

A dramatic short story

By IAN FLEMING

Illustrated by Masefca

THE PROPERTY OF A LADY



Holding a file in his hand, James Bond stole a glance at Maria Freudenstein.

It was, exceptionally, a hot day in early June. James Bond took off his coat. He didn't bother to hang it over the hanger Mary Goodnight had suspended, at her own cost (damn women!), behind the Office of Works' green door of his connecting office. He dropped the coat on the floor. All over the world there was quiet. The In and Out signals had, for weeks, been routine. The only top secret SITREP, even the newspapers, yawned at the news.

Bond hated these periods of vacuum. Suddenly the harsh buzz of the red telephone sprayed into the room. On the second hour he picked up the receiver.

"Hello."
"He put on his coat and walked through into the connecting office, resisting the impulse to ruffle up the ruffled nap of Mary Goodnight's golden neck.

He said her "M" and walked out into the close-curtained corridor and along, between the muted whizz and bang of the Communication Section, to the lift and up to the eighth.

Because Miss Moneypenny's expression conveyed nothing, Bond registered that this was going to be some kind of a routine job, a bore, and he adjusted his entrance through that fateful door accordingly.

There was a visitor—a stranger.

He said stiffly: "Dr. Fanshawe, I don't think you've met Commander Bond of my Research Department."

The stranger was middle-aged, rosy, well-fed, and dressed rather sloppily. Bond summed him up as something between a critic, perhaps, and a bachelor.

He said: "Dr. Fanshawe is a noted authority on antique

jewellery. He is also, though this is confidential, adviser to HM Customs and to the CID on such things. He has, in fact, been referred to me by our friends at MI5. It is in connection with our Miss Freudenstein."

Bond raised his eyebrows. Maria Freudenstein was a secret agent working for the Soviet KGB in the heart of the secret service. She was on the central staff of the MOD, but in a watertight compartment of it that had been created especially for her, and her duties were confined to operating the Purple Cipher—a cipher which had also been created especially for her.

Six times a day she was responsible for encoding and dispatching lengthy SITREPS in this cipher to the CIA in Washington. These messages were the output of Section 100, which was responsible for running double agents. They were actually an ingenious mixture of facts, harmless disclosures, and an occasional nugget of the grossest misinformation.

Maria Freudenstein, who had been known to be a Soviet agent when she was taken into the service, had been allowed to steal the key to the Purple Cipher with the intention that the Russians should have complete access to these SITREPS—be able to intercept and decipher them—and thus, when appropriate, be fed false information.

It was a highly secret operation which needed to be handled with extreme delicacy, but it had now been running smoothly for three years and, if Maria Freudenstein also picked up a certain amount of canteen gossip at

headquarters, that was a necessary risk, and she was not attractive enough to form liaisons which could be a security risk.

M turned to Dr. Fanshawe: "Perhaps, Doctor, you would care to tell Commander Bond what it is all about."
"Certainly, certainly," Dr. Fanshawe looked quickly at Bond. "You see, it's like this, Commander. You've heard of Faberge, no doubt. The famous Russian jeweller."

"Made fabulous Easter eggs for the Tsar and Tsarina before the revolution."

"That was indeed one of his specialities. He made many other exquisite pieces of what we may broadly describe as objects of virtue. Today, in the sale-rooms, the best examples fetch fabulous prices—fifty thousand pounds and more. Recently there entered this country the most amazing specimen of all—the so-called Emerald Sphere, a work of supreme art, hitherto known only from a sketch by the great man himself.

"This treasure arrived by registered post from Paris and it was addressed to this woman of whom you know, Miss Maria Freudenstein."

"Nice little present. Might I ask how you learnt of it, Doctor?"

"I am, as your Chief has told you, an adviser to HM Customs and Excise in matters concerning antique jewellery and similar works of art. The declared value of the package was one hundred thousand pounds. This was unusual. There are methods of opening such packages clandestinely. It was opened—under a Home Office

warrant — and I was called in to examine the contents and give a valuation.

"I immediately recognized the Emerald Sphere from the account and sketch of it given in Mr. Kenneth Snowman's definitive work on Fabergé. I said that the declared price might well be on the low side. But what I found of particular interest was the accompanying document, which gave, in Russian and French, the provenance of this priceless object."

Dr. Fanshawe gestured toward a photograph that appeared to be a brief family tree that lay on the desk in front of M.

"That is a copy I had made. Briefly, it states that the Sphere was commissioned by Miss Freudenstein's grandfather directly from Fabergé in 1917 — no doubt as a means of turning some of his roubles

into something portable and of great value. On his death in 1918 it passed to his brother and thence, in 1950, to Miss Freudenstein's mother.

"She, it appears, left Russia as a child and lived in White Russian emigré circles in Paris. She never married, but gave birth to this girl, Maria, illegitimately. It seems that she died last year and that some friend or executor, the paper is not signed, has now forwarded the Sphere to its rightful owner, Miss Maria Freudenstein.

"I had no reason to question this girl, although, as you can imagine, my interest was most lively, until last month Sotheby's announced that they would auction the piece, de-

scribed as 'the property of a lady,' a week from today.

"On behalf of the British Museum and, er, other interested parties, I then made discreet inquiries and met the lady, who, with perfect composure, confirmed the rather unlikely story contained in the provenance.

"It was then that I learnt she was on the central staff of the Ministry of Defence and it crossed my rather suspicious mind that it was, to say the least, odd that a junior clerk engaged, presumably, on sensitive duties should suddenly receive a gift to the value of one hundred thousand pounds or perhaps more from abroad.

"I spoke to a senior official in

M15 with whom I have some contact through my work for HM Customs, and I was in due course referred to this, er, department."

Dr. Fanshawe spread his hands and gave Bond a brief glance. "And that, Comander, is all I have to tell you."

M broke in: "Thank you, Doctor. Just one or two final questions. You have examined this emerald ball thing and you pronounce it genuine?"

"Certainly. So does Mr. Snowman, of Wartski's, the greatest Fabergé experts and dealers in the world. It is undoubtedly the missing masterpiece of which hidetto Carl Fabergé's sketch was the only record."

"What about the expert you mentioned? It stands up adequately to the greatest Fabergé pieces seen and always privately commissioned."

"I am sure that his father was a vastly rich man — the revolution — a porcelain factory, thirty-nine percent of Fabergé's output had to be sold abroad. There are only a few left in the Kremlin — dozens of them — and you will find examples of Russian jeweled official Soviet view has always been that they are more valuable than the hauls. Officially they are not."

"So the Soviet still retains the examples of the work of the Fabergé. Is it possible that the emerald affair could have been secreted somewhere in the Kremlin through all these years?"

"Certainly. The Kremlin is vast. No one knows what they keep hidden. They have recently put on display what they have wanted to put on display."

M drew on his pipe, but through the smoke were heard that, in theory, there is no way why this emerald ball thing could have been unearthed by the Kremlin, furnished with a history to establish ownership transferred abroad as a means some friend of Russia is now rendered."

"None at all. It is an ingenious method of rewarding beneficiary without paying in some into his or her bank account."

"But the final money now would depend on the sale realized by the sale of the object at the auction price, for instance?"

"Exactly."

"And what do you expect to object to fetch at Sotheby's?"

"Impossible to say. Wartski certainly has. But, naturally, it would depend on how high the

FROM THE BIBLE

☉ You must live in peace among yourselves. And you will urge you, brothers, to admonish the careless, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, and to be patient with them all. — 1 Thessalonians 5:14

(New English Bible)

forced up by an underbidder to pay, not less than one hundred thousand pounds, I'd say."

"Hm." M's mouth turned to "Expensive bank of jewelry!"

Dr. Fanshawe was obviously agast at this barefaced move of M's philistinism.

Bond wanted to get Dr. Fanshawe out of the room so that he could get down to the pertinent aspects of this odd business. "Get out to his feet. He said to M, 'Sir, I don't think there is anything else I need to know. No doubt you will turn out to be a perfectly nice fellow (like hell it would be) — just a matter of one of your roubles turning out to be a very nice woman. But it's very kind of you to have gone to so much trouble.'"

He turned to Dr. Fanshawe. "Would you care to have a car to take you wherever you are going?"

"No, thank you, thank you very much. It will be pleasant to walk across the park."

Hands were shaken, goodbyes were said, and Bond came back into the room. He had taken a bulky file, stamped with the top secret red star, out of his drawer and was already looking at it. Bond took his wet shoes off and waited. The room was silent for the rifling of paper.

This also happened to M's eyes. He had a foolcap sheet of blue carbon paper used for confidential staff communications and carefully read through it first of close type in both

...he slipped it back
to me and looked up.
"He said, and the blue
...bright with interest
...to his right. The
...in Paris in 1933.
...very active in the
...during the war. She
...to run a successful
...and got away
... After the war, she
...to the Sorbonne
...then got a job in the
...in the Naval At-
...office, at an interpre-

"I know the rest. She
...summed — some
...active social business-
...of her mother's old
...friends, who by
...were wealthy for one
...and from then on she
...working under Con-
...the appeal, no doubt
...paranoia for British
...Her clearance
...of Embassy and her
...KGB records
...her to get that by
...and she was then
...summed to us by the

"It was there that she
...be his big mistake. She
...for a year's leave
...coming to us, and was
...reported by the Hut-
...network in the Len-
...espionage school,
...as presumably
...and the usual training
...and to decide what to do
...to be.

"She's 100 thought up
...Purple Cipher operation
...you know the rest. She's
...writing these years
...and headquarters for
...and now she's getting
...toward — this emerald
...thing worth one hundred
...thousand pounds.

"That's interesting on
...counts. First it means
...and the KGB is totally
...and of the Purple Cipher,
...her wouldn't be making
...lemonic payment. That's
...to us. It means that we
...to get the material we're
...ing one. Secondly, it ex-
...something we've never
...to understand—that
...that girl has hidden re-
...present for her ser-

THE PROPERTY OF A LADY

"We were worried by that. We had an account at her bank that only registered her monthly pay cheque of around fifty pounds. And she's consistently lively and fit. Now she's getting her pay-off in one large lump sum via this bauble. All very satisfactory."

"Bond felt there were some ragged edges to this problem — one particularly. He said mildly: 'Have we ever caught up with her local contacts? How does she get her in-structions?'"

"Doesn't need it," said M. "Doesn't she get her hold of the Purple Cipher all she needs to do was hold down her job. Damn it, man, she's pouring stuff into their laps six times a day. What sort of instructions would they need to give her? I doubt if the KGB men in London even know of her existence — perhaps their resident director does but, as you know, we don't even know who he is. I'd give my eyes to find out."

"Bond suddenly had a flash of intuition. 'It might be that this business at Sotheby's could show him to us — show us who he is.'"

"What the devil are you talking about, 007?"

"Well, sir," Bond's voice came with certainty. "You remember what this Dr. Fan- shaber said about an under- bidder — someone to make these Waraki merchants go to their very top price. If the Russians don't seem to know or care very much about Faberge, as Dr. Fanshabe intimates, they may have no very clear idea what this thing's really worth."

"They may imagine it's only worth its break-up value — say ten or twenty thousand pounds for the emerald. That sum would make more sense than the small fortune the girl's going to get if Dr. Fanshabe's right."

"Well, if the resident director is the only man who knows about this girl, he will be the only man who knows

she's been paid. So he'll be the underbidder. He'll be sent to Sotheby's and told to push the sale through the roof. I'm certain of it. So we'll be able to identify him and we'll have enough on him to have him sent home."

He just won't know what's his bid. Nor will the KGB. If I can go to the sale and bowl him out and we've got the place covered with cameras, and the auction records, we can get the PO to declare him *persona non grata* inside a week. And resident director don't grow on trees. It may be several months before the KGB can appoint a replacement for him."

the bidding artificially. We're interested in the underbidder — assuming, that is, that your firm will be leading the field."

"Well, er, yes," said Mr. Snowman with rather careful candor. "We're certainly going to go after it. But it will sell for a huge price. Between you and me, we believe the Victoria and Albert Museum are going to bid, and probably the Metropolitan in New York. But it is some crook who's after it? If so, you needn't worry. This is out of their class."

Bond said: "No. We're not looking for a crook." He wondered how far to go with this man. Because people are

any movement at all. But if the bidder fixes his methods, his code, so to speak, with Peter Wilson before the sale, Peter wouldn't think of letting anyone in on the code. It would give the bidder's game away — to reveal his limit. And that's a close secret, as you can imagine, in the auction and the sale."

"I shall probably be setting the pace. I already know how far I'm going to go — for a client, by the way. I think it would make my job vastly easier if I could tell how far the underbidder is going to go. As it is, what you're telling me has been a great help. It shall warn my man to put his rights over his nose. He's had ten years has got a strong nerve, he may push me very hard indeed. And there will be others in the field, of course."

"It sounds as if this is going to be quite a night. They're putting it on television. Wonderful publicity, of course. By jove, if they knew there was a clock-and-jewelry stuff mixed up with the sale, there'd be a riot! Now, is there anything else to go into? Just spot this man and that's all."

"That's all. How much do you think this thing will go for?"

Mr. Snowman tapped his teeth with a gold pencil.

"Well, now, you see, that's where I have to keep quiet. I know how high I'm going to go, but that's my client's secret. He paused and looked thoughtful. "Let me say that if it goes less than one hundred thousand pounds we'll be surprised."

"I see," said Bond. "Now, then, how do I get into the sale?"

Mr. Snowman produced an elegant tin of silver soapstone and extracted two engraved bits of pasteboard. He handed one to Bond and said: "My wife's. I'll get her one somewhere else in the rooms, B-35—well placed in the centre front on the 36."

Mr. Snowman got up from his chair. "Now would you care to see some Fabergé? We've got some here my father bought from the Kremlin around 1927. It will give you some idea of what all the fuss is about, though of course the Emerald Sphère's incomparably finer than anything else we have by Fabergé, apart from the Imperial Easter Eggs."

Later, dazzled by the diamonds, the emeralds and the gold, the silken sheen of translucent enamel, James Bond walked up and out of the Aladdin's Cave under Regent Street and went off to spend the rest of the day in drab clothes. He had a whole afternoon to plan and arrange the identification and photographing of a man in a crowded room who did not yet possess a face or an identity, but who was certainly the top Soviet spy in London.

Throughout the next day, Bond's excitement mounted.

He managed to find an excuse to wander into the little room where Miss Maria Freudenstein and two assistants were working at their typewriter machines that handled the Purple Cipher dispatches.

He picked up the *en clair file* — he had freestroke access to most material at headquarters — and ran his eye down the carefully edited paragraphs that he had to type, or so, would be spilt, unread, by some junior CIA clerk in Washington, and in Moscow, be handed, with reverence, to a top-ranking officer of the KGB.

He jostled with the two junior girls, but Maria Freudenstein only looked up from her machine to give him a polite smile and Bond's skin

careful with the secrets of their own business doesn't mean that they'll be careful with the secrets of yours. Bond picked up a wood-and-ivory plaque that lay on the table. It is, I think, is I thought, said the buyer. But when he is gone his way be boasteth. Proverbs XIX, 14.

M said thoughtfully: "Perhaps you've got something there." He gazed out of the big window toward the jagged skyline of London. Finally he said: "All right, 007. See the chief of staff and set the machinery up. I'll spare things with Fire. It's their territory, but it's our bird."

Waraki has a modest, modern frontage at 138 Regent Street. The window, with a restrained show of modern and antique jewellery, gave no hint that these were the greatest Fabergé dealers in the world, but the interior, with the group of framed Royal Warrants from Queen Mary, the Queen Mother, the Queen, King Paul of Greece, and the smiling King Frederick IX of Denmark, suggested that this was no ordinary jeweller.

James Bond asked for Mr. Kenneth Snowman. A good-looking, well-dressed man of about 40 came to greet him. Bond said quietly: "I'm from the CID. Can we have a talk? Perhaps you'd like to check my credentials first. My name is James Bond. But you'll have to go direct to the boss or his PA. I'm not directly on the strength at Scotland Yard. Sort of liaison job."

The intelligent, observant eyes didn't appear to be looking him over. "Come downstairs." He led the way to a narrow, thickly carpeted stairway into a large and glittering showroom which was obviously the real treasure house of the shop. Gold and diamonds and cut stones winked from lit cases round the walls.

"Have a seat. Cigarette?"

Bond took one of his own. "It's about this Fabergé piece that's coming up at Sotheby's tomorrow in this Emerald Sphère."

"Ah, yes," Mr. Snowman's clear brow furrowed anxiously. "No trouble about it. I hope you're not from the Treasury."

"Not from your point of view. But we're very interested in the actual sale. We know about the owner, Miss Freudenstein. We think there should be an attempt to raise

any movement at all. But if the bidder fixes his methods, his code, so to speak, with Peter Wilson before the sale, Peter wouldn't think of letting anyone in on the code. It would give the bidder's game away — to reveal his limit. And that's a close secret, as you can imagine, in the auction and the sale."

"I shall probably be setting the pace. I already know how far I'm going to go — for a client, by the way. I think it would make my job vastly easier if I could tell how far the underbidder is going to go. As it is, what you're telling me has been a great help. It shall warn my man to put his rights over his nose. He's had ten years has got a strong nerve, he may push me very hard indeed. And there will be others in the field, of course."

"It sounds as if this is going to be quite a night. They're putting it on television. Wonderful publicity, of course. By jove, if they knew there was a clock-and-jewelry stuff mixed up with the sale, there'd be a riot! Now, is there anything else to go into? Just spot this man and that's all."

"That's all. How much do you think this thing will go for?"

Mr. Snowman tapped his teeth with a gold pencil.

"Well, now, you see, that's where I have to keep quiet. I know how high I'm going to go, but that's my client's secret. He paused and looked thoughtful. "Let me say that if it goes less than one hundred thousand pounds we'll be surprised."

"I see," said Bond. "Now, then, how do I get into the sale?"

Mr. Snowman produced an elegant tin of silver soapstone and extracted two engraved bits of pasteboard. He handed one to Bond and said: "My wife's. I'll get her one somewhere else in the rooms, B-35—well placed in the centre front on the 36."

Mr. Snowman got up from his chair. "Now would you care to see some Fabergé? We've got some here my father bought from the Kremlin around 1927. It will give you some idea of what all the fuss is about, though of course the Emerald Sphère's incomparably finer than anything else we have by Fabergé, apart from the Imperial Easter Eggs."

Later, dazzled by the diamonds, the emeralds and the gold, the silken sheen of translucent enamel, James Bond walked up and out of the Aladdin's Cave under Regent Street and went off to spend the rest of the day in drab clothes. He had a whole afternoon to plan and arrange the identification and photographing of a man in a crowded room who did not yet possess a face or an identity, but who was certainly the top Soviet spy in London.

Throughout the next day, Bond's excitement mounted. He managed to find an excuse to wander into the little room where Miss Maria Freudenstein and two assistants were working at their typewriter machines that handled the Purple Cipher dispatches. He picked up the *en clair file* — he had freestroke access to most material at headquarters — and ran his eye down the carefully edited paragraphs that he had to type, or so, would be spilt, unread, by some junior CIA clerk in Washington, and in Moscow, be handed, with reverence, to a top-ranking officer of the KGB.

He jostled with the two junior girls, but Maria Freudenstein only looked up from her machine to give him a polite smile and Bond's skin

crawled at this proximity to treachery and at the black and deadly secret locked up beneath the frilly white blouse.

She was an unattractive girl with a pile, rather pimply skin, dark hair, and a vaguely unwashed appearance. Such a girl would be unloved, make few friends, have chips on her shoulder—more particularly in view of her illegitimacy—and a grouse against society.

Perhaps her only pleasure in life was the triumphant secret she harbored in that furtive bosom—the knowledge that she was cleverer than all those around her, that she was, every day, hitting back against the world—the world that despised, or just ignored, her because of her plainness—with all her might. One day they'd be sorry!

It was a common neurotic pat-

tern—the revenge of the ugly duckling on society.

Bond wandered off down the corridor to his own office. By tonight that girl would have made a fortune, been paid her thirty pieces of silver a thousandfold. Perhaps the money would change her character, bring her happiness. She would be able to afford the best luxury specialists, the best clothes, a pretty fat.

But M had said that he was now going to hit up the Purple Cipher operation, try a more dangerous level of deception. This would be dirty work. One false step, one incautious lie, an ascertainable falsehood in a message, and the KGB would smell a rat. One more, and they would know they were being hoaxed and

Continued from page 59

THE PROPERTY OF A LADY

probably had been indignomously hoaxed for three years.

Such a shameful revelation would bring quick revenge. It would be assumed that Maria Freudenstein had been acting as a double agent, working for the British as well as the Russians. She would inevitably and quickly be liquidated.

James Bond looked out of the window across the trees in the park and shrugged. Thank heaven it was none of his business! The girl's fate wasn't in his hands. She was caught in the grimy machine of espionage and she would be lucky if she lived to spend a tenth of the fortune she was going to gain in a few hours in the auction rooms.

There was a line of cars and taxis

blocking George Street behind Sotheby's. Bond paid off his taxi and joined the crowd filtering under the awning and up the steps. He was handed a catalogue by the uniformed commissionaire who inspected his ticket, and went up the broad stairs with the fashionable, excited crowd and along a gallery and into the main auction room that was already thronged.

He found his seat next to Mr. Snowman, who was writing figures on a pad on his knee, and looked round him.

The lofty room was perhaps as large as a tennis court. Miscellaneous pictures and tapestries hung on the olive-green walls and batteries of television and other cameras

(among them the M15 cameras with a Press pass from the day) were clustered round their handlers on a platform overlooking from the middle of a tapestried hunting scene.

There were perhaps a dozen dealers and spectators sitting actively on small gilt chairs. They were focused on the glass-topped table in the center of the room, where the raised wooden podium was dressed in an ornate, upholstered buttonhole. He spoke usually and without emotion.

The quiet voice went calm but firm, and the attentive audience the equally impassive dealers signalled their responses litany.

While the bidding rose, Bond slipped out of his seat and down the aisle to the back of the room, where the overflow of noise spread out into the Gallery and the Entrance Hall as the sale on closed-circuit television.

He casually inspected, seeking any face he could recognize from the two hundred men in the Soviet Embassy staff, the photographer, clandestine agents he had been studying during the days. But amidst an audience defied classification—a mix of dealers, amateur collectors, and those who could be broadly classified as pleasure-seekers—was not to be let alone a face, that he might size except from the company.

One or two tall faces might have been Russian, but most might have belonged to half-European races. There was a tiering of dark glasses, but glasses are no longer a distinc-

BOND went to his seat next to Mr. Snowman, whom he saw the man would divulge himself when the bidding began. Mr. Snowman was Bond. "I've got to join the bidding, and for some reason it's considered bad to look over one's shoulder while bidding against you—if you're the trade, that's to say—if you're able to spot him if he's where up front here, and for that's unlikely, as he's a dealer, but you can start as much as you like."

"What you've got to do is Peter Wilson's eyes and then see who he's looking at if he's looking at him. If you can't see him, which may be quite difficult even the very smallest. When a man does—starting by pulling at the sole of his shoe whatever—it will be a sign arranged with Peter Wilson."

"I'm afraid he won't do so obvious like raising his hat. Do you get me?"

"And don't forget that he'll make absolutely no movement until right at the end when he pushed me as far as he can go, then he'll want to sign off you." Mr. Snowman smiled. "We get to the last lap I'll put my feet on him and try to pull these hands. That's another course, that we are the bidders left." He looked round. "As I think you can tell, we shall be."

From the man's expression, Bond felt pretty sure that the man had been given instructions to get the Emerald Sphere at all costs.

A sudden hush fell as a tall man draped in black velvet brought in with ceremony a casket in front of the auction room. Then a handsome man of what looked like white velvet with reverence, an elderly grey uniform with white and black collar, and black belt, stepped and lifted out Lot 42, placing it on the black velvet, and announced the case.

The cricket ball of the emerald on its exquisite lap with a supernatural glow from the jewels on its surface and opalescent meridian wove various colors.

THE PROPERTY OF A LADY

Continued from page 60

There was a gasp of admiration from the audience and even the auctioneer and experts behind the rostrum and among the tall countesses seated beside the auctioneer, concentrated to the crown jewels of Europe passing before their eyes, to look forward to get a better look at the property. Bond turned to his catalogue. There it was, in heavy type and in prose as thickly luscious as a search-sunder.

THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE. Acquired in 1917 by Carl Fabergé, a Russian gentleman, now his daughter's property.

A VERY IMPORTANT LARGE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE. A sphere carved from an emerald matrix weighing approximately one thousand three hundred carats and of a superbly clear and vivid translucent, representing a terrestrial globe supported on an elaborate scrollwork base. The globe is finely chased in quatrefoil gold and set with a profusion of rose diamonds and small pearls of intense color, to form a globe thick.

Mounted on this mount six gold putti support themselves among clouds and are naturally finished in carved rock-crystal finials and veined with fine pearls of rose diamonds.

THE globe itself, the size of which is meticulously given with a map of the world and the principal cities indicated in brilliant diamonds embedded in the gold, rotates mechanically on an axis controlled by a hand-dial, which is concealed in the base and is grided by a fixed gold band. The globe is encased in a mottled opalescent oyster shell, which is covered with a mirrored push in champagne color. The globe is mounted on a more gilded base, which is encased in a mottled opalescent oyster shell, and a single translucent pinkish Burma ruby of about one carat is set into the surface of the globe, pointing the hour.

The globe is mounted on a base of white Workmaster, Henrich Wagners. In the original presentation white velvet, satin and silver case, with the gold and silver in the base.

The theme of this magnificent globe is one that had inspired the artist some 15 years earlier, as shown in the miniature terrestrial globe which forms part of the collection at Sandringham, in plate 100 in "The Art of Carl Fabergé," by A. Kenneth Snowman.) After a brief and searching search of the room, Mr. Wilson turned his hammer softly. "Lot 42 is subject of virtue by Carl Fabergé." A pause. "Twenty thousand pounds I see bid."

Mr. Snowman whispered to Bond: "The means he's probably got a lot of at least fifty. This is simply the first thing moving."

"And thirty," said the auctioneer. "And sixty thousand pounds I am bid. And sixty, seventy and eighty thousand pounds. And ninety." A pause. "One hundred thousand pounds I am bid."

There was a rattle of applause. The cameras had swivelled to a man in a dark suit, one of three on the platform to the left of the auctioneer who were speaking softly into telephones. Mr. Snowman turned to the young men. "That's one of the young men. He'll be on the line to America. I should like to see the Metropolitan building, but it might be anybody. Now time for me to get to work."

Mr. Snowman flicked up his rolled-up catalogue. "And ten," said the auctioneer. "And twenty." The man spoke into his telephone and nodded. "And twenty." Again a flick from Mr. Snowman.

"And thirty," said the auctioneer. "And twenty." The man spoke into his telephone and nodded. "And twenty." Again a flick from Mr. Snowman.

The man on the telephone seemed to be speaking rather more words than before into his mouthpiece — giving his estimate of how far the price was likely to go. He gave a slight shake of his

head in the direction of the auctioneer and Peter Wilson looked away from him and round the room.

"One hundred and thirty thousand pounds I am bid," he repeated quietly.

Mr. Snowman said softly to Bond: "Now you'd better watch out. America seems to have signed off. It's time for your man to start pushing me."

James Bond slid out of his place and went and stood among a group of reporters in a corner to the left of the rostrum.

Peter Wilson's eyes were directed toward the far right-

hand corner of the room. Bond could detect no movement, but the auctioneer announced: "And forty thousand pounds." He looked down at Mr. Snowman. After a long pause Mr. Snowman raised five fingers. Bond guessed that this was part of his process of putting the heat on. He was showing reluctance, hinting that he was near the end of his tether.

"One hundred and forty-five thousand." Again the piercing glance toward the back of the room. Again no movement. But again some signal had been exchanged.

"One hundred and fifty thousand." The auctioneer repeated the bid.

And now there was the tiniest movement. At the back of the room, a chunky-looking

sand pounds. There was a buzz of comment and some desultory clapping. This time Mr. Snowman's reaction was even slower and the auctioneer twice repeated the last bid.

Finally, he looked directly at Mr. Snowman: "Against you, sir." At last Mr. Snowman raised five fingers.

"One hundred and fifty-five thousand pounds."

James Bond was beginning to sweat. He had got absolutely nowhere. The auctioneer repeated the bid.

And now there was the tiniest movement. At the back of the room, a chunky-looking

ing man in a suit reached up and unconsciously took off his dark glasses. There was a smooth, nondescript face—the sort of face that might belong to a bank manager, a member of the bar or a doctor.

This must have been the prettiest girl ever seen by an auctioneer. So long as a man wore his dark glasses he would raise no eyebrows. When he took them off, he had quit.

Bond shot a quick glance toward the bank of cameras. Yes, the M13 photographer was on his feet. He had also seen the man deliberately and then with a quick glare of a flash, had got back to his seat and whispered to Snowman: "That's in touch with you, that's a lot." Mr. Snowman nodded. His eyes straggled on the auctioneer.

Bond slipped out of his place and walked round down the aisle as the auctioneer said for the last time: "One hundred and fifty-five thousand pounds an bid," and then banged down his hammer. "That's it."

Bond got to the back of the room before the auctioneer had risen, applying a foot. His quarry was somewhere among the gilt chairs. He had now put on his dark glasses again and Bond's on a pair of his own.

He contrived to slip to the crowd and get behind the man as the chairman's eyes streamed down the aisle. He had grown low down at the back of the man's neck and squat neck. He had a red hump, perhaps only a slight deformation, but it was backed. Bond suddenly remembered. This was Peter Malozowski, who had the title on the Embassy for "Agricultural Attaché."

Outside, the man was walking rapidly toward Bond Street. James Bond unburied into a taxi with its engine running and flag down. He said to the driver: "That's him, Tax easy."

"Yes, sir," said the driver, pulling away into the kerb.

THE man picked up a taxi in Bond Street. The tail in the road caused traffic was easy. Bond's car was mounted on the man's taxi turned up with the park and along the water. It was just a question whether he would turn left to the private entrance to the Kensington Palace Gardens where the first man's car was the man's taxi. If he did, that would be matters. The two policemen, the man's bodyguards, had been specially picked that night. Their job was to ensure that the occupant of the taxi actually entered the Soviet Embassy.

Then, with the secret evidence and the M13 cameraman, it would be enough for the Foreign Office to get Comrade Piotr Malozowski next great espionage grounds of espionage and send him packing the grim chess game that secret service work, the Russians would have been a satisfactory visit to the station rooms.

The leading taxi did not in through the entrance.

Bond smiled with satisfaction. He leaned forward: "Thanks, driver. My quarters, please."

Copyright, Leo Fleming, 1951