domino describes him as a guardian.

Bond and Domino flirt over their drink together. Bond says he hopes he will see Domino in the casino. Domino puts him off, but as she is leaving, she realizes she wants to see Bond again.

## Chapter 11, Domino Analysis

Domino, Bond's female interest, is introduced in Chapter 11. Domino is beautiful, sexually free, independent, and a fantastic driver. To Bond, this makes her very desirable. She is also Bond's way into Largo's inner circle so he can investigate.

Largo's cover as a treasure hunter is an important part of the atmosphere. The story is a modern-day pirate tale. Fleming compares Largo to a pirate, and in fact, SPECTRE is composed of bloodthirsty, ruthless crooks. Largo's ship is a modern pirate ship. These pirates have commandeered a modern treasure, a nuclear bomb, and buried it on the high seas. To top it off, they are trying to acquire gold bullion, a pirate's booty.



# Chapter 12, The Man from the CIA

## Chapter 12, The Man from the CIA Summary

Bond goes by taxi to meet the CIA man assigned to help him in the Bahamas. Bond himself arrives earlier that morning. He meets with the Bahamas officials, where he learns about Largo and Domino.

When the CIA man arrives, he is Felix Leiter, an old friend and colleague of Bond's. Leiter sports a hook instead of a hand, from a battle injury. In Leiter's rental car, he and Bond drive back to the hotel. Bond asks Leiter why he is working for the CIA again, because the last Bond knew, Leiter was working for Pinkerton's, the private security firm. Leiter explains that former field agents have been called to duty to help out with Operation Thunderball.

Bond tells Leiter everything that has happened, and Leiter's quick mind puts together the puzzle of Lippe. He realizes Lippe probably posted the blackmail letter from nearby Brighton. The hijacking was probably planned for a full moon, but it was a week or so off because of Lippe's burns. Then, Leiter guesses, SPECTRE had Lippe killed in the explosion that saved Bond.

Over dinner, Leiter shows Bond the communication equipment he has brought and a special Geiger counter disguised as a camera with the readouts showing on a wristwatch. They plan to visit Largo's ship to detect whether the nuclear bombs are on board.

## Chapter 12, The Man from the CIA Analysis

Leiter puts together for Bond much of what the reader already knows from the scenes of SPECTRE's organization. His guesses are correct in every detail, showing how well his mind works. This type of guesswork is evident throughout the novel. First, M puts himself in the position of SPECTRE and rightly deduces where the bombs are likely located. Now, Leiter puts together the bits of Bond's tale to correctly deduce Lippe's role. Bond will use a similar type of deduction to correctly determine Largo's plans for deploying the first nuclear bond.

Leiter also brings with him gadgets to fight against SPECTRE. The communication device will assure SPECTRE does not intercept communications with Washington and London. The Geiger counter disguised as a camera and a watch will allow Leiter to search for the nuclear bomb. A second underwater Geiger counter will allow underwater searches. These gadgets add to the exotic nature of the adventure.

Finally, Leiter has a hook instead of a hand. The atmosphere of the pirate adventure continues. The hook is a reminder of physical danger and the ruthless, embattled lives secret agents live, much like the life of pirates.



# Chapter 13, 'My Name Is Emilio Largo'

## Chapter 13, 'My Name Is Emilio Largo' Summary

Bond and Leiter go to Largo's ship to investigate. Leiter brings his disguised Geiger counter. Bond introduces Leiter as his attorney. Bond says he is interested in purchasing Palmyra, the estate Largo is renting. He asks for permission to look over the property. Largo acquiesces and asks Bond to call Domino and arrange a visit.

Bond pretends interest in the ship, and Largo is obviously proud of his toy. Largo shows Bond and Leiter around the ship, but he will not show them the hold, which he claims holds extra stores of fuel, or the radio room.

The Geiger counter picks up nothing on Largo's ship. Then, reports come back negative on all the men in Largo's party. None of them have police records. Still, Bond is curious about the hold of Largo's boat, and he realizes Largo has the perfect cover, pretending to be a wealthy adventurer searching for pirate treasure.

## Chapter 13, 'My Name Is Emilio Largo' Analysis

Largo's cover is solid. The reader knows Largo is the criminal, and this creates some tension and dramatic irony. When the reports come back clean on the SPECTRE agents, the reader knows a clean record is a requirement of SPECTRE. When the Geiger counter fails to detect radiation, the reader knows the bombs are safely stashed in a distant cave. The cover seems impenetrable, and the reader must hope Bond continues to be suspicious.



# Chapter 14, Sour Martinis

## Chapter 14, Sour Martinis Summary

Bond does not report his lead to M, in case it amounts to nothing. He learns, though, that Largo's ship does not use as much fuel as he claimed, so Largo is definitely hiding something in the hold. After a brief rest, during which Bond dreams of Largo turning into a shark and threatening Domino, Bond and Leiter go to the bar for drinks. Leiter chastises the barman for cutting the martinis with water and extra-large olives and gets him to make some real martinis.

Leiter asks Bond if the espionage business has gotten boring, but Bond claims some enemy always arises. Bond suggests he and Leiter search for the downed airplane with a small plane the next day and Leiter agrees. Leiter tells Bond the U.S. has put a squadron of aircraft and a nuclear submarine at their disposal. Leiter thinks it is a waste of taxpayer money.

Leiter and Bond discuss possible targets for the bombs: Cape Canaveral or a British base on Grand Bahama are possible targets worth over 100 million pounds for the first weapon. Miami is the most likely target for the second bomb, assuming the warheads are in the Bahamas.

## Chapter 14, Sour Martinis Analysis

Leiter and Bond are closer than they know to the center of the action. They hold little hope for their operation, since the search for the criminals is spread worldwide. Their corner of the search is based on thin threads of possible leads. The reader knows, however, that Bond and Leiter are on the right track, so the dramatic irony continues.

Bond, Largo, and Domino form the same dramatic triangle as Bond, Lippe, and Patricia. Bond's love interest and his enemy are completely entangled, and Bond's dream of Largo as a shark shows Bond's animosity is already growing.



# Chapter 15, Cardboard Hero

## Chapter 15, Cardboard Hero Summary

Bond and Leiter go to the casino to scope out the men in Largo's party. Largo is at the baccarat table with Domino watching over his shoulder. Bond goes up to the table and takes the seat next to Largo. He challenges Largo by matching his bet. Bond's two cards are a nine and a ten, for a total of nine, the best possible hand. Largo loses by one. Then, Largo bets against Bond. Bond wins again, six against five.

Then, Largo takes the bank again, and again Bond bets against him. It seems almost personal. Bond casually uses the word "specter" to see how Largo reacts, and Largo's face changes instantly. His manner hardens. Bond has a five and does not draw, but he acts as if his hand is better. Largo also pulls a five and draws, but the draw brings his hand down to a four. Again, he loses by one.

After taking Largo's money, Bond leaves the table with his winnings, offering to buy Domino a drink while Largo attempts to win back the money. Bond notices Domino walks with a limp. One leg is shorter than the other. He finds it child-like and attractive.

Bond and Domino talk, and Domino recounts the romantic story she made up as a girl about the sailor on the Players cigarette packages. As Domino talks about her childhood, she reveals her brother is Giuseppe Petacchi.

## Chapter 15, Cardboard Hero Analysis

Bond's confrontation with Largo over the baccarat table shows Bond has cast Largo in the role of enemy, even if Bond is not certain Largo is part of the SPECTRE plot. This is the follow-up to Bond's dream of Largo turning into a shark. Largo is a dangerous beast, and Bond does not like Domino being so close to him. This is, in part, jealousy.

Domino has a limp, a defect. She is, in a way, broken. Bond finds it attractive, and in his mind it makes her child-like. By making her into a child in his mind, Bond exudes his essential sexism. Domino's limp gives her the appearance of handicap, something that demands protection. Bond wants to protect her and save her. Bond's picture of Domino as someone who, out of necessity, uses her body as a weapon for survival puts her in the role of a prostitute with a heart of gold, although Bond particularly refuses to call her a prostitute, whore, or tart.

"Cardboard hero" refers to the sailor on the Players package, but Bond himself is something of a cardboard hero in this chapter, heroically defeating Largo in the realm of cardboard playing cards.





# Chapter 16, Swimming the Gauntlet

## Chapter 16, Swimming the Gauntlet Summary

That night, Bond goes with a local constable to check out Largo's ship. Bond dons an aqualung and swims out toward the vessel. His plan is to survey Largo's ship from underneath the ocean. As Bond swims toward the hull, he sees a barracuda pacing him. The evil looking fish does not attack but seems to be waiting for his moment. Finally, Bond finds the ship's anchor and swims upward. He seems to have lost the predatory fish.

Bond gets to the hull and sees there is an underwater door, as he suspected. Bond turns to go back to land when he is attacked by a guard armed with a spear gun. Bond narrowly avoids the guard's shot, and then Bond attacks him while the guard is reloading. The two men struggle, and Bond wounds the man with his knife.

The barracuda that was stalking Bond earlier attacks the bleeding man, and Bond escapes. As he swims back, grenades explode around him. Bond barely escapes, but the barracuda is not so lucky. Bond sees it in its death throes, likely to soon be attacked and eaten by a bigger predator.

## Chapter 16, Swimming the Gauntlet Analysis

The attack on Bond as he covertly collects information about Largo's ship is more evidence Largo is involved with SPECTRE. The underwater three-way fight between Bond, the guard, and the barracuda is designed to be exotic. Nature steps in on the side of Bond, attracted to the blood from the guard's knife wound.

Bond thinks about the mortally wounded barracuda's likely future, eaten by yet a larger fish. This natural order is analogous to the natural order of the criminal world. The small fish like Lippe are eaten up by larger fish whenever they show weakness. Largo is the next biggest fish, but there is a bigger fish behind Largo—Blofeld.



# Chapter 17, The Red-Eyed Catacomb

## Chapter 17, The Red-Eyed Catacomb Summary

Bond rejoins Leiter, anxious to send a report about Largo to M, and to Bond's surprise, Leiter agrees. After Bond left the casino, Leiter recognized one of Largo's companions as Kotze, a physicist from East Germany. Bond realizes Largo's cover as a treasure hunter still explains all the suspicious circumstances: an armed guard, a secret underwater exit, and a scientist on board. Bond recommends sending for the Manta, the nuclear-powered U.S. naval submarine at Leiter's disposal, and waiting for Largo's next move. Leiter agrees to the plan.

The next morning, Bond and Leiter take out an amphibian plane to search for the downed aircraft. First, they fly over the base on Grand Bahama to scope out the potential target. After being warned off by the base, they fly over the most likely location of the aircraft. On the first flyover, they find nothing. Still, something worries Bond. They see three sharks gathered together in one spot of clear ocean. Why are the sharks there? Bond tells Leiter to come in for a closer look.

As the plane nears the ground by the sharks, Bond and Leiter see that what appeared to be ocean floor is really a large camouflage tarp. The plane is underneath, and the sharks are attracted by the smell of dead bodies. Bond shoots one of the sharks to distract the other two and puts on his diving gear.

Bond goes down into the water, beneath the tarp. He finds what he expects to find: the downed plane and the dead bodies of its crew. The wreckage is covered with tiny octopi. He takes Giuseppe Petacchi's identification and searches to make sure the nuclear weapons and fuses are gone. Then, he cannot take the gruesome scene anymore and returns to the plane.

## Chapter 17, The Red-Eyed Catacomb Analysis

Bond and Leiter are putting all of the pieces of the puzzle together. Every new circumstance now seems to condemn Largo. They uncover hard and fast proof that the plane landed in Bermuda. Still, there is no hard and fast proof connecting the nuclear weapons to Largo himself.

Bond uses his superior intelligence and observation to find the plane. The camouflage successfully hides it from passing aircraft, but Bond spots the sharks circling the area and recognizes it as a suspicious circumstance. The underwater wreck, with its dead bodies decaying under the tarp, is a horrible sight designed to create a strong reaction in the reader. Bond does his distasteful work and comes out with important evidence of Petacchi's death. With this identification, Bond can convince Domino her brother is dead, on her lover's orders.



# **Chapter 18, How to Eat a Girl and Chapter 19, When the Kissing Stopped**

## **Chapter 18, How to Eat a Girl and Chapter 19, When the Kissing Stopped Summary**

On the way back to Nassau, Leiter spots some suspicious tracks leading into an outbuilding at Palmyra, Largo's rented estate. He vows to investigate them. Bond determines a course of action of his own. Bond arranges to meet Domino at the beach. When he arrives, he does not see her.

Domino appears in the ocean, complaining of the spines of a sea creature stuck in her foot. Bond lifts her out of the ocean and brings her to the shade. Then, he sucks the spines out of her foot with his mouth. The spikes come out slowly, and Bond sucks painfully hard, drawing blood. Afterwards, Bond carries Domino to the changing area to make love to her.

After the lovemaking, Bond shows Domino her brother's identification. She guesses immediately that he is dead. Domino first responds to Bond with anger, thinking he slept with her to use her. He denies it, saying he could not resist her. Bond tells her about Plan Omega and recruits her to detect the nuclear bombs once they are brought aboard Largo's yacht. She will use the Geiger counter disguised as a camera.

Domino accepts the dangerous mission to avenge her brother. Once the Geiger counter detects the bombs, Domino will go up on deck as a signal to the watching police. After Bond leaves Domino, squelching his final misgivings, the Manta arrives, and Leiter briefs Bond on the nuclear-powered sub's capabilities.

## **Chapter 18, How to Eat a Girl and Chapter 19, When the Kissing Stopped Analysis**

The attraction between Bond and Domino is fulfilled in Chapter 18. Bond gives in to his sexual desires in the same instant he plots to use Domino as part of his scheme to stop Largo. Although Bond purposely hurts Domino and knowingly puts her in danger, his feelings for her seem to be those of honest attraction. The magnitude of what is at stake makes it necessary to use every resource, even if it means putting Domino at risk.

Domino herself is driven by a need for revenge. Although Domino's brother was a criminal, Domino loves him. She wants Largo to die, or live out his life in prison, to pay for the murder of her brother. Her need for vengeance echoes Bond's need for vengeance against Lippe at the beginning of the novel.



# Chapter 20, Time for Decision

## Chapter 20, Time for Decision Summary

Bond and Leiter board the Manta and meet with its captain, Commander Peter Pedersen. Pedersen has orders to obey Leiter and Bond. The two agents brief Pedersen and outline their plan to follow Largo's boat. Pedersen explains the boat can navigate in shallow water the submarine cannot.

The agents decide to bring in the fighter squadron at Leiter's disposal to watch the U.S. coast for Largo's yacht. Meanwhile, Bond and Leiter determine to follow a different path and intercept Largo at his presumed target, the British base on Grand Bahama.

Bond receives word that Largo's yacht has left harbor. Largo has returned from his air trip, and Bond believes the nuclear bombs are on board. However, Domino has not appeared on the ship's deck. Bond wonders what has happened. Perhaps the bombs are not yet on board. Perhaps Domino has turned on Bond, or perhaps she has been found out by Largo.

## Chapter 20, Time for Decision Analysis

Time is running out. In about 24 hours, SPECTRE has promised to blow up an installation worth 100 million pounds. Bond and Leiter are on the trail, but can they accomplish their mission in time?

As Largo's yacht pulls out of harbor, Bond's mind is not entirely on the mission. His personal concerns take precedence in his thoughts over stopping SPECTRE. Bond feels responsible for Domino, and since she has not given her signal, Bond believes something is wrong. The reader also feels the tension. What has happened to Domino?



# Chapter 21, Very Softly, Very Slowly

## Chapter 21, Very Softly, Very Slowly Summary

The agents of SPECTRE meet aboard Largo's yacht. Largo reports he discovered Domino with a camera, acting suspiciously. Largo forcibly detained her, incapacitated her, and examined the camera. It is a Geiger counter.

Largo has tied Domino up in her cabin and will proceed to question her. Blofeld has been informed of this, and the leaders have agreed to move forward with the plan. Largo doubts he is under any special suspicion, but he thinks Bond and Leiter may be agents and perhaps bribed Domino to take Geiger counter readings.

As the meeting prepares to wrap up, one of the Russian agents begins to talk. Blofeld warned Largo about the suspicious nature of the Russian agents, and those warnings are fulfilled. The Russian suggests that while the men are transporting the nuclear device to its target, the few people remaining on board might take off and leave them to die in the nuclear explosion, then go on to collect the gold bullion ransom for themselves. Largo responds by shooting the man to death.

After the meeting, Largo goes to Domino's cabin. He brings a cigar and a bucket of ice. Domino is tied to the bed. Largo explains to her that he will torture her and she will talk. Then, he strips off her clothes and menacingly brings the cigar toward her.

## Chapter 21, Very Softly, Very Slowly Analysis

Chapter 21 answers the questions raised in Bond's mind at the end of Chapter 20. Domino has not turned on Bond, but she has been discovered. Largo seems confident his torture will be successful, and the scene leaves the reader to wonder whether Bond's identity and suspicions will be revealed. If so, his efforts to stop Largo could be compromised.

The death of the Russian agent reiterates the initial meeting of SPECTRE, when Blofeld electrocutes an undisciplined subordinate. Largo, filling the position of Blofeld for this mission, acts with the same violent ruthlessness. The evil nature of SPECTRE is again brought home to the reader.

Blofeld supports continuing with the mission, despite the detection of a spy in the midst of the SPECTRE agents. Blofeld's decision may be biased. The mastermind is far removed from the action on this mission. He risks nothing if the mission fails. However, if SPECTRE cancels the bombing and dumps the bombs, there is no prospect of reward. If Blofeld considers only his own benefit, then recommending the mission to proceed is a risk easy to take. The potential rewards are great, and the potential risks only to his subordinates.



# Chapter 22, The Shadower

## Chapter 22, The Shadower Summary

The Manta carries Bond and Leiter toward Grand Bahama, where they suspect Largo is headed. Bond outlines his plan for the intercept. He is concerned that, once Largo knows he has been detected, he will steer the boat over deep water and drop the nuclear bombs into the depths of the ocean. With the evidence disposed of, the police will have no connection between the gang and the blackmail. Largo and his cohorts will escape.

Bond wants to catch Largo and the SPECTRE men red-handed with the evidence. Due to the underwater exit in the yacht, Bond believes the criminals plan to anchor the yacht some distance from the target and remove the bombs from the boat through the bottom of the hull. Then, using an underwater carrier towed by a small underwater vehicle, they will move the bomb into the shallower water close to the base. Once it is in range, they will arm the bomb using the timer, return to the yacht, and speed away to avoid the explosion.

Bond plans to take a group of men from the Manta and ambush the SPECTRE men on their way to plant the bomb. That way, they will recover the bomb and catch the men with the evidence. Pedersen says he has top-notch swimmers on his crew and he will call for volunteers. All they will have for weapons, though, is knives. Bond says he will lead the group, and Leiter says Bond cannot leave him behind. Leiter will wear a flipper over his hook to allow him to swim with the party.

As the submarine nears Grand Bahama, the crew detects Largo's ship, exactly where Bond expects it. Bond, Leiter, and the navy sailors arm themselves and prepare for their underwater attack.

## Chapter 22, The Shadower Analysis

Again, one of the spies correctly guesses something the reader knows to be true. In every detail, Bond predicts the SPECTRE plans. There are only a few exceptions. First, the size of the team Bond will be up against is larger than Bond expects. Bond's party will be barely large enough to battle them. Second, the team will have curare-tipped spears, if they are composed enough to remember to remove the protective tips. The third exception is that the SPECTRE men will have accelerators, allowing them to out-swim Bond.

The end result is that Bond creates a workable plan through his almost super-human ability to jump to the right conclusions and make nearly impossible deductions, and yet, the reader is left in suspense, knowing the SPECTRE men will have more men and more resources than Bond. Bond is the underdog, so he must use superior skill to defeat the villains.



# Chapter 23, Naked Warfare and Chapter 24, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond'

## Chapter 23, Naked Warfare and Chapter 24, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond' Summary

Bond and his men exit the submarine and get into formation for the attack. Bond rises to the surface to get his bearings and then leads the men toward where he estimates they will meet up with the underwater party of SPECTRE men. When they begin to get close, Bond rises to the surface again. At first, he sees nothing on the water's surface. Then, a diver comes up briefly. Now, Bond has an accurate bearing.

The ambush party comes upon the SPECTRE thugs. Bond flanks them, but they are going faster than expected, using special boosters to speed their progress. There are also more men than Bond expected. His party is outnumbered. Still, the SPECTRE group has not detected the ambushers. Finally, Bond catches up with the nearest thugs, and he begins the attack. Soon, the battle is broken up into small fights.

Bond concentrates on preventing the SPECTRE agents from disposing of the nuclear bomb. He spies a man aiming at Leiter and narrowly saves Leiter's life. Bond helps Leiter to the surface, where he will await a rescue boat from the sub. Then, Bond returns to the fight. Largo is attempting to get away with the nuclear bomb. Bond struggles with him, finally capsizing the chariot that tows the weapons.

As Bond retreats, Largo follows him. The two men end up in a deathly struggle. Largo blinds Bond by putting an octopus over his face and then picks Bond up and begins to strangle him. Bond is on the verge of losing consciousness when suddenly, Largo lets go. When the octopus swims off, Bond can see Largo is dead, with a spear through his neck. Domino has shot him, but she is exhausted and almost unconscious. Bond uses the last of his energy to help her swim to the surface.

James Bond wakes up in the hospital. Leiter comes into his room and tells him they found both bombs, and Kotze has told them everything. Leiter also tells Bond how Largo detected Domino and that Blofeld has escaped. Leiter leaves and Bond's doctor comes in. Bond begs him for information about Domino and finds out she is okay and in the next room. Barely able to walk in his drugged state, Bond struggles into the room to see her. She begs him not to leave her, and Bond collapses, unconscious, by her bed.

## Chapter 23, Naked Warfare and Chapter 24, 'Take It Easy, Mr Bond' Analysis

Chapter 23 is the climax of the novel. Bond and his men finally engage Largo and his men. Largo has many advantages: more technology, better weapons, better speed, and



more men. Bond only has his abilities and the element of surprise on his side. Largo's advantages in the fight underline Bond's superior skills.

Naturally, Bond must end up in a death-fight with the main villain, Largo. Bond's fight is valiant, but his ultimate advantage is Domino. Domino comes to kill Largo for her brother, to avenge him for torturing her, and also for James Bond. Bond seduced her to his side, and this ability to cultivate women ends up giving Bond the final advantage. This is the second time Bond has been rescued by a woman. Patricia removes Bond from the rack after he loses consciousness, and now, as Bond loses consciousness again, Domino appears to save him.

The novel concludes with a major loose end. Blofeld, the mastermind, escapes, and Bond has not even met the man. Now Bond has defeated the lesser villain, Largo, he clearly has another level of villain to face in a future adventure.





# Characters

## James Bond

James Bond is agent 007 in Her Majesty's Secret Service. He begins the novel in a sorry state. He has not had any real work to do, just depressing paper work. He has been drinking too much and smoking too much and gambling badly.

Bond thrives on danger, and he is ill-suited to a life without it. When M sends Bond to Shrublands for a natural health cure, the reader for the first time sees that James Bond could, in fact, adapt to a normal life. He becomes transformed, energetic, and willing to do paperwork. James Bond's vices—liquor, smoking—are inherently tied to his ability to live an exotic, hazardous life, and conversely, giving up these vices allows Bond to live a normal life.

When Bond goes back to the work of a spy, he is not particularly hard drinking or hard gambling. He has a few drinks, but not nearly as many as in some of his adventures. Bond's time at Shrublands seems to have brought him closer to some sort of balance and back from a dangerous brink.

Bond is driven by animal desires. He gives in to his sexual desires, bedding Domino when he knows it is a bad idea. He gives in to his desire for revenge, paying Lippe back in kind instead of reporting the incident and the sinister criminal to his superiors. This is another aspect of Bond's dangerous, fantastical lifestyle. However, Bond's desires are tempered by loyalty to his duty and his country.

## Ernst Stavro Blofeld

Blofeld is a villainous mastermind. Although Bond never meets Blofeld during the novel, Blofeld exists behind the scenes, pulling the strings. Blofeld is a cold, callous, ruthless man driven by self-interest. He began his life of crime during World War II, when he sold secrets to both sides of the war. Since then, he has dabbled in every type of crime and now leads the international criminal organization SPECTRE.

Blofeld himself is a kind of specter, existing behind the scenes, never seen, but hovering just beyond reach. Clearly, Bond will need to face a confrontation with Blofeld in a future adventure. He is established as an arch-villain to rival Bond. The next encounter must be face-to-face.

Blofeld is characterized as a very cold man. In contrast to Bond's passions, Blofeld is not known to be involved with women. When he kills, it is not in the heat of anger. Instead, it is through cold calculation. Blofeld, in this way, exists as a foil to Bond's character. Blofeld is almost entirely intellectual, while Bond, for all his intellect, exists in a visceral, animal world.



## Emilio Largo

Emilio Largo is the immediate villain of the novel. He takes the place of Blofeld as the operational leader of Plan Omega, the plot to blackmail the western world under threat of exploding nuclear bombs. In a way, Largo is a puppet, allowing Blofeld to run the operation at a safe distance. Largo acts exactly as Blofeld acts. He kills an underling during a meeting in much the same way Blofeld kills an underling during another meeting. Still, Largo is not driven only by intellectual forces. Largo desires women, expensive boats, and luxury.

Largo is compared to a pirate several times. Largo's actions are those of a pirate. Headquartered on a ship and with a vicious crew behind him, Largo ruthlessly steals the property of others and buries his treasure in the sea.

Largo is described as handsome and attractive to women. Still, his nose is hooked, and his air is over-slick. Largo is clearly an oily character. In this way, he is similar to Lippe, and he takes Lippe's place in the story as the lead villain, after Lippe's death.

## Dominetta Vitali (Domino)

Domino is James Bond's love interest in the story. She is Largo's mistress, and she is the sister of Giuseppe Petacchi, the pilot who steals the plane containing the nuclear bombs. Domino earns her keep by using her body. Bond recoils from calling her a prostitute, but he recognizes she uses her body to survive. Domino, however, grows distant from Largo. This allows her to act as a weapon for Bond against her lover.

Domino fits into the archetype of the prostitute with the heart of gold. She sells her body for high living, but she is driven by romantic dreams, desires for Bond, and love for her brother. Domino, like Bond, is highly motivated by revenge.

Domino inspires a protective feeling in Bond. Her limp creates a feeling of pathos. Her life is a life of tragedy. As Domino makes more and more sacrifices, the reader feels more and more sorry for her. When she is tortured, this pathos reaches its apex. The reader recognizes Domino has a right to kill Largo for what he has done to her, her brother, and Bond.

## M

M is Bond's superior officer in Her Majesty's Secret Service. M recently went on a health kick and orders Bond to Shrublands, where Bond unknowingly delays SPECTRE's plot by tangling with one of its operatives. M also orders Bond to the Bahamas, since M has a hunch that is where SPECTRE has hidden the stolen nuclear warheads.



## Miss Money Penny

Miss Money Penny is M's beautiful assistant. She has a crush on James Bond and enjoys verbally sparring with him.

## Taxi Driver

Bond is driven to Shrublands by a young taxi driver who gives him the low-down on the health clinic.

## Joshua Wain

Mr. Wain is the head naturopath at Shrublands health clinic.

## Patricia Fearing

Patricia is the beautiful osteopath who works at Shrublands. Bond meets her by saving her from a passing car, befriends her while he is recovering from Count Lippe's attack, and finally beds her after his stay at Shrublands.

## Count Lippe

Count Lippe is a sub-operative working for SPECTRE and a former member of a criminal organization called The Red Lightning Tong. Bond sees Lippe's Tong tattoo while at Shrublands, and with his identity compromised, Lippe tries to kill Bond. In revenge, Bond turns up the heat on Lippe's steam bath, putting him out of commission for a week with severe burns. This means SPECTRE's international blackmail plan is delayed by a week, and because of Lippe's behavior, SPECTRE marks him for death. SPECTRE kills Lippe just as Lippe is about to kill Bond in retaliation.

## Loelia Ponsonby

Loelia is James Bond's secretary. She is annoyed by the extra work created by Bond's new lease on life after returning from Shrublands.

## May

May is Bond's Scottish housekeeper. Bond calls her his "treasure."



## **Giuseppe Petacchi**

Giuseppe Petacchi is the self-serving Italian pilot hired by SPECTRE to steal the plane containing two nuclear weapons. SPECTRE kills the pilot instead of paying him off after he successfully crash lands the plane in the Bahamas. Petacchi turns out to be the brother of Domino, Largo's mistress, and she avenges his death by siding with Bond to defeat Largo and SPECTRE.

## **Kotze**

Kotze is the physicist who rewires the nuclear bombs for SPECTRE, fitting them with timers for detonation. After he is captured, Kotze turns over all the information he knows to the U.S. and British forces.

## **Felix Leiter**

Leiter is a CIA agent who has also worked for Pinkerton's, the famous security firm. Leiter, who sports a hook instead of one hand, works with Bond to foil SPECTRE's plot.

## **Commander Peter Pedersen**

Pedersen is the commander of the nuclear-powered U.S. naval submarine Manta. Pedersen takes Bond and Leiter on their journey to intercept the SPECTRE men attempting to plant a nuclear bomb near the British base on Grand Bahama.



# Objects/Places

## Shrublands

Shrublands is a health spa located in Sussex, where M sends Bond to cleanse the poisons of alcohol and nicotine out of his system. At Shrublands, Bond tangles unknowingly with one of SPECTRE's sub-agents and delays SPECTRE's plans for a week.

## The Red Lightning Tong

Count Lippe is a former member of The Red Lightning Tong, a Macao-based criminal organization.

## The Traction Machine

The traction machine at Shrublands is a device for stretching and aligning the spine. The patients jokingly call it "the rack," but this becomes more than a joke when Count Lippe uses the device as a weapon to warn James Bond to keep out of his way.

## FIRCO, the *Fraternité Internationale de la Résistance* Contr

FIRCO is the cover organization for the criminal group SPECTRE.

## SPECTRE

SPECTRE is the Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion. The leader and organizer of SPECTRE is Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Its board of directors is made up of six groups of three men. Each group is from a major criminal organization: the Italian mafia, the French mafia, the former Soviet black ops agency SMERSH, the now defunct German Gestapo, Yugoslavia's secret police, and Turks who worked with Blofeld during the war.

## Plan Omega

Plan Omega is the SPECTRE plan to blackmail the western world with the threat of using stolen nuclear weapons.



## **The Vindicator**

The Vindicator is a plane carrying two nuclear weapons hijacked by SPECTRE.

## **The Disco Volante**

The Disco Volante is a state-of-the-art hydrofoil yacht, costing 200,000 British pounds. SPECTRE bought the yacht for Plan Omega. Emilio Largo uses the yacht to recover the nuclear bombs from the crashed plane and hide them in a coral cave.

## **Palmyra**

Palmyra is the estate Largo is renting in the Bahamas.

## **The Manta**

The Manta is the U.S. naval nuclear submarine that assists Bond and Leiter in pursuing Largo's yacht.

## Social Concerns And Themes

Nuclear weapons often figure in the James Bond tales. In *Thunderball* (1961), nuclear blackmail is the focus of the story. SPECTRE, a terrorist organization, steals two nuclear bombs and demands that Great Britain and America pay it \$100,000,000 or it will blow up first a valuable government installation and then a large city. This theme of terrorists struck a nerve in a public worried about the potential of nuclear war, and *Thunderball* was a spectacular best seller.

SPECTRE'S scheme is intricately worked out. Bribes to a corrupt pilot in the Royal Air Force yield a stolen aircraft, a dead aircrew, and two nuclear bombs. Pretending to be treasure hunters, SPECTRE operatives hide the bombs at sea, off the Bahamas. A British rocket testing center in the Bahamas is their first target; Miami is the second. The narrative moves too fast for readers to worry much about the improbability of the plot, and the chosen targets are logical enough to give the terrorism a hard edge of menace.

Another social concern focuses on healthy and unhealthy living. The novel begins with James Bond having a "hangover, a bad one, with an aching head and stiff joints." Heavy drinking and smoking and fast living in general have left Bond in terrible physical condition. "There is no way to health except the natural way," declares M, the head of the British Secret Service.

He sends Bond for mandatory treatment at a health club called Shrublands. The results are miraculous: "He had never felt so well in his life. His energy had doubled." In fact, "Bond awoke so early and full of beans that he had taken to arriving at his office early and leaving late, much to the irritation of his secretary." Bond even takes to drinking tea, which he had always regarded as a sissy's beverage.

He and M take to discussing whole wheat bread, natural grains, and yogurt, as well as to decrying "dead" foods: "denaturized foods — white flour, white sugar, white rice, white salts, whites of egg." Even after he resumes some of his old bad habits, Bond is a healthier and more energetic foe for SPECTRE.

## Techniques

Fleming uses the tease method of maintaining suspense. Early on, he reveals that Bond has "upset, if only in a minute fashion, the exactly timed machinery of a plot that was about to shake the governments of the Western world." By the end of chapter 5, the details of SPECTRE'S plot against the Western world have been revealed, except for the targets of the bombs.

Fleming repeatedly hints at thrills to come, even using Leiter's appearance in the Bahamas to point out that Leiter has been part of some of Bond's "most thrilling cases." The plot is intricate, the narrative is fast-paced, and the theme of nuclear blackmail can stir up enough emotions that the poor contest between Bond and Largo may not be noticed.



# Themes

## Loyalty

Blofeld, as head of SPECTRE, demands unquestioning loyalty from his group of cutthroats. For disobeying SPECTRE's dictates, the punishment is death. As Blofeld's surrogate, Largo demands the same unquestioning loyalty. To enjoy the profits available as members of the group, each member must suppress his individual needs, thoughts, and instinct and, with unquestioning loyalty, follow the leader.

SPECTRE's idea of loyalty is hypocritical, though. Blofeld himself answers to no one and is loyal to no one. The reader may interpret Blofeld's willingness to continue Plan Omega after Domino has been caught spying as a purely selfish move. After all, Blofeld is safe and only his men are taking risks. In an even more obvious show of disloyalty, SPECTRE double-crosses Giuseppe Petacchi, the Italian pilot who steals the plane for them. Loyalty in the SPECTRE organization only travels one way. Subordinates must obey their superiors, but superiors have no loyalty to subordinates.

James Bond must exhibit loyalty as an agent of the Secret Service. He serves his crown and country, even when that means working through dry paperwork and enduring natural health treatments at Shrublands. Bond's natural inclinations are the same as many of the crooks he runs across. He desires women, fast cars, excitement, and extravagant objects. What prevents Bond from becoming a criminal like the men around him? The answer is a deep-seated loyalty.

## The Individual versus Society

The theme of the individual versus society surfaces in Fleming's novel as part of the main conflict. Blofeld is the ultimate individualist. He does not care for any country or any person other than himself. Blofeld's actions during the war exemplify his individualist attitudes. He sells secrets to both sides of the conflict. Ultimately, he is working only for himself. When Blofeld takes charge of SPECTRE, he creates a miniature society, a cooperative group bound together by common interest for the common good. However, Blofeld is willing to sacrifice this society for his own good at any moment.

All of the villains in Fleming's novel exhibit a similar attitude. Petacchi, during the war, is quick to switch sides once he knows which way the wind is blowing. He is quick to steal the plane at the promise of money, no matter who he is working for. This individualist attitude is Petacchi's ultimate downfall, since the people he is working for see the world in the same way. Their individual needs outweigh the needs of the group and the needs of others, and so Petacchi is double-crossed and killed.

The use of the nuclear bomb against society for individual gain is an ultimate crime against humanity. The threat of the nuclear bomb is the threat of the selfish individual



gaining complete power. Bond represents society, as an agent for the Secret Service. Bond's cooperative ties with Leiter, Domino, the Bahamian officials, Pedersen, and the U.S. navy indicate Bond represents not only himself, but a large, intertwined web of people. He is an example of individual ingenuity and drive put to use for the common good. Remember, Bond accepts his assignment with a "So be it," even though he does not think he will see enough action. He is ready to be used however society best sees fit.

As much as Bond represents society, he still must use his individuality. He needs to move independently and think independently in order to be competent. This dynamic seems to advocate a balance of individual freedom for the good of society—the democratic ideal.

## Revenge

Throughout Fleming's novel, revenge is an important human dynamic. All human beings experience a drive for revenge. Bond must revenge himself against Lippe, and in turn, Lippe must revenge himself against Bond. This escalates the conflict, until the ultimate result must be death. By a stroke of luck, the death which ends the escalation is Lippe's rather than Bond's.

Domino is another example of the power of revenge. Her motivation for working with Bond against Largo is the death of her brother. She initially tells Bond she wants Largo to die, and she accepts the idea he will spend life in prison instead because she thinks that is worse. Domino is not interested in protecting society or creating justice. Her interest is revenge.

When Domino finally kills Largo, she is avenging his wrongs done, not only to her brother, but also to herself. Largo must die for what he has done, not because of a need for justice but because of a need for vengeance.



# Style

## Point of View

Fleming's novel is narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator. While the reader follows James Bond, the narration is mainly in Bond's mind. The reader empathizes with Bond and is able to experience his adventures along with him. Bond is a vehicle for the reader to vicariously experience adventures, so when Bond is in trouble, the reader is in trouble with him.

The novel takes the reader inside the underworld, however, in a way Bond does not experience it. Bond experiences Plan Omega from the outside in. He at first is only on the outskirts of the international conspiracy, not even aware of it. Even when Bond comes to the Bahamas and starts on the tracks of the criminal, he is only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Through the omniscient narrator, Fleming gives the reader an opportunity to be a fly on the wall during the most secret meetings of SPECTRE, know the details of the intangible specter Blofeld, and follow along as the nuclear bombs are stolen and stashed in a secret coral cave. This knowledge is thrilling, and it also creates dramatic irony. The reader knows before Bond does that he is on the right track to catch the criminals.

## Setting

Fleming's novel begins with the mundane and ends with the exotic. Bond starts out his adventures in Shrublands, a natural health clinic in Sussex, England. Shrublands is anything but exotic. The food is tea and vegetable soup. Although Bond finds a beautiful woman and a vile criminal among Shrublands' tenants, they are a minor crook and a minor love interest. Shrublands, with its emphasis on health and fitness, is a tame sort of place.

As Bond moves deeper into his adventure, he moves to a much more exotic setting. The Bahamas is the land of pirates. It is filled with both beauty and danger. The seascape setting allows the villains to sport an exotic vehicle, their hydrofoil yacht. The villains hide their treasure in an underwater corral cave. The romantic comparison to pirates is clear.

The sea also provides natural hazards that add a new dimension to the fights. Bond must spy and fight under water. He must protect himself against barracudas, sharks, and octopi. He must protect his breath, because his need for oxygen makes him vulnerable under the ocean. He must fight with knives because guns are not an option. This extravagant setting adds a swashbuckling backdrop to the direst of adventures, saving the world from a nuclear threat.



## Language and Meaning

The language throughout Fleming's novel is at once highly educated and specialized. Fleming uses his advanced vocabulary to give a high-brow, intellectual feeling to James Bond, who straddles a line between the down-and-dirty everyman and the high-life hero. Fleming's vocabulary evokes the high-life aspect of Bond.

Meanwhile, the specialized military terms and slang evoke the down-and-dirty everyman. Memos are headed with MOST IMMEDIATE and TOP SECRET. Reconnaissance is known familiarly as "recce." Leiter, Bond, and Pedersen banter in jargon befiting their lifestyle. These are men who work in the trenches, and their vocabulary immerses the reader in the foreign world of military espionage.

Fleming also uses lengthy technical descriptions to drive home the striking advanced technology used by both the CIA and SPECTRE. The capabilities of the hydrofoil yacht are described in loving detail. The mechanisms of an atomic bomb are gone over with the same treatment. Leiter himself gives the reader a verbal tour of his disguised Geiger counter. These toys are part of the fantasy of James Bond, where a perceived masculine desire for gadgets is fulfilled.

During the action sequences, Fleming uses short, staccato sentences to echo Bond's thought processes. Bond's disjointed thoughts are sometimes relayed in fragments ("Someone to the rescue?") and sometimes in ejaculations ("No! he said to himself. No! Don't let that happen!"). This brings the reader into the action and heightens tension.

## Structure

Fleming's novel of nuclear blackmail is broken into several distinct sections. The first part of the novel is not about the main plot at all. Instead, it introduces James Bond in a mini-adventure at Shrublands, which later echoes and also contrasts the main conflict. Bond meets and beds a lover, just as he meets and defeats an enemy.

After the introductory adventure, Fleming takes the reader inside the heart of SPECTRE, the villainous organization against which Bond will fight. This section sets up the plot and the characters of the villains for the reader. Finally, the plot is put into action.

Bond is finally put to work tracking SPECTRE agents in the Bahamas. This Bahamian adventure is the main portion of the novel. Bond is constantly working under uncertainty and doubt. While the reader knows Bond is hot on the trail, Bond himself is in the dark. The reader follows along with Bond and lives Bond's adventure, but all the time the reader has additional knowledge of the villains' plot.

The novel ends with a climactic battle between Bond and SPECTRE, followed by an emotional reunion with Bond's love interest, but the ending leaves a major issue

unresolved. Bond has not met Blofeld, and he has not battled the mastermind. This conflict is left to drive a future adventure.



## Quotes

"And then his secretary had gone down with the flu and he had been given a silly, and, worse, ugly bitch from the pool who called him 'sir' and spoke to him primly through a mouth full of fruit stones." Chapter 1, p. 2.

"A voice said quietly, close up against his ear, 'You will not meddle again, my friend.' Then there was nothing but the great whine and groan of the machine and the bite of the straps that were tearing his body in half. Bond began to scream, weakly, while the sweat poured from him and dripped off the leather cushions on to the floor." Chapter 3, p. 27.

"He slowly put both hands under the table. One hand remained flat on his thigh. The other went to a side-pocket and drew out a thin gold vinaigrette and placed it on the table in front of him. He prised open the lid with his thumbnail, took out a violet-scented cachou, and slipped it into his mouth. It was his custom, when unpleasant things had to be said, to sweeten his breath." Chapter 6, p. 51.

"This looked like the biggest job the Service had ever been given and, in Bond's opinion, for he didn't give much for M's guess, he had been relegated to the back row of the chorus. So be it." Chapter 8, p. 80.

"Largo was an adventurer, a predator on the herd. Two hundred years before, he would have been a pirate—not one of the jolly ones of the story books, but a man like Blackbeard, a bloodstained cut-throat who scythed his way through people towards gold." —Chapter 10, p. 99.

"He felt absolutely beat—the plane trip, the heat, the nagging sense that he was making a fool of himself in front of the Commissioner, in front of Leiter, in front of himself, added to the dangers, and probably futile ones at that, of this ugly night swim, had built up tensions that could only be eased by sleep and solitude." Chapter 14, p. 150.

"The smile came off Largo's face as if he had been slapped. It was at once switched on again, but now the whole face was tense, strained, and the eyes had gone watchful and very hard." Chapter 15, p. 160.

"Something was itching deep down in Bond's mind. Something, some small detail, had raised a tiny question-mark. What was it? Those sharks! In about forty feet of water! Circling on the surface! What were they doing there? Three of them. There must be something—something dead that had brought them to that particular patch of sand and coral." Chapter 17, p. 188.

"By sending her back on board, and with the Geiger counter, he was putting her in double danger. She could be found out by Largo, in which case her death would be immediate. If it came to a chase, which seemed almost certain, the Manta would sink the Disco by gunfire or torpedo, probably without warning." Chapter 19, p. 210.



"But if this gamble came off, with all its possibilities of error, why hadn't Domino made her signal? What had happened to her?" Chapter 20, p. 222.

"Largo put the muzzle of the gun up to his nose and delicately sniffed at it, moving it to and fro under the nostrils as if it was some delicious vial of perfume." Chapter 21, p. 230.

"Slowly he sank to his knees. But how, why was he sinking? What had happened to the hands at his throat? His eyes, squeezed tight in agony, opened and there was light. The octopus, now at his chest, let go and shot away among the coral. In front of him Largo, Largo with a spear sticking horribly through his neck, lay kicking feebly on the sand. Behind him and looking down at the body, stood a small, pale figure fitting another spear into an underwater gun. The long hair flowed round her head like a veil in the luminous sea." Chapter 23, p. 253.

# Adaptations

On the copyright page of the novel *Thunderball* is this notice: "This story is based on a screen treatment by K. McClory, J. Whittingham, and the author."

The 1965 motion picture *Thunderball* credits the screenplay to Richard Maibaum and John Hopkins, while declaring: "Based on the original story by Kevin McClory, Jack Whittingham, and Ian Fleming." As with *Goldfinger*, *Thunderball* was a United Artists release and was produced by Kevin McClory. The direction by Terence Young is surehanded. The wonderful special effects of John Stears won him an Academy Award. Sean Connery plays James Bond; Claudine Auger plays Domino; Adolfo Celi plays Emilio Largo; Rik van Nutter plays Felix Leiter; and Bernard Lee plays M. The gadgetry of the film *Goldfinger* proved to be such a hit with audiences that gadgets became a regular part of the subsequent James Bond motion pictures. The technological wonders co-star with Connery in *Thunderball*.

For a discussion of other adaptations of James Bond novels, see the biographical entry on Ian Fleming.





## Topics for Discussion

Bond is attracted to independent, strong women, but he also feels the need to conquer and protect. Why does Bond exhibit these conflicting attitudes?

Compare the novel to a pirate adventure.

The novel has a hierarchy of villains, including Lippe, Largo, and Blofeld. What is the purpose of these multiple villains?

The novel begins with a mini-adventure at Shrublands. How does this adventure fit into the structure of the novel?

A lengthy description is devoted to Blofeld, but Bond never meets this villain. What is the purpose of describing Blofeld in detail?

A whole chapter tells the story of Petacchi's theft of the plane and its nuclear cargo. How does this story-within-a-story fit into the novel?

How is James Bond different from criminals who lead a similar lifestyle?

## Literary Precedents

Criminal mastermind Blofeld is reminiscent of the coldly calculating crime lord Dr. Moriarty of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Both regard murder as merely a tactic in their contests against the forces of good; both lead international criminal organizations; and both are terrorists.

Almost from the moment of the detonations of atomic bombs on Japan, nuclear weapons became an important theme in popular literature. Science fiction authors in particular made stories about the aftermath of nuclear war a commonplace of fiction in the 1950s.

In 1957, English novelist Nevil Shute, then living in Australia, published *On the Beach* ; it was an international sensation. Like *Thunderball*, it capitalized on the public's fears about nuclear weapons — this time by speculating on the potential effects of nuclear war.

However, the focus on the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists was unusual when *Thunderball* was published.

## Related Titles

James Bond titles include: *Casino Royale*, 1953 (also published as *You Asked for It*); *Live and Let Die*, 1954; *Moonraker*, 1955 (also published as *Too Hot to Handle*); *Diamonds Are Forever*, 1956; *From Russia with Love*, 1957; *Doctor No*, 1958; *Goldfinger*, 1959; *For Your Eyes Only: Five Secret Exploits of James Bond*, 1960, short stories; *Thunderball*, 1961; *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1962; *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1963; *You Only Live Twice*, 1964; *The Man with the Golden Gun*, 1965; and *Octopussy: The Last Great Adventures of James Bond 007*, 1967, short stories.



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