

The Beginning of the Pipeline

The large bush stood in the moonlight at the meeting place of three African countries. The man from the diamond mines⁴ had waited under the bush for nearly two hours. Suddenly, he heard the noise of a helicopter. He looked up and saw it coming towards him from the east.

He waited.

When the helicopter was just above the ground, an arm came out. A torch⁵ switched on and off, dot-dash, the morse code⁶ for the letter A. The diamond smuggler flashed back 'B' and 'C', and the helicopter came down safely. After a few moments, its engine was silent. The pilot opened the door and climbed down to the ground. The other man walked across to him.

'You're late again,' he said.

'I had engine problems,' said the pilot. 'Well, if you've got it, let's have it.'

The man from the diamond mines reached into his shirt and took out a packet. He gave it to the pilot. The pilot dropped the packet into the pocket of his shirt.

'Things are getting difficult at the mines,' said the diamond smuggler. 'A man has come from London. His name's Sillitoe. The Diamond Corporation has sent him. Some of my men are afraid. One day one of them is going to talk.'

'Do you want me to tell this to ABC?' asked the pilot.

'Yes,' said the other man. 'They must know about Sillitoe. Our mines are losing more than two million pounds a year because of smuggling. The Corporation wants the government to stop it. And that means "stop me".'

'What do you want?' asked the pilot. 'More money?'

‘Yes,’ answered the diamond smuggler. ‘Twenty per cent more.’

‘I’ll pass the message on to Dakar,’ said the pilot. ‘If they’re interested, they’ll send it on to London. But don’t push them too hard. Already three men have died in the last twelve months in “accidents”. Two were stealing diamonds from the packets. The other man tried to run away.’

For a moment, the two men looked silently at each other in the moonlight. Then the pilot climbed up into the helicopter.

‘I’ll see you in a month,’ he said.

The diamond smuggler watched the helicopter fly away to the east. With it went the diamonds, which would be sold for one hundred thousand pounds. His men had stolen them from the mines during the past month.

The diamond smuggler got on his motorcycle and rode off towards Sierra Leone. He rode fast towards the hills. Away from the great bush, where the pipeline⁷ for the richest diamond smuggling operation in the world began. And the end? Five thousand miles away, around the necks of rich women.

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*James Bond – Secret Agent*⁸

Commander James Bond of the British Secret Service picked up the diamond from the desk and held it in front of the desk lamp. He was a tall, handsome man, with blue eyes and dark hair. He wore an expensive dark blue suit and a white shirt. Bond looked carefully at the diamond. It was carat⁹, and its many colours shone brightly in the light. ‘It’s beautiful,’ Bond said.



M, Head of the British Secret Service, moved his hand towards a pile of paper packets on the desk in front of him. He opened a packet and pushed it across to Bond.

‘What you’re looking at is the best – a “Fine Blue-white”,’ he said. For the next fifteen minutes, M showed Bond many different kinds of diamonds. Finally, he sat back in his chair. He looked worried. ‘Ninety per cent of all diamond sales happen here in London,’ he said. ‘It’s big business – fifty million pounds a year. But two million pounds worth of diamonds are being smuggled out of Africa every year. We think they’re going to America. To American gangs of criminals¹⁰.’

‘Why don’t the mining companies stop it?’

‘They’ve tried, but they can’t. And the Government thinks that the problem is too big for a lot of separate mining companies,’ said M. ‘There’s a big packet of smuggled stones in London at the moment. They’re waiting to go to America. Special Branch¹¹ know the name of the carrier who’s going to take them there. They also know who’s going to be watching him.’

‘Why don’t Special Branch or MI5¹² stop them?’ asked Bond.

‘Because that won’t stop the smuggling,’ replied M. ‘The carriers never talk. And they probably know nothing important. They get the diamonds from a man here, then hand them to another man when they get to the other side. We need to follow the pipeline to America and see where it goes over there. And the FBI¹³ won’t be much help to us. It’s a very small part of their fight with the big gangs. Have you heard of “the House of Diamonds”?’

‘Yes,’ said Bond. ‘The big American jewellers. They’re on West 46th Street in New York and the Rue de Rivoli in Paris.’

‘They’ve got a small place in London, too,’ said M. ‘In Hatton Garden. They were once very big buyers at the monthly sales of the Diamond Corporation. Now they’re buying less and less. But they’re selling more and more. So where are they getting their diamonds? Their main man in London is Rufus B. Saye.’

‘What do we know about him?’ asked Bond.

‘Not much,’ said M. ‘He has lunch every day at the American Club in Piccadilly. Doesn’t drink or smoke. Lives at the Savoy Hotel.’

‘So, what do you want me to do?’ asked Bond.

M looked at his watch. ‘You have a meeting with Ronnie Vallance at Scotland Yard in an hour. He’s going to put you into the pipeline in the place of the carrier.’

‘And then?’ said Bond.