



The Man with the Golden Gun (James Bond series, Book 13)

By Ian Fleming

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[Read by Kenneth Branagh]

[*This audiobook includes an exclusive bonus interview with Kenneth Branagh.]

In a highly secret office somewhere in London, a murder is to be attempted. M is to be the victim, and the assassin is to be James Bond.

If you try to assassinate your boss - even though brainwashed at the time - you must pay the price. To redeem himself James Bond is sent to kill one of the most lethal hit men in the world . . . Paco "Pistols" Scaramanga. In the sultry heat of Jamaica, 007 infiltrates his target's criminal cooperative - only to find that Scaramanga's bullets are laced with snake venom. When the end comes, every shot will count.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Exciting sequences, especially the railroad scene, capture all the thrills one has come to expect." --Raymond Benson, author of *High Time to Kill*

"Fleming keeps you riveted." --*Sunday Telegraph* (London)

"I can't think of a bad time or place for listening to any of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels . . . Any of them will have you driving in circles rather than arrive at your destination." --*Times* (London)

About the Author

Ian Fleming (1908-1964) was born in London and educated at Eton and Sandhurst. During World War II, he served in British Naval Intelligence, playing a key role in shaping the prototype CIA. His wide-ranging, fast-paced life would provide the backdrop for his beloved spy novels featuring the perennially charming James Bond.

Audiobook narrator **Kenneth Branagh** was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is the founder of the Renaissance Theatre Company, which boasts Prince Charles as one of its patrons, and is an Academy Award-nominated actor and director. He has brought Shakespeare to the mainstream in such major films as *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Henry V*.

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1. 'CAN I HELP YOU?'

The Secret Service holds much that is kept secret even from very senior officers in the organisation. Only M and his Chief of Staff know absolutely everything there is to know. The latter is responsible for keeping the Top Secret record known as 'The War Book' so that, in the event of the death of both of them, the whole story, apart from what is available to individual Sections and Stations, would be available to their successors.

One thing that James Bond, for instance, didn't know was the machinery at Headquarters for dealing with the public, whether friendly or otherwise - drunks, lunatics, bona fide applications to join the Service, and enemy agents with plans for penetration or even assassination.

On that cold, clear morning in November he was to see the careful cog-wheels in motion.

The girl at the switchboard at the Ministry of Defence flicked the switch to 'Hold' and said to her neighbour, 'It's another nut who says he's James Bond. Even knows his code number. Says he wants to speak to M personally.'

The senior girl shrugged. The switchboard had had quite a few such calls since, a year before, James Bond's death on a mission to Japan had been announced in the Press. There had even been one pestiferous woman who, at every full moon, passed on messages from Bond from Uranus where it seemed he had got stuck while awaiting entry into heaven. She said, 'Put him through to Liaison, Pat.'

The Liaison Section was the first cog in the machine, the first sieve. The operator got back on the line: 'Just a moment, sir. I'll put you on to an officer who may be able to help you.'

James Bond, sitting on the edge of his bed, said, 'Thank you.'

He had expected some delay before he could establish his identity. He had been warned to expect it by the charming 'Colonel Boris' who had been in charge of him for the past few months after he had finished his treatment in the luxurious Institute on the Nevsky Prospekt in Leningrad. A man's voice came on the line. 'Captain Walker speaking. Can I help you?'

James Bond spoke slowly and clearly. 'This is Commander James Bond speaking. Number 007. Would you put me through to M, or his secretary, Miss Moneypenny. I want to make an appointment.'

Captain Walker pressed two buttons on the side of his telephone. One of them switched on a tape recorder for the use of his department, the other alerted one of the duty officers in the Action Room of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard that he should listen to the conversation, trace the call, and at once put a tail on the caller. It was now up to Captain Walker, who was in fact an extremely bright ex-prisoner-of-war interrogator from Military Intelligence, to keep the subject talking for as near five minutes as possible. He said, 'I'm afraid I don't know either of these two people. Are you sure you've got the right number?'

James Bond patiently repeated the Regent number which was the main outside line for the Secret Service. Together with so much else, he had forgotten it, but Colonel Boris had known it and had made him write it down among the small print on the front page of his forged British passport that said his name was Frank Westmacott, company director.

'Yes,' said Captain Walker sympathetically. 'We seem to have got that part of it right. But I'm afraid I can't place these people you want to talk to. Who exactly are they? This Mr Em, for instance. I don't think we've got anyone of that name at the Ministry.'

'Do you want me to spell it out? You realise this is an open line?'

Captain Walker was rather impressed by the confidence in the speaker's voice. He pressed another button and, so that Bond would hear it, a telephone bell rang. He said, 'Hang on a moment, would you? There's someone on my other line.' Captain Walker got on to the head of his Section. 'Sorry, sir. I've got a chap on who says he's James Bond and wants to talk to M. I know it sounds crazy and I've gone through the usual motions with the Special Branch and so on, but would you mind listening for a minute? Thank you, sir.'

Two rooms away a harassed man, who was the Chief Security Officer for the Secret Service, said 'Blast!' and pressed a switch. A microphone on his desk came to life. The Chief Security Officer sat very still. He badly needed a cigarette, but his room was now 'live' to Captain Walker and to the lunatic who called himself 'James Bond'. Captain Walker's voice came over at full strength. 'I'm sorry. Now then. This man Mr Em you want to talk to. I'm sure we needn't worry about security. Could you be more specific?'

James Bond frowned. He didn't know that he had frowned and he wouldn't have been able to explain why he had done so. He said, and lowered his voice, again inexplicably, 'Admiral Sir Miles Messervy. He is head of a department in your Ministry. The number of his room used to be twelve on the eighth floor. He used to have a secretary called Miss Moneypenny. Good-looking girl. Brunette. Shall I give you the Chief of Staff's name? No? Well let's see, it's Wednesday. Shall I tell you what'll be the main dish on the menu in the canteen? It should be steak-and-kidney pudding.'

The Chief Security Officer picked up the direct telephone to Captain Walker. Captain Walker said to James

Bond,' Damn! There's the other telephone again. Shan't be a minute.' He picked up the green telephone. 'Yes, sir?'

I don't like that bit about the steak-and-kidney pudding. Pass him on to the Hard Man. No. Cancel that. Make it the Soft. There was always something odd about 007's death. No body. No solid evidence. And the people on that Japanese island always seemed to me to be playing it pretty close to the chest. The Stone Face act. It's just possible. Keep me informed, would you?'

Captain Walker got back to James Bond. 'Sorry about that. It's being a busy day. Now then, this inquiry of yours. Afraid I can't help you myself. Not my part of the Ministry. The man you want is Major Townsend. He should be able to locate this man you want to see. Got a pencil? It's No. 44 Kensington Cloisters. Got that? Kensington double five double five. Give me ten minutes and I'll have a word with him and see if he can help. All right?'

James Bond said dully, 'That's very kind of you.' He put down the telephone. He waited exactly ten minutes and picked up the receiver and asked for the number.

James Bond was staying at the Ritz Hotel. Colonel Boris had told him to do so. Bond's file in the KGB Archive described him as a high-liver, so, on arrival in London, he must stick to the KGB image of the high life. Bond went down in the lift to the Arlington Street entrance. A man at the news stand got a good profile of him with a buttonhole Minox. When Bond went down the shallow steps to the street and asked the commissionaire for a taxi, a canonflex with a telescopic lens clicked away busily from a Red Roses laundry van at the neighbouring goods entrance and, in due course, the same van followed Bond's taxi while a man inside the van reported briefly to the Action Room of the Special Branch.

No. 44 Kensington Cloisters was a dull Victorian mansion in grimy red brick. It had been chosen for its purpose because it had once been the headquarters of the Empire League for Noise Abatement, and its entrance still bore the brass plate of this long-defunct organisation, the empty shell of which had been purchased by the Secret Service through the Commonwealth Relations Office. It also had a spacious old-fashioned basement, re-equipped as detention cells, and a rear exit into a quiet mews. The Red Roses laundry van watched the front door shut behind James Bond and then moved off at a sedate speed to its garage not far from Scotland Yard while the process of developing the canonflex film went on in its interior.

'Appointment with Major Townsend,' said Bond.

'Yes. He's expecting you, sir. Shall I take your raincoat?' The powerful-looking doorman put the coat on a coathanger and hung it up on one of a row of hooks beside the door. As soon as Bond was safely doseted with Major Townsend, the coat would go swiftly to the laboratory on the first floor where its provenance would be established from an examination of the fabric. Pocket dust would be removed for more leisurely research. 'Would you follow me, sir?'

It was a narrow corridor of freshly painted clapboard with a tall, single window which concealed the Fluoroscope triggered automatically from beneath the ugly patterned carpet. The findings of its X-ray eye would be fed into the laboratory above the passage. The passage ended in two facing doors marked 'A' and 'B'. The doorman knocked on Room B and stood aside for Bond to enter.

It was a pleasant, very light room, dose-carpeted in dove-grey Wilton. The military prints on the cream walls were expensively framed. A small, bright fire burned under an Adam mantelpiece which bore a number of silver trophies and two photographs in leather frames - one of a nice-looking woman and the other of three nice-looking children. There was a central table with a bowl of flowers and two comfort-able club chain on either side of the fire. No desk or filing cabinets, nothing official-looking. A tall man, as pleasant as the

room, got up from the far chair, dropped The Times on the carpet beside it, and came forward with a welcoming smile. He held out a firm, dry hand.

This was the Soft Man.

'Come in. Come in. Take a pew. Cigarette? Not the ones I seem to remember you favour. Just the good old Senior Service.'

Major Townsend had carefully prepared the loaded remark - a reference to Bond's liking for the Morland Specials with the three gold rings. He noted Bond's apparent lack of comprehension. Bond took a cigarette and accepted a light. They sat down facing one another. Major Townsend crossed his legs comfortably. Bond sat up straight Major Townsend said, 'Well now. How can I help you?'

Across the corridor, in Room A, a cold Office-of-Works cube with no furnitu...

Users Review

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Bertha Franke:

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Mildred Lucas:

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Nona Smith:

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