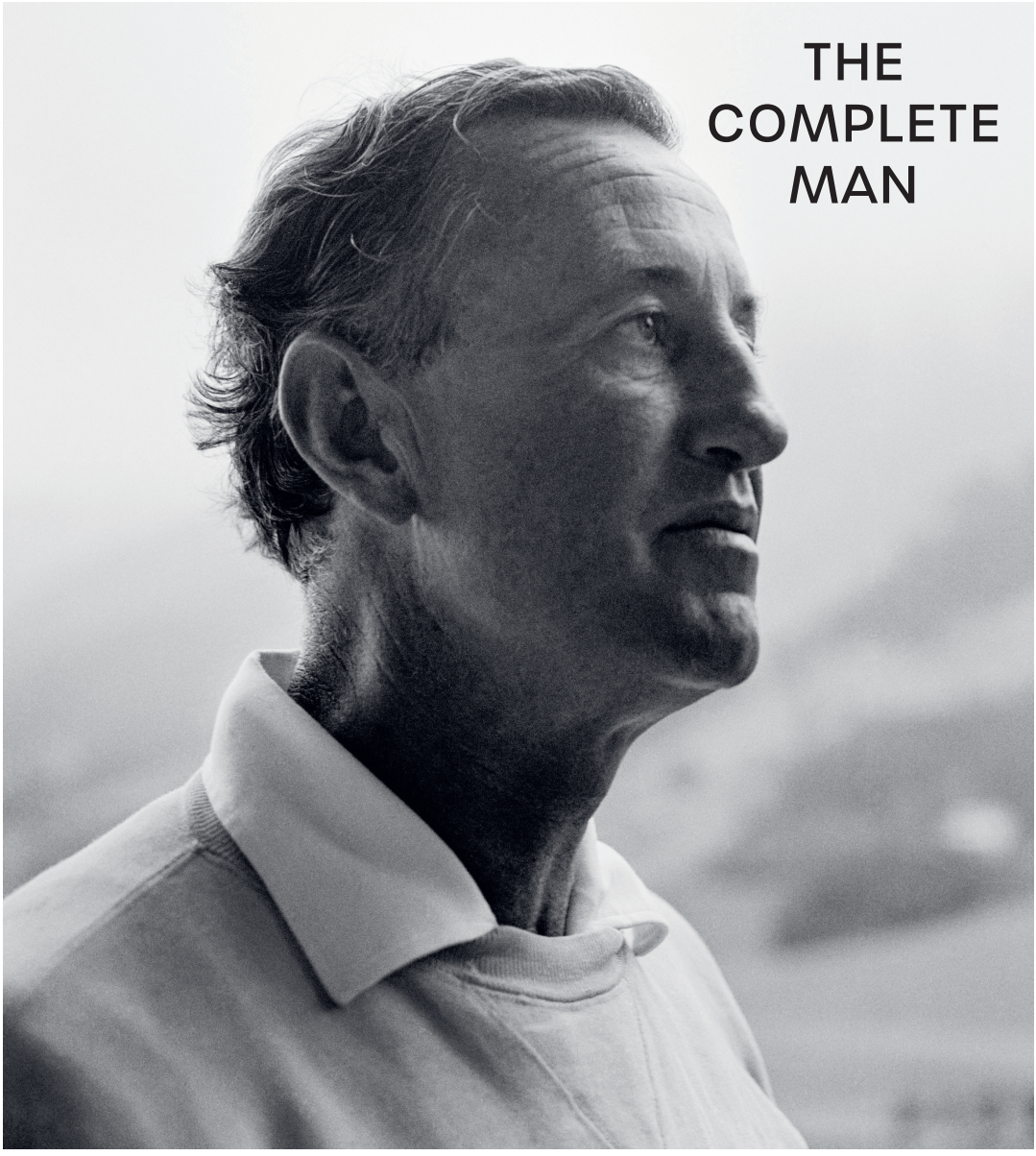
IAN FLEMING



NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE

IAN FLEMING

Also by Nicholas Shakespeare

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Priscilla

Six Minutes in May

IAN FLEMING

The Complete Man

NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE

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TO MY FATHER –
JOURNALIST, DIPLOMAT, TRAVELLER

'My name's Bond – James Bond. I write books – adventure stories . . . When I said "stories" I didn't mean fiction. I meant the sort of high-level gossip that's probably pretty near the truth. That sort of thing's worth diamonds to a writer.'

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

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INTRODUCTION

'Good evening, Mr Bond.'
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

'Mr Fleming,' she said in her deep voice, 'to me you're the epitome of the English cad.'

'Mrs Leiter, you're so right. Let's have a Martini.'

It became common for those who had not met Ian Fleming to take the hostile position of Marion Oatsie Leiter, who, on encountering him for the first time at a party on a warm evening in Jamaica, chastised Fleming for how he had treated her friend in an affair.

His niece Gilly says, 'I was only allowed to meet Uncle Ian when I was past eighteen because he was so dangerous. He'd had lots of women and drank too much, my mother said. She was appalled at his behaviour.'

Just as Graham Greene has been boiled down to 'sex, books and depression', so is Ian Fleming rendered into tabloid fat as a card-playing golfer who hits the road after whipping his wife, roaring home late at night in his Ford Thunderbird from Royal St George's golf course or Boodle's, fortified on a diet of Martinis, Turkish tobacco and scrambled eggs, before tip-toeing, slip-on shoes in hand, up the narrow staircase in Victoria Square, past Ann's smart guests, to his monastic top-floor bedroom, where, after first removing his polka-dotted bow-tie and navy blue Sea Island cotton shirt, he would lie with his blanket over his head listening to over-educated voices on the floor below snigger at his latest book.

This caricature still broadly holds, which is why I was wary when the Fleming Estate wondered if I might consider writing a new biography, with the promise of access to family papers that had not been seen before; in order to guarantee artistic integrity, it would be up to me to find a publisher.

But was there anything more to learn or say about Ian Fleming that had not been well told already? Furthermore, did I wish to spend four or five years in the company of this 'moody, harsh and withdrawn person, habitually rude and often cruel' – as even one of his best friends portrayed him. Oatsie Leiter groaned in response to yet one more question about what he had been really like, 'Darling, I think I'm about *out* of Ian Fleming.'

Like most baby boomers in Britain, America, Canada and Australia, I had grown up on James Bond. Yet about his creator, I knew no more than titbits picked up when interviewing one or two of his contemporaries.

Before deciding, I conducted a background check. I sought out Fleming's previous biographers. I spoke to his surviving family and friends. I looked out some of the new material that has appeared since the last major biography in 1995. And what I found is what you find when you dive deeper and then deeper. Under the jarring surface of his popular image I could see a different person.

A shining example, literally, of the uneasy contract between the public and private Fleming is the story about him flinging a squid at the novelist Rosamond Lehmann when she was staying at his home in Jamaica. In the version told by the writer Peter Quennell, Fleming did this to frighten Lehmann into leaving early since he was expecting the arrival of another lover. Lehmann's less well-known account sheds a more satisfying light on the story.

Lehmann came across the squid on the kitchen floor; Fleming had speared it, intending to have it for dinner. 'As I looked at it,' she recalled, 'I suddenly caught its eye. It seemed to stare at me, and I felt for some reason that this was a creature every bit as intelligent as we were and that it was suffering terribly. So I persuaded Ian to throw it back in the sea. He grumbled a bit and said, "How typical of a soft old pseudo-liberal like you. You may think nature is beautiful, but it is very cruel, very ruthless. Just you see. As soon as we throw the squid back in the sea, all the other creatures will go for it. Just you see." So we did throw it in, and it was quite extraordinary, for suddenly this odd, grey, inanimate creature began to light up in the water until it was quite phosphorescent. Then it swam away as we watched and Ian was completely speechless. It was an incident that I always meant to write a story about, but never have.'

As with the squid, so with its fisherman. The unsympathetic image I had formed from sideways glimpses of a prickly, self-centred bounder camouflaged another, more luminous person. This Ian Fleming, so far from having an unimportant desk job in the Second World War, had played a singular part in the war that he could never talk about, tantalising bits of which emerged in the novels that he started writing after this adventure was essentially over, but who also lived life to the full and had a wonderful laugh and, in the words of another friend, 'brought colour (and occasional fury) into the lives of countless others'. He broke the taboos of our time but not of his own, carrying on as if it were wartime – which perhaps, for Fleming, his life always was. For all his undeniable shortcomings, he was an unfailingly intriguing character who, as Leiter herself had been swift to recognise, was more than capable of being sympathetic, funny, vital, humane: of glowing. If he was not an unblemished paragon like his father, a war hero, neither was he the unpleasant, frivolous second son I had imagined. As in the story of the squid and the reassessment it begs, the new material – unpublished letters and diaries, declassified files, previously uninterviewed witnesses – sets off Fleming and his life in a new light that leads to new conclusions about the man.

You felt his presence on the page and, what is not so common for a writer, also in the room.

'I can see him walking through the door at Buscot into the tiny sitting room,' says his wife's niece Sara Morrison. 'He stops and puts his elbow on the upright piano on the right and tells us children to go to bed. He had an absolutely hypnotically attractive voice to a child, haunting and never raised, and everyone seemed to shut up when he spoke. I was rather intrigued by grown-ups' reaction to him. We all knew that something big had come into the room, and everyone jumped to.'

'He was rather good-looking to say the least of it,' says Fleming's stepson Raymond. 'In my mother's album there's a photo of him, and underneath she's written "Beautiful Ian".'

His American friend Ernie Cuneo has given us a pen-portrait of Fleming's sad, bony, 'fateful' features: 'a high forehead with a head of thick brown, curlyish hair, parted on the side and neatly combed over to the left. His eyes were

piercing blue and he had a good, firm jaw.' The American journalist Dorothy Thompson sighed after meeting the young Ian Fleming in Kitzbühel: 'The moulding of those cheekbones.' His nose had been broken and repaired with a metal plate, giving him the look of a light heavyweight boxer. To Lady Mary Pakenham, the journalist daughter of the Earl of Longford, 'Ian was the best-looking man I have ever seen with a broken nose and a damned soul/fallen angel expression. He was taller than Peter, about five eleven, I imagine. Slightly round-shouldered, but with marvellous legs.' They were the smooth-muscled legs of a runner, 'with rather large calves', observed Cuneo, a former football star.

Then the voice. His stepdaughter Fionn remembers it as curiously light for a man. 'Because of the image of James Bond, you think you're going to get a deep baritone, but it's a lyric tenor.' She says: 'His voice surprised people.'

As did his physicality. 'Ian moved as quickly as a lizard,' said Mary Pakenham. 'If he got up to fetch a book, he would dart across the room in a flash. For older or slower people, it was exhilarating to have him about.'

Ivar Bryce met him first when Fleming was eight, knew him to the end of his life, and was still able to summon his 'magnetic, electrically charged personality' ten years after his death. 'The way he burst into a room, radiating enthusiasm for some never-before-thought-of project, the jollity and warmth of his language, his strikingly good looks even, make him seem so much more alive than most of us.' Bryce wrote in an unpublished account: 'I should not feel surprised, only overjoyed, if he were to come crashing in. "Why should you think I was dead?" '

This vitality was singled out by Noël Coward, whom Fleming chose to be his best man. 'Half of his world was fantasy. That was what made him such an enchanting person to be with. At any moment you would find yourself slap in the middle of this dream world of his and you would be carried along and it would be wonderful, and unlike being with anyone else.'

Lisl Popper first knew Ian Fleming in Austria in the 1920s. 'All the things people said about him later, about his gloom, melancholy, solitariness, frankly amaze me. He was exactly the opposite.'

Clare Blanshard was another dissenter. She had met Fleming in Ceylon

in 1944, and went on to work for him at the *Sunday Times* in New York, and was the first to read his books. In one of 'the hilarious sessions we had over his manuscripts', Blanshard admonished him for being damagingly cavalier about his public image. 'I painted horrible pictures of the false "self" he was presenting to the world.'

The 'imbalance', as Blanshard saw it, of his private, generous, funny side, and the rude, brooding Fleming on formal display was captured in one of only two or three portraits of him, painted in 1962 by his friend Amherst Villiers. Fleming had paid £525 for the oil painting, which was used as the frontispiece in a limited edition of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, but 'Mr Fleming was of the opinion it was valueless', according to his secretary. Objecting to the 'doom-fraught eyes', he grumbled that it made him look like 'an aged Dracula or a young Somerset Maugham'. Eventually, it was to hang outside the gun room at his home in Wiltshire – with Fleming's face turned to the wall by his widow after his death.

Blanshard offered this tribute when asked to describe Fleming's truer face: 'It was his innocence, geniality, merriment, wonderful sense of humour . . . all that and his zest for extracting what cheer he could from the daily situation, & injecting joie de vivre into companions, that rendered him so attractive to be with. He was privately, almost secretly, generous-minded, and there was nothing petty about him.'

One of his most understanding lovers, Maud Russell, who had paid for Fleming's house in Jamaica, wrote in her diary: 'After being with I[an]. I always feel a more sensible, less petty and more courageous person.'

Old lovers went on loving him. Seven years after his death, Maud still had not forgotten his effect. 'Sometimes I think of Ian – mostly of his personality, his character & his innate kindliness.'

Kindliness is not the first characteristic that James Bond evokes, yet it is telling how often this word or something like it bobs up in connection with his author. Rosamond Lehmann had the briefest fling with Fleming in Jamaica, but essentially she felt the same – 'really he was a very kind person.'

It would be wrong to think this kindliness was directed exclusively at women. 'A ladies' man par excellence,' said his wartime associate Peter

Smithers, Fleming was also that rare combination, 'a man's man if ever there was one'. Plenty of Fleming's other male colleagues attest to the generous and loyal stripe in his make-up. They also appreciated his humour, adopting Fleming's maxim: *When hungry in France and looking for a restaurant, always ask a fat policeman*. A feature that distinguishes his male friends is that, barring one or two garish exceptions, they are characters in the upright mould of his banking grandfather Robert Fleming: they are unlikely to have been duped by a cad.

'The inimitable and lovable Ian Fleming,' Denis Hamilton, his editor at the *Sunday Times* called him. Robert Harling, who worked with Fleming for 25 years: 'The most generous, least malicious, most merry yet most melancholy man I ever knew.' His lawyer Matthew Farrer says: 'If he said he'd do something, it would never have occurred to me he wouldn't. I'd trust him absolutely.' Fleming's cousin Lord Wyfold was adamant: 'Whatever you hear, if Ian had his last possession in the world and it was a dollar, and you needed a dollar, he would give it to you.'

Not that Fleming was someone to broadcast his deeds. He agreed with the Australian journalist Richard Hughes, to whom he had done an invisible good turn, that one of the great pleasures in life was 'to do good by stealth and have it discovered by accident'. A small example of his surprising concern for others is recollected by the son of Jock Campbell, chair of the company that bought Fleming's literary estate. Weeks before Fleming died, John Campbell, aged twenty-four, stayed with him in a small flat overlooking the golf course at Sandwich on the Kent coast. 'We were talking about shaving. I told him, "I still wet shave, I don't use electricity." That evening, I found a lovely old badger brush sitting beside my watch which I'd put on my bedside table.'

'Like him?' says the thriller writer Len Deighton, who met Fleming when writing the first of his two Bond screenplays. 'I'd go down on the knees and say prayers for his afterlife. Lord, yes.'

While many would find it easier to praise the exemplary character and all-round achievements of Fleming's outstanding elder brother, the poet John Betjeman felt otherwise: 'I like Peter, but Ian was a much kinder, nicer, more sensitive person.'

Kinder, and more important.

Fleming's blatant legacy is the fictional hero he created in his last dozen years, almost as an afterthought. This English secret agent has gone on to have a profound global impact on the culture of the twentieth century and thereafter, with the titles of his adventures and the names of his villains and heroines now in the lexicon. According to the historian Max Hastings, he remains known to peoples throughout the world, from western capitals to desert wildernesses of Arabia and icy wastelands of North America. 'It seems to me that whatever reservations we all have about Ian Fleming and Bond, today it is impossible to overstate their quite extraordinary influence in making something English seem important in the twenty-first-century world. James Bond has a stature to which no modern prime minister, nor royal, nor indeed anything can lay claim.'

The source of Fleming's notoriety was 'the fast-moving, high-living' character who was 'unrivalled in modern publishing history', according to the blurb of *The Man with the Golden Gun*,* the twelfth novel in the series, that was published a year after his death – by which time global sales of Fleming's books surpassed forty million.

This character needs no introduction. Like Paddington Bear or Winnie-the-Pooh, he enjoys universal appeal. Anywhere in the world, the five words 'The name's Bond. James Bond' are guaranteed to ignite a smile.

In the United States alone, James Bond has been invoked as a model by successive presidents, from John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan to George Bush, Jr. and Donald Trump, as if they believe he exists. 'James Bond is a man of honour,' said Reagan. 'Maybe it sounds old-fashioned, but I believe he's a symbol of real value to the Free World.'

Bond's ability to create myths and interest is undiminished. His continuing purchase on our imagination astonished Fleming's last publisher at Cape, Tom Maschler. Shortly before his death in 2020, Maschler

* To differentiate between Fleming's novels and the films of the same name, the titles of novels are given in italics and of films in inverted commas.

protested, 'You can't open a newspaper without a reference to James Bond.'*

That no day passes without James Bond making a media appearance is a testament to the enduring power of his brand. But Bond is more than a commercial icon. Few of us appreciate, quite, the reach of his influence.

Like Fleming, who predicted electric cars in the 1950s and decried the environmental harm that petrol engines could do, James Bond was frequently ahead of the game. A champion of modernisation and the latest technology, he has acted as a lightning rod for three generations and their understanding of politics, culture and sex. As much as any president, James Bond helped establish our post-war attitude towards the United States, and our less positive image of Russia, whose present leader is characterised in the British press as 'this Botoxed Bond villain who won't sit at a table with other people. All that's missing is a trapdoor and a pool of sharks'. It is James Bond, discovered by sociologists in the 1960s and 1970s to hold an almost equal attraction for a female audience as for a male one, who was at the wheel of the sexual revolution in London in the Swinging Sixties, and, after that, pretty much everywhere else. He is an avatar for us all, says Dwight Macaulay, president of the Intrepid Society in Winnipeg, which honours the life of Fleming's Canadian spy chief, William Stephenson: 'Let's face it – every man has secretly wanted to be him, and every woman wanted to meet him.'

Not only to foreigners has Bond succeeded in promoting a seductive ideal of what it means to be British. He has done this most effectively to the

* A sample of headlines from the time bore this out:

'The only character to marry James Bond' (*Times* obituary of Diana Rigg, 11 September, 2020)

'Ian Fleming's family are shaken after vandals target the James Bond writer's grave' (*Daily Mail*, 29 September)

'No Time to Die: Bond 25 pushed back again to spring 2021' (*Guardian*, 2 October)

'Bikini worn by Dr. No Bond girl Ursula Andress set to sell for $500K' (*Daily Mail*, 7 October)

'Subsea speedboat has echoes of 007' (*Times*, 13 October)

'World's greatest collection of James Bond novels goes up for sale' (*Times*, 19 October)

'Declassified Files Reveal a Possible Spy in Poland—Named James Bond' (*Wall Street Journal*, 23 October)

'Jeffrey Epstein behaviour based on Bond pastiche' (*Sunday Times*, 25 October)

'The legendary actor, 007 Sean Connery, has past [*sic*] on to even greener fairways' (Donald Trump, Twitter, 1 November)

British themselves. When we required an ambassador to represent us at the opening of the 2012 London Olympics, who did we pluck from the heavens to act as the Queen's bodyguard, in a cameo appearance watched by an estimated 1 billion people, but the one other Britisher to have enjoyed Her Majesty's fame (she had attended not a few of his premieres as well). Born fully formed in the year of her coronation and still going strong after her death, Bond is at the heart of the British subconscious, chosen to symbolise Britain not merely over the Cold War period, but into the twenty-first century. 'Who first introduced James Bond?' is Question 12 of 24 in the 2020 test for British citizenship.

In his most tremendous leap, Bond has managed to survive in our contemporary world as an emblem of Britain's vision of itself, despite the tidal shift in our notions of pluralism, diversity and sexual equality. He is an indissoluble force, who is tricksy enough to resist our best intentions, however diligently we work to refine our fantasies. He somehow continues to be 'a product of his era and a reflector of the times', to borrow Paul Gallico's phrase from 1961. However offensive he may appear to us, however much we might tire of him, outgrow him, or grow disenchanted, we find it impossible to escape him. He is a shorthand for something we have not yet fully resolved in ourselves.

Why has Bond endured? Eric Ambler, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Peter Cheyney, Mickey Spillane. Not one of the authors with whom Fleming was compared created a character who has continued to prosper against traditional gambling odds. An easy answer would be that the films were exceptionally popular. Yet could it not also be that they were only so popular because the character Fleming created was so unique and captivating, at once a hero of modernisation and yet a symbol of retrospective power? In this respect, Bond is like the gold Louis that Fleming observed in Monte Carlo: an out-of-date currency unaccountably still in use.

He came into his first burst of popularity in the depressing wake of the Suez Crisis – 'one of the most pitiful bungles in the history of the world, if not the worst', Bond tells Japanese agent Tiger Tanaka. Fleming's contemporaries recall Suez as a painful summation of the slow, grey post-war decade: a grim, unhealthy period characterised by too much smoking/drinking/bad food/currency restriction – no one had travelled, except in

the army, for years – and a habitual silence about the Second World War (the historian Antonia Fraser did not know her husband Hugh had fought in the Battle of the Bulge until they were watching a film about it). Peter Fleming explains in *The Sixth Column*, the thriller he dedicated to Ian and published six months before *Casino Royale*: 'Almost any form of exciting fiction provided a welcome antidote to the restrictions and frustrations of life in England at that time.' Britain had lost an empire, yet all at once, through Bond, it discovered a different way of being reunited with the world.

Conceived as a post-war British fantasy, as a balm for a demoralised imperial power on its uppers, James Bond has evolved into an immaculate agent of escapism. The lower the sun has sunk on the empire that Bond was born into, the more radiant his glow.

As the Bond legend has grown, it has carried its own time with it. James Bond is a man of the moment who has made the moment last till now. Seven decades on, after a divided Britain battles to go it alone – again – and the latest Bond movie arrives to rescue the film industry, a new generation continues in a post-pandemic era, with war in Ukraine, to scan our porridge skies for that familiar St George-like figure to parachute in out of the blue. To save and distract us from the dragons that currently threaten; to restore to us an image that is likeable to ourselves and the rest of the world.

The same two questions are always on the mind of Dwight Macaulay when he sits on the edge of his movie seat in Winnipeg. How will Bond avoid annihilation, and who exactly is James Bond? 'Was he purely fictional, or was he based on a real-life individual?'

This last question perennially fascinates Fleming's legions of fans. It has been asked numerous times since 1953 and the publication of *Casino Royale*. How *did* Bond spring into being; what inspired this outrageously successful character?

How much Bond is a legend that has covered for his author is another ongoing controversy. To no trivial extent, Fleming modelled himself on John Buchan's fictitious hero Richard Hannay, whose favourite dictum was, 'If you want to hide something, put it directly under the light.' Bond's

flamboyant reputation has long been Fleming's disguise, but it also led to what his first authorised biographer, John Pearson, called his 'terrible nemesis'.

We tend to think of John le Carré before George Smiley. With Fleming, it is the reverse, as if Bond's unstoppable waves of popularity have lapped back over the author, submerging him. More often than not, he is left out of the picture entirely, like the missing comma in the film 'From Russia with Love'.

'There are parasite ants that eat the host,' says Len Deighton. 'Fleming's book writing has been devoured by the films. There's this gigantic mass of interest in the Bond phenomenon and a smaller interest in Ian Fleming.'

Admiral John Godfrey was not the only one of Fleming's wartime colleagues to lament how the man himself had been 'overtaken by Bond' with little more 'than a screen of lampoons and parodies erected around him'; bluntly, 'Ian has disappeared'.

This elimination is all the stranger, and even now it is not possible to explain, because Fleming was a lot more substantial than his fictional character. In the assessment of CIA director Allen Dulles, 'It took a Fleming to create him.' No less a fan than the poet Philip Larkin praised the Bond books for being 'instinct with a personality much more complex, much more intelligent, much more imaginative than Bond's – the personality, in short, of Fleming himself'.

When all this is said, Fleming emerges as significant despite Bond and not wholly because of Bond. He was an influential figure in his own right, someone even world leaders wished to consult, who had a fascinating story to tell, but one that security concerns and a strong stripe of diffidence prevented him from writing. To simplify horribly, there would be no James Bond had Ian Fleming not led the life he did, but if Bond had not existed, Fleming is someone we should still want to know about.

The pre-Bond Fleming was a patriotic Scot who had lived in Austria, Munich and Geneva as Hitler was coming to power. He made a noteworthy contribution to the Second World War – and not only in organising covert operations in Nazi-occupied Europe and North Africa that helped to shorten the conflict. He was also one of a trusted few who were charged with trying

to bring the United States into the fight, and worked to set up and then coordinate with the foreign Intelligence department that developed into the CIA. Following the Allied victory of 1945, he continued to play an undercover role in the Cold War from behind his *Sunday Time*s desk.

Fleming's talent and business was to know the movers and shakers on close terms. Winston Churchill was a family friend: Fleming kept Churchill's framed obituary of his father on the wall beside his bed, and for the first eight months of the war he listened to the First Lord pace the floor directly above his desk. After the war, Fleming was on first-name terms with another Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, who stayed at his house in Jamaica during Britain's most serious post-war drama at the very moment when Fleming's wife Ann was embarking on an affair with the Leader of the Opposition.

Fleming was part of the tiny circle in the room when important decisions were made. After a visit to Washington in December 1953, he joked to Ernie Cuneo, who had worked in President Roosevelt's White House during the war, 'I spoke severely to the White House before leaving, and I am glad to see that Dulles and the President have acted so promptly on my advice.' Seven years later, Fleming had an intimate supper in Washington with a future American president and gave a bewitched Jack Kennedy the benefit of his wartime experience in suggesting how to deal with Fidel Castro.

Squashed around their dining-room table in London, Ian and Ann Fleming sat up to three times a week between the most influential political, cultural and social figures of the 1940s, 50s and 60s. It is not a stretch to say that Fleming formed the fascia of his class: elusive, at once separating and connecting, and serving a role that most people did not know existed but was fundamental at a time when his nation was engaged first in defending and then in healing itself.

Few better appreciated Fleming's worth than Cuneo, his rumbustious long-term associate, the New York lawyer, journalist, former quarterback for the Brooklyn Dodgers and Intelligence operative, who worked with him during and after the war. Three years older, twenty pounds heavier, 'all belly and bald head' according to John Pearson, Cuneo was Fleming's main source of information on America. Fleming once wrote to him: 'I am already vastly looking forward to some of those perspiring walks along the

dusty Vermont lanes while I pick your brains for my books.' For Cuneo, dedicatee of *Thunderball*, research assistant for *Live and Let Die*, *Diamonds are Forever* and *Goldfinger*, and a superb talker with beguilingly brilliant eyes that made you forget his corpulence, 'the books of Ian Fleming plus the actual documentation of Ian Fleming's life add up to a fascinating three-dimensional study, a rare psychological compendium of the mind of the Twentieth Century man.'

Cuneo was unequivocal: Fleming was more than his books and plays a part more central to our understanding of his time than his avatar has allowed. Yet Cuneo was quick to accept that his friend of twenty-three years was also someone who did not like to be fathomed and shot off into other disguises if the attention was narrowed on him. 'Typical of twentieth-century artists, Ian Fleming was many people.'

It is not an exaggeration to say there were even more Ian Flemings than there are actors who have played Bond. Fleming's long-time editor William Plomer did not need to remind his listeners at Fleming's memorial service that he was 'not a man of single aspect', but of multiple, conflicting personalities. 'Thunderbird', 'Byron', 'Faust', 'Sir Tristam', 'Falstaff', 'Walter Mitty', 'Ibsen's Dora', 'B & B' (short for Blue shirt and Bow tie), 'Jocky' (as his father had called him), 'Iarn' (as he was called in America), 'the Colonel' (as Peter sometimes called him and as Ian sometimes called Peter, along with the interchangeable nickname 'Cracker', and an earlier nickname 'Turnip'), '17F' (as Ian was known in the war), 'the Commander' (as he was called in Jamaica), 'Frank Gray' (as he once or twice signed himself, as well as 'Cory Anan' and 'R. Coranville'), 'Fine Lingam' (Ivar Bryce's anagram of him, sketched on a French napkin). Then, as others saw him: 'boy scout', 'broken-nosed pirate', 'Roman emperor', 'Greek god', 'fallen angel', 'a bottlenecked figure with a large bum', 'a Holy Innocent', 'the Devil'. Not to omit how he variously presented himself: athlete, soldier, journalist, banker, stockbroker, book collector, publisher, Intelligence officer, thriller writer, clubman, scuba-diver, bridge-player, golfer.

Ian's last love, Blanche Blackwell, understood that he was 'a very private person because he was so many people'. He was so inward-looking that it was a challenge to know who he was – or thought he was. Ian told Noël Coward that on a visit to Bombay he had gladly autographed a book by him,

and then in quick succession books by William Plomer, Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden. Not even then had Fleming begun to cover what Ann called 'the whole gamut of your vast range of Freudian moods'.

Fleming's only child Caspar was bipolar, a disorder now considered 'highly heritable'. Caspar's father was never consistent or predictable in his moods or relationships with people. 'There was a peculiar duality in this too,' said the Jamaican journalist Morris Cargill, who observed that Fleming was 'extremely fond' of the literary critic Cyril Connolly and very proud of his friendship. 'Yet time after time he would go on about, "that terrible shit Connolly".'

He liked to keep friends in separate compartments, perhaps suspecting what Clare Blanshard called their 'interminable ruminations about him'. No friend mulled over the enigma of Ian Fleming with more obstinate curiosity than Mary Pakenham, who complained that whenever you called on him 'you never quite knew what you would find because you never knew what mood he would be in' – on top of that, he was 'never, never the same two days running'. Pakenham wrote in her diary after another frustrating evening spent trying to work him out: 'Ian has *more* characteristics than anyone I know.' She watched with compassion how these characteristics 'warred with each other, and went on warring until the end'.

It means that virtually anything you can say of Ian Fleming, the opposite is true also.

Graham Sutherland: 'He was good on art.'

John Hayward: 'You never heard him mentioning a painting he really liked.'

Roald Dahl: 'Ian adored money.'

Ivar Bryce: 'Money really wasn't important to Ian. All he really wanted were cars, movement, books, cigarettes and a few antiques.'

Ann Fleming: 'He was most emphatically not a snob.'

Sean Connery: 'A real snob.'

Edward Merrett: 'I never saw him lose his temper.'

Peter Quennell: 'When the Commander really became annoyed he would appear like an angry Aztec idol.'

Ralph Arnold: 'He was completely and utterly irresistible to women. He was the only man I have known who really was.'

Mary Pakenham: 'Nine out of ten women couldn't stand him.'

Raymond O'Neill: 'I always saw Bond as Ian.'

John Godfrey: 'Ian hadn't the remotest resemblance to James Bond.'

And so on.

He was lazy yet never stopped working; a playboy puritan who never stopped punishing himself; a deep melancholic who never stopped laughing. ('There's never been anyone could make me laugh quite so much as Ian,' said Noël Coward, 'we just laughed and laughed until it hurt us.') Easily bored, he sought the company of bores. ('Ann,' he used to say, 'but I *love* bores.') He was a life-enhancer at one moment, a killjoy at another. At night, a whip-wielding sadist; by day, according to Joan Saunders, who worked with him at the Admiralty, 'the least violent man I have ever known'. A loner who needed a group. An ultra-conservative who was a non-conformist. A man of iron routine who craved excitement and change to an unnatural degree. And after forty-three years of living and sparring with all these versions of himself and more, a confirmed bachelor who then married his opposite.

He listed himself in *Who's Who* as 'author and publisher', and the first item under his recreations was 'First editions' (followed by spearfishing, cards and golf). Among the myriad things I never knew about him was that in one of his compartmentalised identities he had owned and directed not only the Queen Anne Press, but also the leading bibliographic journal, the *Book Collector*; and long before that, he had himself been a dedicated collector of rare books.

An image that stays is the description by one of Fleming's girlfriends of his grey-painted bachelor studio in Ebury Street before the war: the forbidding volumes, each in its fleece-lined black box embossed in gold with the Fleming coat of arms, but with the pages inside showing no indication of having been touched. She had the sudden insight that he himself was like a rare first edition, yet to be read or understood by its collector.

So is Ian Fleming to us. For all that we feel we know him, this ultimately popular author remains unread in unexpected ways.

Mike VanBlaricum is the founder and president of the Ian Fleming Foundation, and the world's leading collector of 'the writings by and about Ian Fleming and the entire James Bond phenomenon'. After forty years of immersing himself in Fleming and his work, VanBlaricum still considers him an enigma. 'A mystery remains how a single individual, through the life he had led, changed popular culture. After he wrote the books, everyone knows what happened. But what was in his life to 1952, until he started putting that stuff on paper?' Deep in his masonry, in the deepest reaches of the books, articles, theses, symposiums, TV dramatisations, films and headlines that Fleming continues to generate a lifetime after his death, there is a genuine and still unresolved inner puzzle.

Fleming's public reputation is undercut by the testimonies of those closest to him. That said, he never fully revealed himself to anyone, and even with his friends was guarded about his true feelings, motivations and thoughts. 'Ian's basic complication in life was just communicating with people,' said Ann. Few managed to swim near enough to crack that 'puzzling' personality and understand how who he was and how these tensions within him led Fleming to impact popular culture to the degree that he has. Fleming's wartime chief, Admiral Godfrey, who oversaw one of the most effective Intelligence organisations in the world, was astounded by 'how very little I knew about a man with whom I had worked so closely for four years.' Godfrey said, 'he might have known my best friend but he would never have told me.'

His favourite position was to stand at the edge, or to sit alone at a corner table watching others. Whatever he was thinking, he kept it to himself. 'I've never known anyone who gave so little of himself away,' wrote John Pearson.

The mask reveals more than the face. For Cuneo, this aphorism captured 'in the truest and kindest sense, James Bond, Fleming himself, and the different postures he took with his widely varied friends. Ian's masks were not those of deceit: they covered wounds, early wounds, of great depth and pain.'

On the other hand, Fleming's schoolfriend Hilary Bray speculated that he might have solved the answer to life's riddle: 'I sometimes think it strange

that ILF with his, at times, distant focus as upon some clue to life that lay beyond the horizon, had within himself and used only for others, the true philosopher's stone. This was the imprisoned splendour.'

The Royal portable on which he started to type out his first Bond story in Jamaica had a meaningful association for Fleming that the typewriters of his fellow novelists Graham Greene and John le Carré did not. They, like Bond, had been minor players in British Intelligence. Fleming was in the inner sanctum of the 'central inaccessible citadel', as Admiral Godfrey called it – and a more significant figure in the history of covert operations than Bond, Greene or le Carré ever were. Ian and his brother Peter formed part of an unbelievably select group who were cleared to know the war's top secrets, the decrypts from the code-cracking centre in Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire: in April 1940, the list of those with access to this information, known as ULTRA, was restricted to less than thirty.

Ian Fleming's portable Royal resembled nothing so much as the cipher-generating Geheimschreiber typewriter G–292 that Fleming's commandos seized in Algiers in November 1942, assisting cryptanalysts at Bletchley to read Abwehr Enigma traffic passing between North Africa, France and Germany.

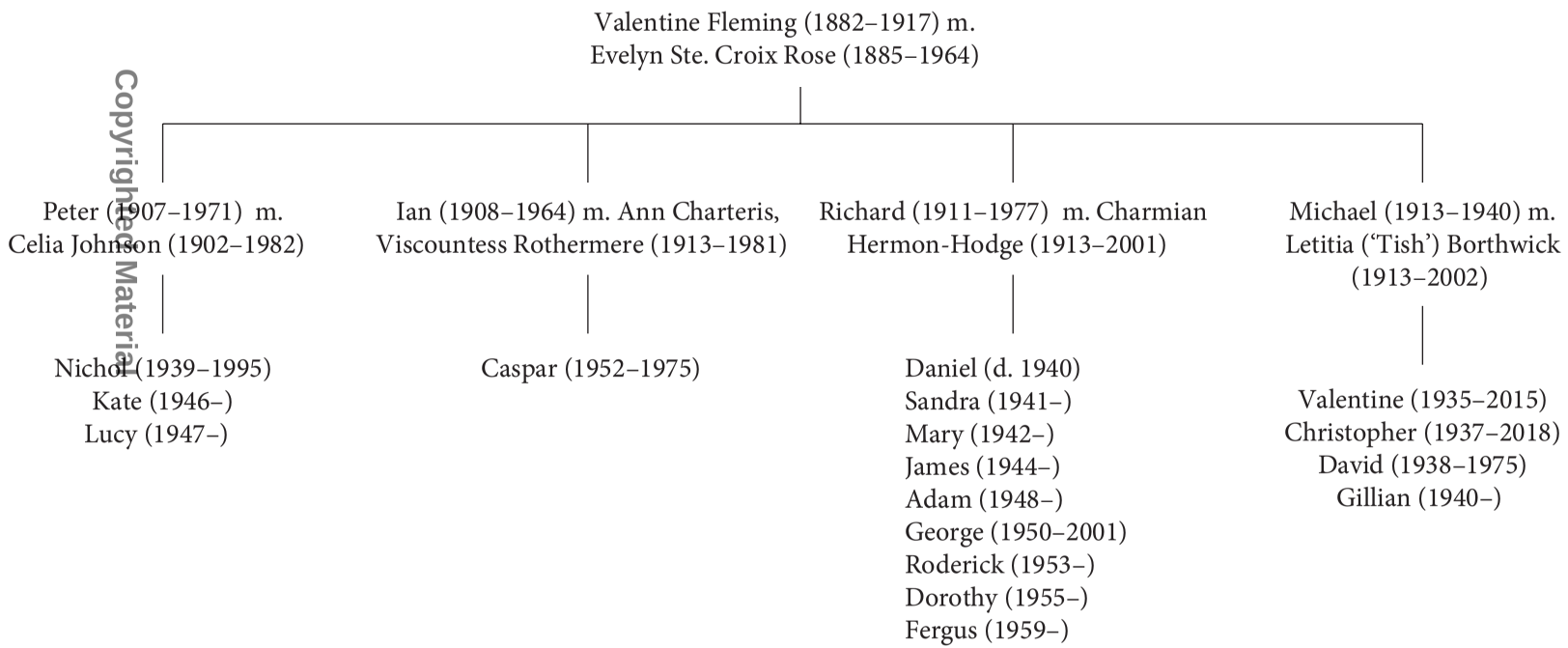
As he began typing on that February day in 1952, the words that had been accumulating for a decade clattered out in a rush – two thousand by the end of that morning – his old typewriter taking him back to the shadow world of the 1930s and 1940s in which Fleming had operated as a free agent; a world of secrets that he had helped to decipher but was forbidden to reveal.

In a Borges riddle to which the answer is 'knife', the only word that may not be used is 'knife'. The most basic principle of Enigma – no letter could be encrypted as itself. If you press the letter 'I', it is the one letter that will not light up on the lamp board.

In a hut at Bletchley Park, I type the letters IAN FLEMING on a three-rotor Enigma machine. It scrambles the name into what reads like a shorthand for titles of further novels he might have written had he lived longer. This biography's mission is to unscramble him back, decode him, and maybe solve the enigma of NVP TGLPYUM.

PART ONE

Fleming Family Tree



PROLOGUE

'Will you be staying long, Mr Bomb?'
GOLDFINGER

Organised in haste, the service is about to begin.

It is a cool and cloudy Saturday afternoon in August 1964 in the Wiltshire village of Sevenhampton. Inside the dimly lit church of St James', the congregation of less than twenty suggests the funeral of an unremarkable local everyman and not a figure whose name is known worldwide. Most of the pews are empty.

Ann Fleming ought to be seated by now. But she is still escorting her late husband's coffin across the lawn to the lake and up through the chestnut avenue to the church.

News of Ian's death at fifty-six reached his younger brother Richard at the family estate in west Scotland three days earlier. Richard was in the dining room at Glen Etive in his kilt, eating his salted porridge standing up, and preparing to set out with his shotgun on Rannoch Moor in a vast line of dogs and cousins, when the lodge's single telephone rang in the gun room. The black Bakelite phone sat on a worktop in a cold, narrow space smelling of gun oil. After putting down the receiver, Richard announced that he had to return to England and catch the sleeper. 'He didn't say anything about Ian dying,' remembers his daughter Mary. 'He didn't say anything at all.'

It was a Fleming trait to give away little of yourself. Peter was staying for the start of the grouse season 150 miles away in Dumfriesshire with the Keswicks. The call came after breakfast. Without a word, Peter stepped out of the house. He returned minutes later and, not wishing to spoil the shooting, said nothing until evening, then set off south.

Hilary Bray made both calls from his home in Kent. Ian's old schoolfriend lived not far from the golf course in Sandwich where Ian collapsed following a weekend at his cherished Royal St George's club. His famous last words to the ambulance attendants taking him to Canterbury Hospital: 'I'm sorry to trouble you chaps.' He was pronounced dead at 1.20 a.m. the next day. As well as the start of the grouse-shooting season, it was his only child Caspar's twelfth birthday.

After telephoning Richard and Peter in Scotland, Bray assumed responsibility for 'the many details arising on Ian's death'. He gathered up Ian's personal effects – 'none of which comprise anything of exceptional value' – and paid for six copies of his death certificate and the funeral arrangements.

The funeral takes place at Ian's parish church on the boundary of his country home near Swindon; following extensive renovations, he and Ann had moved in the previous summer.

In the chill interior, the gas lights flicker over the sombre faces. Among those seated in the front pew are Ian's twenty-nine-year-old nephew Valentine Fleming, son of Ian's youngest brother Michael who died of his wounds after Dunkirk. Next to him sit Valentine's wife Elizabeth; his sister Gilly and their mother Tish. 'A terribly nice wee church,' Valentine wrote afterwards in his diary, 'with ancient stove in one corner, crumbling roof, and individual gas lights for each pew.'

Where is Ann?

It would hurt her that 'not one of my family offered to come'.

Among other glaring absences are Ian's ostracised last love, Blanche Blackwell; his stepdaughter Fionn, pregnant in Brazil; his son Caspar and Ann's thirteen-year-old nephew, Francis Grey, who have been kept in London.

No photographer captured Ian's marriage to Ann at his Jamaican home twelve years previously. Nor is there anyone to take pictures on this occasion. This is owing to the far-reaching Fleet Street connections of Ian's widow, whose previous husband owned the *Daily Mail*, and of the deceased, who had served fourteen years as Foreign Manager of the *Sunday Times*.

The only press to disregard the family's request for privacy are two local journalists from Swindon, who lurk about the grave 'looking rather like

detectives', in Elizabeth's recollection, as they wait outside for the coffin to materialise. The scoop hinted at by one of the reporters is preserved in a single line of the *Wiltshire Gazette and Herald*: 'Mrs Fleming with others walked to St James Church, arriving three minutes late after the service had begun.'

'A sad Service.' Valentine's spare diary entry is typical of the family's restraint about all things personal, but it fails to register the drama that was unfolding right in front of him and has never been recounted.

Even though six decades have passed, Valentine's wife and sister have a searing recollection of the incident that took place moments before Ann Fleming, distraught and on medication, walked in behind the coffin to find the service already under way.

At the appointed time, the local vicar, the Revd Edward Burnley, had raised his eyes to the front pew, and mistaking Valentine's mother Tish for Ann, stood up to perform the ceremony.

'He'd never read a James Bond book' is how Gilly makes sense of it. 'He knew so little about Ian that he couldn't even recognise the widow. He didn't know she wasn't there.'

'I was looking to see where Ann was,' remembers Elizabeth. 'One was so gripped that the service started without her, it was surreal. "We are all gathered together," and we weren't gathered together at all – and then she appeared and came up the aisle, and everyone slightly gasped.

'The vicar then stopped everything, and we regrouped, as one might say, *and the service had to start again*.'

As in life, so in death, a strong woman had played a defining role.

Susan Woolliams once lived in the stables at Sevenhampton Place, where Ann employed Susan's father as a driver. Susan's grandson Corey today works as a groundsman on the estate. 'I saw an otter the other day, only the one,' says Corey. 'I spotted him on a bank and I was walking the dogs and he swam with us and came on down so far and then he swam off.'

After visiting the family plot where Ian, Ann and Caspar are buried, next to the house cleaner Joan Prew, we head back to the house. This is the path that Fleming's mourners would have taken, following the ceremony, for a very English 'cup of tea'. As we walk towards the lake, Susan says: 'You read

a lot of things about Ian Fleming, and you don't know what's true and what isn't.'

Nearly sixty years after Fleming's private burial in the aptly named churchyard of St James', there are ample and legitimate reasons to go right back to the beginning; to turn the soil of his personal history and revisit his legacy from a contemporary perspective.

I
'LAIRN TO SAY NO, LADDIE'

'Very strange people the Flemings.'
NOËL COWARD

On a journey through China, Peter discovered that 'Fleming' could be transliterated into Chinese as *Fu Lei Ming*, meaning 'Learned Engraver on Stone'.

In *State of Excitement*, a short book about Kuwait that the Kuwait Oil Company commissioned Ian to write in 1960 but never published, Ian poked fun at an imaginary British nouveau riche family who, having won the pools, are desperate to etch a name for themselves. 'They become foolishly rather ashamed of their lowly origins and decide that, for social reasons, they would like to invest their name and their family firm with some of the trammels of high birth . . . Becoming enthusiastic they visit the College of Arms and pay for further researches into their past, at the same time acquiring a modest coat of Arms.'

This described Ian's great-uncle John Fleming, Lord Provost of Aberdeen, who, in 1900, gazed up at the ceiling of his council chamber 'upon which were emblazoned the arms of many town and county families' and thought he should like his arms among them.

Not to be outshone, in 1921, Ian's grandfather Robert Fleming was pressured by his wife Kate for a coat of arms with the head of a goat and the clan motto, *Let the Deed Shaw*. The legend refers to the fourteenth-century Robert Fleming who held up the dripping head of John 'Red' Comyn, whom he had slain in a church. Ian chose the motto for his bookplate.

Ian was more loyal to his Scottish background than snobbish about it. 'Alas, I am very unfilial and lacking in ancestor worship,' he wrote to a woman in Cyprus who claimed kinship. To another enquirer, 'I am no relation of any medical Fleming – not even of Sir Alexander.' He joked to the

book collector, Percy Muir: 'We're not Scots. We're Flemings. A lot of nasty old Dutch merchants.'

By Ian's time, the Flemings were understood as posh and rich. Alaric Jacob joined Reuters at the same moment as Ian and recalled visiting Eve Fleming's home in Cheyne Walk, where she lived with her four sons in some opulence. 'To see them all together in their magnificent house in Chelsea was to see a microcosm of what the English ruling class ought to look like but rarely does – epicene yet forceful, well exercised in body and in mind . . . Yet the wonder was – they were all of very humble origin indeed.'

Ian's mother was an exceedingly snobbish woman, who, while claiming Highland ancestry, used to tell her daughter Amaryllis that 'the Flemings were a dreadful lot of lowland Scots'. Mary Pakenham was shocked when a friend ticked her off 'for consorting with someone as common as Peter Fleming'. Peter would not have disagreed. 'My grandfather's upbringing was humble in the extreme.'

On one of their railway trips across America, Ian mused to Ernie Cuneo: 'Men are like elephants. They go home to die. Someday,' waving a hand, 'I guess I'll just go back to Scotland.'

Ian was about to set out on his return journey when he suffered his final heart attack in August 1964. He had told the American ambassador, David Bruce, one of the last people he spoke to, that he planned 'to revisit the scenes of his youth'.

'You can't go back to anything,' Ian said to Cuneo. 'But something calls you to the neighbourhood of your people's place. It's a mystique.'

Dundee was his people's place. He was interested at once in anyone who knew the city – like the CIA's head of Counterintelligence, James Angleton. 'Talking about Dundee was one of the easiest ways of communicating with Fleming.' In New York, Ian would stay with the Bryces, whose head housemaid, an elderly, eccentric Dundonian, May Maxwell, 'coddled him with adulation for his Scottishness – a sentiment that he fully returned.'

'I am Presbyterian and Scotch,' he insisted to Maud Russell. He put 'Scottish' as his nationality when he briefly worked for the League of Nations in Geneva, and later, on his CV: 'Born May 28th 1908 of Scottish parents.'

That northern blood was on his mother's side too: her Rose grandfather

had married into a family originally from Bothkennar in Stirlingshire that traced itself back to 1543. When not furiously claiming descent from John of Gaunt, she told her sons, 'Remember you're Scots.' Ian never forgot. Their son Caspar was two when Ann wrote, 'Ian is determined that he should wear some curious tartan that belongs to his mother's clan!'

Scotland was stitched into Ian Fleming's fabric as it was into James Bond's. 'That's where I come from,' says Bond, explaining his reason for turning down an honour in a telegram to 'M': 'EYE AM A SCOTTISH PEASANT AND WILL ALWAYS FEEL AT HOME BEING A SCOTTISH PEASANT OHOHSEVEN.'

Ian Fleming was the son of wealth, but the grandson of poverty. He is proof of how mobile society was then. Robert Fleming's father John never earned more than £1 a week. Still, Robert managed in one generation to be, from nothing, one of the wealthiest men in Europe, with a grand house in Grosvenor Square that was later knocked down to be replaced by the American embassy, a 2,000-acre country estate at Nettlebed near Henley employing twenty-seven gardeners, a huge Scottish shooting and fishing estate in Argyllshire, and a merchant bank named after him. 'By 1928, he was controlling in today's money maybe a trillion pounds,' calculates one of his several descendants to work for Robert Fleming & Company. 'He had a colossal influence.' The great difference between Robert's wealth and that of the landed aristocracy, who were much wealthier on paper, was that *his* was 'ready' money.

In his drawing room in Oxfordshire, beneath a small oil painting of Loch Dochart on Black Mount, his Scottish estate ('my favourite place'), I ask the former chairman, Robert's last surviving grandchild Robin Fleming, and the head of the family, to what extent he and his first cousin Ian had absorbed the founder's ethos and character. He answers with tremendous care: 'One probably did think he left a culture, a way of doing things, that one subconsciously inherited.'

An earlier chairman had been Ian's younger brother, Richard. Sir Claude Hankes was at a meeting where two Americans tried to offer 'some incredible opportunity' to the bank. 'When they finished, he said, "I'm afraid I'm not interested." "But you were writing everything down." "Yes," and he turned the notepad for them to see "NO" twenty times.'

Richard's daughter Mary says: 'I come from rather a clannish Scottish

family, from someone who made a lot of money, came south and crashed the class barrier, which is easier to do if you're Scottish and talking in a very Scottish accent, and whose explanation for his success was "Lairn to say No, laddie." ' This had been Robert's response to a young thruster wanting to know the secret behind his achievement.

Robert Fleming is of central importance in his grandson's story. Not only for the example he set and for those aspects of his character that Ian inherited, but crucially for what Ian did not inherit. Richard's eldest son James says: 'Ian was much influenced by the wealth that wasn't his.'

The first Flemings came over in 1066 with William the Conqueror from Flanders and migrated north out of Devon. A Theobald the Fleming (*Theobaldus Flamaticus*) appears in Kelso in the twelfth century. Further Flemings emigrated from the Low Countries in the fourteenth century to teach the English and Scots the art of weaving, bringing with them the epigram 'Forgetful of feeling as a Fleming'.

Robert's family emerges from the mists of east Perthshire in the early nineteenth century, as crofters, poachers and whisky smugglers in the village of Glen Shee near Kirkmichael, to which the young Robert would return at weekends. Before Robert's crofter grandfather, who spoke Gaelic when he did not want his children to understand, everything is supposition.

In 1928, Robert Fleming donated a sizeable endowment to Dundee, equivalent to £12 million today, to build accommodation for single women working in the mills. He did not want their children to grow up as he had.

Robert's first home was a two-roomed rented cottage in Liff Road, Lochee, west of Dundee; the other room was rented out to workers from the flax mill below. He was born in 1845 in the wake of tragedy. In 1843, his three siblings, James, Betsy and Annie, died within a fortnight, all under the age of five. Ian's niece Gilly says: 'I saw the children's grave in the churchyard at Kirkmichael. You will cry. Diphtheria.' In 1847, Robert's mother, Ann, had another son, John, and then two more children, James (named for his dead brother) and Jean, who lost their lives during a second epidemic in 1859. Deranged with grief, Ann died the following year. All Robert knew growing up were ghosts and death and heartbreak.

Widowed, John took consolation in God and temperance. In 1868, he

published a book on what he had learned about the jute industry: *The Warping Overseer's Assistant, or a short and simple method of finding the length, breadth, weight and quantity of yarn in any chains with tables and practical remarks*. If James Bond has a literary lineage, it can be traced in part to this pamphlet, which ran into five editions.

Of the two of his seven children to survive, John, his namesake, entered the wood trade, selling timber for boats in the herring boom, and then on to become a knight, Lord Provost of Aberdeen and MP for Aberdeen South; Robert, the eldest, left school at thirteen and followed his father into the jute business. Robert scarcely saw his brother John again after they set off on their separate paths. This was a Fleming characteristic: to be clannish but not intimate. Other characteristics include the inherited tone of voice (Peter's wife Celia wrote to him in India after meeting Ian in London, 'The back of his neck is like yours and the way he speaks'). The solitariness.

Robert's next years are hazy. For a man whose motto was *Let the Deed Shaw*, he was reticent to an extraordinary degree. 'If there is one thing I hate above everything, it is to hear that I have been quoted.' His life has to be woven together from glimpses and eavesdroppings.

He could not hide his physical toughness and stamina, also Fleming characteristics. Ian's athletic genes come from him. Robert walked eleven miles on a Monday morning from the family farm at Glen Shee to Blairgowrie to catch the 9 a.m. train to Dundee, on one occasion 'at an average of 11 and half minutes to the mile'. He excelled at rowing, winning the double skulls at the Newport Regatta three years in a row. Inheriting his skill, his two sons Valentine and Philip went on to row in the Eton VIII and for their Oxford colleges, racing at Henley, an achievement crowned by Philip winning a gold medal in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. 'The emphasis on physical exercise has persisted into my generation,' says James Fleming. 'Keep going till it's done, don't give in. Guests at Glen Etive, where the hills are sheer, were 100 per cent expected to follow suit. It was always said that "the hills were white with the bones of the Flemings' guests." '

Robert was bright. At Brown Street Elementary School, he discovered a talent for arithmetic. James says, 'The real secret to his success is that he had

one of those brains that can make instant calculations in the days when there were no machines to do the adding for you.'

Owing to its jute and flax industries, Dundee was thriving. The fabrics came from Scottish-managed plantations near Calcutta. Shipped back to spinning mills and flax factories in and around Dundee, they were turned into sails for ships like HMS *Victory*, and sandbags for the American Civil War. By 1862, 700 tons of jute bagging and linens were leaving Dundee each week for the United States. Dundee merchants such as Cox Brothers and Edward Baxter & Son made enormous profits. But where to invest them?

Robert Fleming found the solution.

By the time he was thirty, Robert was the leading British financier in his field: a tall, lean, upright figure, with a large moustache and an 'oary' Dundee accent that he never shed. 'It was a wonder people could understand him,' says James. Just how he ascended the rungs from Dundee office boy to everyone's favourite investor on both sides of the Atlantic, consorting with the most famous bankers in the world, eluded his biographer Bill Smith; 'throughout his life, he was very sparing with details of his career. In his business affairs he laid great stress on utmost confidentiality.'

In the HBO drama *Succession*, Logan Roy is a Scottish-American media patriarch who, on a rare pilgrimage back to Dundee, is chauffeured to the modest street where he was born and cannot face climbing out of his limo. There is a little of the dour, closed Logan in Robert.

I travel to Dundee with Robert's great-grandson James to see where the Flemings came from through Fleming eyes. A novelist like his uncle, James owns and edits Ian's antiquarian journal the *Book Collector*. He has never before visited the city of Ian's origins.

But Robert's early traces prove elusive. The gravestone to his mother and two youngest siblings lies on its back in the Western Cemetery, the names not visible. The cottage where he was born in Liff Road no longer exists, nor his home in Ramsay Street, where Robert's mother ran a grocery. The family's next lodging, 3 Lansdowne Place, although renamed and part of an office block, is there still; as is Tighnavon, the large house perched on a slope directly across the Tay, where Robert the young millionaire built a tennis court and Ian's father Valentine was born in 1882. But a moment arrived when Robert wished to get out of Dundee. A similar exodus is still felt today. In

the Brown Street school where Robert learned his maths, now a pub called Duke's Corner, James Fleming and I are the sole people having lunch. The barman says, 'Once you've been here quite a while, there's not a lot left.' Aside from Fleming Gardens East, West, North and South on the housing estate that he paid for, there is the Fleming Gym, also funded by Robert, where they now perform autopsies, much called for in Dundee, which has the lowest life expectancy in Western Europe, plus the highest rate of drug deaths. This is the extent of Robert's imprint.

A vestige of the golden age when Dundee was famous for 'journalism, jute and jam' is the head office of D. C. Thomson, publishers of *The Dandy* and *The Beano*. If Dundee admits to a favourite son, it is the comic magazine strongman, Desperate Dan, commemorated by his black statue in the city centre.

Dundee's most ignored prodigy is Winston Churchill, for fourteen years the city's Liberal MP, from 1908 to 1922, who left Dundee in humiliation after polling fourth in the 1922 election. Churchill never forgave the city for its rejection of him. He swore the grass would grow over him before he set foot there again (he never did), recalling how 'the bestial drunkenness of Dundee' was unmatched in Great Britain and how at one of his first breakfasts in the Queen's Hotel, 'I had half eaten a kipper when a huge maggot crept out and flashed his teeth at me!' Yet he also insisted: 'I always retain the strongest regard and respect for the citizens of Dundee.' Few Dundonians were more prominent than Robert Fleming. Dundee was their uncommon denominator.

Churchill was Dundee's MP at the precise moment when Robert was establishing his bank in London and on his way to becoming one of the richest Dundonians in history. It explains Churchill's bond with the Fleming family, consolidated by Robert's sons Valentine and Philip joining Churchill's regiment and training at Blenheim summer camps with Churchill and his brother Jack. Churchill's self-interest in keeping in with a leading and wealthy constituent caused him to beat a regular path to Robert's doors in Grosvenor Square and Nettlebed and to look upon his host's uncouth Lochee accent as if it represented the voice of his majority.

Our taxi driver is from Lochee too. 'Dundee doesn't acknowledge its history. It's like it's ashamed of it. Go to Council and ask about James Bond, the

most famous character going, and they wouldn't have a clue he started in Dundee.'

So how did Robert climb to the position which allowed him to leave?

Robert 'got his chance' when he was taken up as a clerk by the Cox family, owners of the Camperdown works, the largest jute factory in Europe, and became interested in the stock market. A catastrophic loss taught Robert his lifetime lesson. In 1865, 'seeing before me illimitable wealth', he invested in the Oriental Commercial Bank, which then collapsed, leaving him owing eighteen months' salary. In the same year, 1866, he left Cox Brothers and joined Edward Baxter & Son, and there discovered how to be an indispensable factotum to an older man. Robert passed on to Ian his ability to charm, convince and stand up to the wealthy.

Still in his early twenties, Robert became confidential 'clerk and bookkeeper' to the seventy-five-year-old Edward Baxter, head of the family and an expert in American securities. The Civil War now over, Baxter alerted his canny assistant to the opportunities springing up in the nineteenth-century equivalent of the Silicon Valley boom: the railways already under construction across the Americas. By Baxter's death in 1871, Robert was dealing in railway stocks from Potomac to Peru on behalf of Baxter and twenty-five other clients. It speaks for Robert's hard work, tenacity and clear-sighted analytical skills that someone from his background was listened to. Two years later, he established himself as a principal underwriter of this New World explosion.

A simple calculation launched Robert Fleming on the path to his wealth. He saw a fortune to be made by borrowing cash in England at three per cent and investing it in the US at seven per cent. In 1873, aged twenty-seven, he set up the Scottish American Trust to collect and invest his clients' capital in the US. By a supreme quirk of history, he took the Foreign and Colonial Government Trust as his model, the first collective trust of its kind. This had been created five years earlier by Sir Philip Rose, an energetic City of London lawyer. Rose was the grandfather of Ian's mother Eve. What Ian's maternal great-grandfather had initiated, his paternal grandfather developed over the next fifty years to a scale beyond recognition.

Robert could see through a company's accounts and at once grasp the

true position. He invested not merely in railways but in cattle ranches, electricity, sugar and oil, and not just in North and South America and Cuba: Anglo-Persian Oil, later BP, would be one of these companies.

Sporty, clever, solitary, canny – also lucky. In March 1873, Robert made his first trip to America. He planned to sail on the *Atlantic*, but at the last moment changed his mind and sailed two days later on the *Abyssinia*. The *Atlantic* ran aground in Nova Scotia and sank with the loss of 560.

By 1923, he claimed to have made the crossing 128 times 'to make investments' and pick up good business from the Scottish diaspora in America.

Robert stayed four months on that first visit, meeting bankers like Jacob Schiff and Junius Morgan. He possessed what his brother John called 'the scotch gift of "speirin" questions'. In his thick Dundee accent, he felt no reticence about telling these men what he thought of them. Barely thirty, he wrote a notorious letter to Morgan saying that if he did not conduct his affairs any better, he would withdraw his support. Pivotal in the reconstruction of the Texas and Pacific Railway, he clashed with the railroad speculator Jay Gould, of whom it was said that 'he had not a conception of a moral principle'. Of himself, people would say, 'straight as a die and in every way reliable'. His eldest son Valentine christened him 'The Man of Iron' – like his railroads.

Ian's romance with American railways came from Robert. When travelling across America with Cuneo, Ian hoped that Caspar was 'liking my train postcards!' In *Diamonds are Forever*, Serrafimo Spang drives an 1870 train with a Victorian carriage through Spectreville, a ghost town of the Old West, much as Ian did. After visiting Hollywood, Ian reported in thrilled tones: 'I went in the cabin of the Super Chief & drove it over the Rockies!! & down into the Apache country full of cowboys & purple sage. No foreigner has ever been in the cabin before.'

Ian had greater trouble following Robert's principle of saying No – which Ian termed 'Fleming's theory of the Imperative Negative'. Robert admitted to some difficulty himself. 'It is, I find, one thing having it in your notebook & another thing altogether acting up to it . . . Human nature is so weak that you have to be a veritable iceberg to always escape the effect of Yankee enthusiasm.'

Robert could be that iceberg: monosyllabic, austere, not spending a

penny more than he had to. Two of his favourite expressions were: 'money made easily is apt to take flight suddenly' and 'I don't believe it'.

Inevitably, what he acknowledged as his 'hereditary aversion to paying anything more than 20/- in the pound' led to stories of Robert's thriftiness. How he never took a taxi in his life. How he kept his coppers in his left-hand pocket, his silver in the right, explaining to his head messenger that he 'had one day mistakenly handed over half a crown instead of a penny (*both being much the same size*) and from that time on always kept his coppers separate . . .' That trait resurfaced in the character of Strangways at the start of *Dr. No*, when about to give money to a blind beggar. 'He ran his thumbnail down its edge to make sure it was a florin and not a penny.'

Robert's meanness is the characteristic most associated with the Flemings. His younger son Philip was said to know all the Tube stations where the ticket collector would not be standing at the top of the stairs. 'It gave Uncle Phil a great deal of pleasure', says his niece Sandra, 'to walk from 12 Hyde Park Square to Paddington Station to find if he was passing a shop selling items at cut-price. I remember him fishing from his jacket a tin of Campbell's condensed tomato soup.'

This characteristic passed down through the next generations. 'In terms of day-to-day life, they certainly didn't throw it around,' says a former director of Flemings. 'If going to Heathrow, they all went on the Tube.' He recalls once travelling with one of Robert's great-grandsons to America on business. 'Boston in February is cold, but we bloody well had to walk everywhere and he was unhappy about the bill when we went to a restaurant.'

'We're not mean,' says Ian's niece, Gilly. 'We're just dreadfully, dreadfully careful – very, very "ribby". We turn off lights.'

Set against that 'canniness', as the Flemings prefer to call it, were the sums that Robert consciously handed away – even if Robert's outward behaviour rarely betrayed his 'unostentious benevolence'. After a good night on the town, the novelist Anthony Powell's father brought Robert's son-in-law home, drunk, to Grosvenor Square, and pressed half a crown into the hand of someone he took to be the butler, who put it in his dressing-gown pocket and closed the door. 'Only then I realised I'd put 2/6*d* into the hand of the richest man in Europe.'

Robert was so purse-lipped that not even his wife had any notion of his

fortune. Ian's boyhood friend Amherst Villiers was designing the supercharger for Bentley Motors when he met Robert and Kate at their large country house near Henley, Joyce Grove. Ian's grandmother told him 'how, after being married some twenty years, one day she said, "Robert, you simply can't wear that old hat any longer" – to which he answered, "it is rather shabby for a millionaire" – this was the first time she knew how very well off he was.'

Not till February 1919, when Ian was ten, did his taciturn grandfather break silence in an unrevealing interview with the *New York Tribune*. 'Robert Fleming is not a well-known figure to the American public; but there is not a banker or a railroad man who does not know him.'

He had directed the bulk of British investment in America for more than forty years, putting 'billions of capital into American stocks and bonds,' and was said to know more about American railroads than any man in America, having 'covered probably every foot of the United States'.

'There are international bankers who have their names more talked about (Robert Fleming never gets into the newspapers, and I think this is the first time that he has ever talked for publication), but there are none who carry more weight . . .' What he actually said, though, remains obscure.

Ian knew him as Pap or Papsie and 'often spoke with affection' of him. He would be a hard act to follow.

His small, forceful wife was the socially ambitious one. In 1881, aged thirty-five, Robert invested in 'that most hazardous of all ventures' – marriage. His twenty-three-year-old bride, Kate Hindmarsh, was the daughter of a customs official from Fife. He had met her at the Congregational church in Lindsay Street. On his marriage certificate, she pushed him to elevate his father John, dead for six years, to 'Tea Merchant'.

A friend described Kate as 'kind, very simple and a happy, childish snob'. On their honeymoon in Paris, Kate wrote how 'my dear Robert made me laugh inordinately' by asking an old Frenchman dining next to them, 'if he did not think "the duck was spiffing" '. They saw the *Venus de Milo*. They walked arm in arm through cobbled streets ('Robert was very anxious about the price of butter and eggs'). In Monte Carlo, they visited the Casino and observed the gamblers at the pouget noir tables 'where only gold is played'.

Kate wrote in her diary: 'one old man we saw win Fr. 3,000 and walk away.' The honeymooners returned twice more to see 'money lost and won'. They resisted the urge to gamble, but the urge was there and it re-emerged in their grandson.

Dynamic, with boundless energy, Kate matched her husband in his worship of exercise. She performed physical jerks every morning, swam before breakfast, and was capable of a twenty-mile walk over the moors of Black Mount at seventy. She still stalked deer at eighty and played golf wherever possible, sometimes bringing Ian, who recounted how the caddies hid in the bushes at Huntercombe when they saw her approaching. She was known for undertipping. Ian saw her hand one caddie a toothbrush.

'Generosity was not her second name,' says her great-granddaughter, Mary. 'My grandfather Lord Wyfold erred by generosity in all things. My mum said the difference was when my Wyfold grandpa had two people to dinner, he would say, "What, Dorothy, only one chicken?" – whereas Kate, when the butler was serving out dinner, would whisper to him "DCSC" = don't cut second chicken.'

In Robert, Kate had married a husband who was driven beyond normal bounds. South was where the money was. London was the hub of the world. He wanted to be part of it.

In 1890, the Flemings relocated from Dundee to 'an old rambling house with wooded surroundings' in Chislehurst, Kent. In keeping with Robert's reputation as 'Scotland's Dick Whittington', they soon exchanged this for a central London mansion in Mayfair, before ending up at 27 Grosvenor Square.

Once she discovered the extent of her husband's wealth, Kate was driven to flaunt it. In 1903, she razed to the ground a pretty William and Mary house near Henley and in its place erected Joyce Grove, a forty-four-bedroomed red-brick monstrosity modelled after one of the French chateaux she had visited on her honeymoon, possibly even the Casino at Monte Carlo which she had considered 'a splendid building with beautiful laid out gardens all round'. 'At great expense,' said Peter's best friend Rupert Hart-Davis, 'the worst stained-glass artists in France were brought over to make enormous windows and huge balustrades.' Ian resurrected it as Goldfinger's ugly turn-of-the-century mansion, massive Rothschildian pieces of Second

Empire furniture, imposing stairway, sombre wood-carved ceilings. 'What a bloody awful deathly place to live in, this rich heavy morgue among the conifers.' Movie directors loved it. The exterior doubled for Bletchley Park in 'The Imitation Game' (2014).

In the dark-panelled rooms, hung with the stuffed heads of animals that she and her daughters had shot, including a rhinoceros, Ian's grandmother entertained royally, namely Queen Mary, and the two of them would go off antique-hunting. Queen Mary was not so popular with the rest of the family. When Ann made one of her flick-knife remarks that Ian in his brand-new Daimler looked 'rather like the late Queen Mary', he returned the car that day. Queen Mary met her equal in Kate Fleming's mingling of economy and extravagance. The regal habit of admiring some possession that had caught the queen's fancy in the frank expectation of the admired object then being offered – in one instance, a French table at Joyce Grove – resulted in Kate presenting her instead with a 'chunk of rock' found on a hill at Black Mount.

'She was a very direct lady,' Ian's brother Richard said of their Granny Kate. During the General Strike of 1926, while Ian was manning the signals at Leighton Buzzard railway station, a hostile crowd assembled outside the Flemings' Grosvenor Square residence, chanting, 'You rich buggers!' Kate went out and berated them in her Scottish accent: 'My husband made his money out of his own hard work and his father was the son of a crofter,' and the crowds dispersed. She could be ferocious in defence of her children. Peter Smithers witnessed a spat between Kate and a naval officer who interjected with 'Much too young, much too young' when he heard Kate boast that her eldest son Valentine had gone into Parliament at the age of twenty-seven. 'This immediately caused an explosion. Grandmother blew up. This was one of the first social rows that I had ever seen in my life. It was quite spectacular.'

No one was allowed to criticise Kate's dead son Val.

Though dour, Robert possessed an unexpected literary talent. Written on the ship to New York and never published, 'Prince Curly' was a fantasy about a boy called Philip who is kidnapped by gypsies, then joins a travelling circus and develops into a young superman. 'On the bare back of any of the horses he could turn somersaults or double somersaults, jump through

hoops or anything else that the best performer could do.' Reunited with his family, this mini-Bond goes on to Eton and Oxford 'and became a man of importance in the country'. Philip was named after Robert's second son, yet his superhuman attributes applied in more obvious ways to the elder brother that Philip 'so adored': Ian's father Valentine, known as Val.

'My father didn't talk about Val,' says Philip's son, Robin. 'Rather untouchable, that would sum it.'

Ian barely knew his father except through photographs and stories, and he told Ivar Bryce that he could not remember him. The stories about Val bear out Winston Churchill's signed obituary that Ian kept framed on his bedroom wall and later in his office at Mitre Court, and which said, in effect, 'what a Sir Galahad his father had been'. After the war, Peter Fleming wrote to Churchill asking him to sign his copy: 'We boys hardly knew him but he must have been a wonderful chap.' Peter and Ian's prep-school headmaster had encountered Val only once, and that was enough. 'I have never been more attracted by any man than I was by him when I just met him like that for a few minutes. Over and over again, I've said to my wife, "Oh, he was a *man*." ' Amaryllis regarded him in haloed terms 'as if he was a sort of saint'.

To his grandson Fergus, Val is a measure of how the Flemings were purified within one generation. 'Robert came down to London with a splash, and saw his favourite eldest son into Society with a capital S.'

At Eton, Val was elected to the elite body of prefects known as Pop along with Ian's future English teacher, George Lyttelton (who called Val 'one of the best of my Eton friends'); Robert Vansittart (who had dealings with Ian at the Foreign Office); and Churchill's younger brother Jack. Athletic like his father, Val was in the school rowing VIII and winner of his house long jump, high jump and hundred yards. He only failed to get a rowing blue at Oxford, said Peter, 'because he got a boil just before the trials'. He read history at Magdalen, qualified to become a barrister, and in 1904 joined his local Territorial regiment, the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, where his association with Churchill began. 'Winston was quite a friend,' said Peter. 'Used to come to Joyce Grove and shoot rather badly before the war.' By contrast, Val was an excellent shot, a keen fisherman and 'a good man to hounds'; he hunted hare with bassets, and, at the house that he bought near Joyce Grove in the year of his marriage, he kept a pack of twenty-two, with names like

Striver, Sinbad and Doubtful. Val also had 'sterling qualities as a deerstalker', in the words of his obituary. Out of all the things he enjoying doing, stalking ranked near the very top. At the time of his death, he had just built a lodge, Arnisdale, in Invernessshire.

Val was a paragon of whom no one said a bad word and a credit to his parents in every respect. 'There was absolutely nothing that he couldn't have done if he wanted to,' wrote his sister Dorothy. 'There never has been anybody like him, even as a dear little boy always loved & looked up to.' The only time he seems to have rowed against his family was in his choice of a wife. The Flemings had little in common with 'the lurid bombshell' who in 1906 landed in their midst.

II
EVE

'Character would greatly depend on upbringing, and, whatever Pavlov and the Behaviourists might say, to a certain extent on the character of the parents.'

FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

'I've always been inclined to say "No".' James Bond grapples with Robert Fleming's mantra in 'the book of golden words', as Ian called the notebook in which he scribbled down 'thoughts and comments' for his character. 'It's a shorter word than "Yes." And it commits you to less. But it's wrong and a bad way of life. What people call the "full life" is a commitment up to the hilt.'

Ian's mother tugged in the opposite direction. She was a Yes-girl from the tip of her broad-brimmed, ostrich-feathered hats to the hem of her swishing yellow crinolines. Her motto resurfaced in Ian's children's book *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang*: 'Never say "no" to adventures. Always say "yes"; otherwise, you'll lead a very dull life.' Her untempered ache for excitement also informed Peter's theory that 'you must *never* refuse a risk to which you feel attracted even if doesn't seem a very sensible one to take. If you do start refusing risks that you want to take you are sunk & you will be run over by a bus or something silly like that.'

William Stephenson said of Ian: 'You will understand him better if you understand how the crazy genes from his mother were always dancing round the strong, silent Scottish genes from his father.'

Evelyn Sainte Croix* Rose was a dark-haired girl with large striking eyes

* Bond's mother was Monique Delacroix, a nod to Eve. But the Sainte Croix in Eve's name had nothing to do with her family. Lucy de Sainte Croix was 'a dear friend' of Eve's grandmother, Margaretta Rose. A childless widow from Guildford, Lucy left her estate to Margaretta. In Lucy's memory, the Roses named Eve's father George Sainte Croix.

who came from the nearby Thameside village of Sonning, now famous for George Clooney and Theresa May. She had attended a French finishing school and played the violin. She was vain, selfish and extremely pretty, remembered Mary Pakenham. 'Her expression was the blank, wide-eyed stare of the professional beauty.' She once wrote to the portrait painter Philip de László: 'I am a good sitter though difficult to do, I believe!' Augustus John painted her sixteen times and never caught her scatter-brained vanity.

Ian's niece Mary met her later in life at the Grosvenor Hotel. 'She gave me a pearl necklace for my twenty-first and I went wearing it to thank her. She was in bed. She wanted to order us a cake for us to eat and for something to occupy the staff, and then she smiled and it was the most beautiful smile I've ever seen, ever, and I could understand how beautiful she must have appeared to others.'

Eve first smiled at her future husband at Henley's Royal Regatta, where her father acted as a steward. Her louche brother Harcourt had rowed with Valentine at Eton and Oxford: in all likelihood, he introduced them.Years later, Ian wrote to her that the ghillie at Black Mount still talked about Eve's fishing prowess. 'He never met anyone who would cast a line so straight into the wind.' Once Eve had hooked her gaze on Robert Fleming's handsome, rich young son, she did not release him, 'and married him almost immediately,' said Ian's half-sister Amaryllis. 'He was the one person in the world who had been able to cope with her.'

Eve Rose's square, sane, country-loving in-laws would always be a bit suspicious of her. 'Robert disapproved of his son marrying Miss Rose from the start,' recalled Ian's tutor, Ernan Forbes Dennis. 'Said she wasn't the real goods.'

A discordant note that she shared with Robert's wife Kate was her obsession with lineage. Eve's brittle insistence on the importance of ancestry explained Ian's second name, Lancaster: after a Mary Lancaster in the eighteenth century, and so back, somehow, to John of Gaunt, first Duke of Lancaster – from whom, as Ian used to point out, 'half England could be descended'. Towards Lancaster, Ian adopted the attitude of Bertie Wooster whose middle name was Wilberforce ('except in moments of great emotion one hushed it up').

Hester Chapman, the daughter of Ian's prep-school headmaster, was so astounded by Eve's social aspirations that she cast her in a novel as 'the Duchess of Lancaster' who was unable to stand at the top of the stairs

without a tiara – which in Eve's case resembled 'a glorified jam tart'. Amaryllis recognised how 'Ian's dislike of sociability is probably a revolt against my mother's absurd socialite phase. She was always having ridiculous people to her parties which were quite appalling. People with titles just because they were titles. She had a fantastic regard for position.' Eve's much later lover, the 16th Marquess of Winchester, informed his no less socially ambitious Parsee wife, whom Eve had usurped, that Eve 'descended from a Spanish woman called SANTAQUARA who kept a pub in Portsmouth'.

If not publicans, Eve's family was as upwardly mobile as Val's. The third child of George and Beatrice Rose, she grew up in a middle-class Georgian villa on the Thames, where her father, another keen oarsman, was president of the Sonning regatta. George, a solicitor, was the ninth child of the founding father of asset management, Sir Philip Rose.

A philanthropist responsible for the Royal Brompton Hospital, Eve's grandfather had acquired his baronetcy for services rendered to the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, later Lord Beaconsfield, with whom he had been at school in Islington and 'learned their simple alphabet together'. Paunchy, bald, with a short white beard, Sir Philip Rose is caricatured by 'Spy' in *Vanity Fair* as 'Lord Beaconsfield's friend'. He was, in addition, Disraeli's executor as well as his legal and financial adviser.* It was Rose's investment trust – the first anywhere – on which Robert Fleming had modelled his Scottish American Trust.

Disraeli threaded Eve's paternal Rose grandfather to her maternal grandfather, the eminent doctor Sir Richard Quain. A matching 'Spy' cartoon shows 'Lord Beaconsfield's Physician' as a beak-nosed man with the same ruminative expression that people later observed in Ian, of one who, in the words of his obituary, 'may be said to have known everyone worth knowing and seen everything worth seeing'.

Peter Fleming inherited his ivory chalice. 'I think whatever brains we have must come from old Quain.'

* The mother of Rose's wife, Margaretta Ranking (already a status-conscious name), was Elizabeth Amos, which may explain Ian's cryptic reference to 'the mixture of Scottish and Jewish blood which runs in my veins'.

Richard Quain was Irish, born on the Blackwater River, and apprenticed aged fifteen to a surgeon in Limerick. His medical background explained how he got to know the Roses. In London, Quain became a consultant at Sir Philip Rose's Royal Brompton Hospital and 'the most capable young physician of his day'. He attended Disraeli in his final days, and Queen Victoria as her physician-extraordinary. Among Quain's patients were Thomas Carlyle and his wife, Jane. Ian would have known the story of how Quain allegedly examined Jane Carlyle in late life and was led to expostulate in amazement, 'Why! You're virgo intacta!' Apparently, Jane had then revealed to Quain how on her wedding night she was so hysterically nervous that she had burst out laughing to find that her husband 'in a blue funk was frigging himself' beneath the sheets, whereupon he stormed from the room.

Not to be confused with his cousin – the physician Richard Quain, author of *The Diseases of the Rectum* (1855) – his area of expertise was the heart, from its opening beat to its last. Yet the one ambition of his life remained unfulfilled: to publish a small work on 'the Diseases of the Walls of the Heart' – a likely cause of Ian's death. Instead, Quain threw it aside to concentrate on *Quain's Dictionary of Medicine* (1882), a project that took him eight years, ensured his place in the medical books, and inspired a story by Borges.

A meticulous proofreader, Quain was in the last stage of putting to bed his 2,500-page dictionary when he received news that Benjamin Disraeli was dying, and he was summoned jointly with Ian's other great-grandfather. The *Pall Mall Budget* pictured the scene. 'About five minutes before the breathing ceased Sir Philip Rose and Dr Quain arrived. Then a most placid appearance came over his lordship's face, which deeply moved all in the room . . . thus without suffering, without a struggle, Lord Beaconsfield's life slowly passed away.'

Compared with these two Victorian pillars, Eve's brothers Ivor and Harcourt were 'so disreputable they were kept out of sight'.

Churchill called the Fleming brothers, Ian's father and uncle, 'the Flemingoes'. Eve's brothers gained notoriety as 'the wild Roses'. Both alcoholics, both three times married, both declared bankrupt, they were the gaudy

reverse of Valentine and Philip, an example of everything that Robert Fleming had worked each day to avoid. They reminded him of the immoral Jay Gould and other American chancers, and motivated Robert to act to limit their threat so that the fortune he had made for his family did not take sudden flight.

'Harky', or 'Ingle' as Harcourt Rose was known by his stepson, the actor Christopher Lee, blamed his plunge on having been 'brought up in an atmosphere of considerable affluence'. In 1928, the New York bank Speyer & Company appointed him their London representative 'with every reason to believe that he would not earn less in salary and commission than £20,000 a year', approximately £12.5 million today. He overspent this sum by the same amount on 'unjustifiable extravagance in living'. Lee's childhood was a pageant of chauffeur-driven Buicks, silver-fox furs, one country house after another, and shooting parties at which 'Ingle' could be smelt downwind for miles 'because of an evil mixture of creosote and vinegar of his own invention to keep insects off his face'. With the same pungent creativity, he batted away creditors and ex-wives. Lee recalled a short, energetic, prodigiously strong man of 'sheer animal verve' who could bend a poker round his neck and excelled at word games. He was a friend of Rasputin's assassins, claimed to know a lot about drink – he had forty bottles of Tokay from Franz Josef's cellars in Vienna – and remained 'a very free spender'. By 1936, it was all gone. Harcourt told the Bankruptcy Court that his 'only asset was a ring which had realised £1.15*s*'.

Lee was able to draw on Harcourt's characteristics when he played the three-nippled assassin Scaramanga in the film of Ian's last novel, *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

Harcourt's only recorded sighting after that was when a stranger knocked one night on Amaryllis's door and said he was her Uncle Harky, come to see what she looked like, and produced a large chicken. 'This is all they seem to have in Norfolk,' he added, and disappeared.

Ivor was Eve's elder brother. Christopher Lee wrote that 'we never met Ivor, seemingly because he'd married an Eskimo.' But Ivor's third wife was not Innu: she was the daughter of Richard White, an expert on the Innu who ran a network of trading posts in Labrador. In the late 1930s, when several hundred Innu were dying of starvation, he led a party on dog-sleighs to save

them. His reckless son-in-law never saved anyone. After leaving Eton to fight in the Boer War, Ivor was wounded in the First World War. He then squandered his inheritance on yachting holidays and expensive cars, making his daughter paint the radiator badges vermilion 'to enable people to see how fast he was coming'. He contested one of a blizzard of speeding fines saying he could not have been driving so fast because his wife was sitting on his knee. He ended his debt-ridden days in a coachman's cottage.

Eve ensured that neither Ivor nor Harcourt came anywhere near her children. Ian, in particular, might have found their whimsical appetites to his taste. Ivor's one subsequent reappearance occurred shortly after Ian joined White's Club in St James's when an older member introduced himself as 'Your Uncle Ivor' and offered Ian a selection of pornographic postcards.

'A fortune once acquired should never be endangered' was another maxim in Robert Fleming's notebook. Upon Val's marriage in February 1906, Robert gave him a one-off settlement of £250,000 (£36 million in today's money). The behaviour of the 'wild Roses', who were indeed to come knocking on their sister's door for cash, may have persuaded Val to accept his father's advice on safeguarding this inheritance when he made his will. The measures and clauses that Val put in place on the eve of his going to war were to have a tremendous impact on his children.

III
A STORMY CHILDHOOD

'He was a complex creature but all the complications derived from his home & schooldays – as most complications do.'

ROBERT HARLING

'The four madmen to whom I gave birth,' as Eve called them, appeared in quick succession. Peter was born on 31 May 1907; and Ian, another Gemini, one year later, on 28 May 1908, at 27 Green Street, the house his parents leased off Park Lane. Three years separated Ian from Richard, born in 1911. Michael, the youngest, was born in 1913.

About his early years, Ian talked as sparingly as James Bond. In an unpublished essay on 'Bondsmanship', Stephen Potter observed that there was 'no patter of little feet in Bond Street'. Bond never says to his companion, 'This is where I first learned to ride a bicycle.' Like the stamps and cigarette cards Ian collected as a boy, the story of his childhood has to be assembled from disparate sources.

It was a privileged upbringing, overprivileged even. Quite how unhappy is revealed in the Blitz when Ian's lover Maud Russell telephoned him, distraught. Her son Raymond had been found unconscious in a gutter in Cambridge, having taken half a bottle of Adalin pills. 'He said he sometimes thought of putting his head in a gas oven,' Maud wrote in her diary. 'Poor I[an]. had a very troubled youth himself and understands this dreadful tangle better than anyone I know and better than I do . . . He groaned as I told him. His heart is so good.' Ian's advice for Maud boiled down to doing what he wished his own mother had done for him: '*Go on, make more sacrifices. You won't forgive yourself unless you do, unless you do your utmost. If you can, be emotional. Cry if you can*.' Maud

followed his advice because she knew Ian had had 'such a stormy childhood himself'.

But why so stormy? Ian's tutor in Kitzbühel, Ernan Forbes Dennis, afterwards became a professional analyst, and was mystified by Fleming's attitude towards his early years – 'the sense of deprivation . . . which lasted all through his life'. This puzzled Fleming's schoolfriend Gerald Coke. 'He had everything he could have wanted – looks, money, brains, position . . . but he behaved as if he was permanently deprived.'

His unhappiness is present from early on. He has been left at home with Peter and his new baby brother, Richard, when their nanny writes to Eve from Brazier's Park, the Flemings' country house near Henley. This is the first glimpse we have of Ian Fleming – as a constipated three-year-old:

'Now Master Ian, he was so cross on the morning you left we did not know what to do with him. I gave him one of his Powders Squares. It kept him going all the Tuesday. I was very sorry for him. They had not done that before so I made him a cup of arrowroot [for diarrhoea] for his supper. He was very pleased and came the next night to see if I had another. On Thursday I gave him gravy and toast as he will not eat potatoes for his dinner and he has had good dinners each day since and he is quite good about the bacon fat if he has a tiny bit of fat on each finger of bread.'

Peter said: 'He always made his feelings very clear about bad food even as a boy. At Joyce Grove, when he was very young, he used to object to his porridge and used to throw it on top of the wardrobe, where of course it soon produced a fine growth of fungus.'

Ann observed the same cross, fussy appetite at play, the desire for that extra bit of fat. 'He always acted as if someone hadn't given him the lion's share. He had a sort of hunger for things. Whenever he was in France I used to hear him ordering breakfast in the morning and the words "*un double*" kept recurring. Double orange juice, double eggs, double coffee. Double everything.' Rarely was his hunger satisfied, since it had little to do with food. 'Ian was a melancholic, and needed much solitude. I have a photograph of him with his three brothers . . . In the picture, three boys are smiling at the camera and there's one looking saturnine. This was Ian. He was different. I don't think he was a very easy child.'

He is in tears in the next glimpse. On 3 September 1911, Val writes from Loch Choire Lodge near Helmsdale to 'Master Ian Fleming'. He is three and a half.

'My dear Baba, I hope you are quite well & have been a good boy & that you eat your food without crying, 'cos it is stupid to cry & little boys who cry get laughed at when they go to school.

'Dada would like to come & see you and play with you on the sands, and build big sand castles to keep the sea back.

'Dada sends you a picture of himself shooting a big stag.

'Look after your Mumma, if you lose her Dada will be angry 'cos she is a unique specimen,

'Your loving DADA'

His father with a stag at his feet was a formative image. Val, pipe in mouth, was another. Ian knew him as 'Mokie', after the clouds of tobacco smoke in which his eyebrow moustache and prematurely balding head appeared to be permanently enveloped. Val called Ian variously 'Baba', 'Johnny', and 'Jocky' out of the same blurred focus.

That summer of 1911, Robert Fleming, a grandchild of crofters and poachers, rented the deer-stalking on the Loch Choire estate in the northern Highlands of Scotland from the Duke of Sutherland, who demanded references. One referee wrote back that in case His Grace did not know it, Robert Fleming was one of the wealthiest men in Britain. Robert had a telephone cable run from the lodge to hear what was going on in the world. The game bag of 130 stags and 1,814 grouse broke all records.

Robert spent every August and September in a Scottish deer forest; taking sporting estates at Rannoch Lodge in Perthshire, and then, for six seasons, Glenborrodale, 'a dotty red sandstone castle' on the Ardnamurchan peninsula. From 1924 on, he leased from the Marquess of Breadalbane a 110,000-acre slab of land on Loch Tulla in north-east Argyllshire called Black Mount. In the 1930s, during the agricultural depression, the family bought the estate, and since then, Black Mount has been 'the tribal centre' of the Flemings. 'We'd go

north in August and September like migrating birds,' says Richard's daughter Mary, 'and then when the geese went over you knew it was time to come south.'

All three of Ian's brothers inherited Val's reverence 'for sporting holidays marked by a degree of bloodthirstiness and physical exhaustion rarely seen out of wartime'. Days were spent wading through icy burns and trudging across savage moors. A family poem celebrated Robert's spartan ethos that he had carried since boyhood:

If you can crawl or worm upon your belly
If you can fall on rocks and never squeal
Although your limbs are battered to a jelly
And there's a normous blister on your heel . . .
In short if you are strong enough to bear creation
If you can smile when frozen in a wave
You will have earned the Flemings' approbation,
Or else – they'll write 'Hic Jacet' on your grave!

Ian's brothers were addicted to this ardent regime. 'Peter is flying north for three more days of grouse shooting,' Rupert Hart-Davis wrote to George Lyttelton in September 1959. 'Shooting is like a religion to him – something solemn and ritual, which can scarcely be joked about.'

Their strenuous outdoor exercise made Val's sons uniformly fit. Dressed in plus-fours in Black Mount green and brown tweed designed by Robert's daughter Dorothy, they looked 'curiously muscle-bound' to one observer from south of the border, 'so that, during a meal, when one of them turned to speak he moved not merely his head or his head and shoulders alone, but his whole tweed-coated torso'. Peter Quennell noticed the same rigidity about Ian, 'which grew more pronounced should his temper have been aroused or his spirits happen to be low.'

Nothing lowered Ian's spirits more than the prospect of joining his family in Argyllshire. 'He used to get very sullen towards Christmas,' said Ann. 'Apparently, as a boy, he had always hated going to Black Mount for the traditional deer-hunting thing with the Flemings. Felt claustrophobia in the family circle.' His reply when asked what he wanted to do after the paucity of

the previous day's sport passed into Fleming lore. 'Well, if it's all the same to you I'd rather catch no salmon than shoot no grouse.'

Ian's aversion to following a stag or trampling the moors with a shotgun was inexplicable to his brother Richard. 'Don't ask me why he didn't. Never really understood. I took to these things almost by instinct.'

Richard, the most Scottish of the brothers, who would twirl through Cheyne Walk in a kilt, had an obsession with hunting. Once, when his daughter Sandra suggested that 'there are other things to do in life other than get on a horse and hunt', his wife replied: 'What, dear? Life is hunting.'

'I don't like hunting or shooting,' Ian wrote to Ann. He was 'not greatly interested in horses' either. He had regarded them as 'dangerous at both ends and uncomfortable in the middle' ever since, aged twelve, he was sent off, complaining, to a nearby meet in Oxfordshire from which he was ordered home 'until you can learn to ride'.

Hunting on foot held no more allure, after one of Val's beagles went for Ian when he was six. 'He never liked dogs after that,' said Peter. Putting up a rod had less appeal still. On a list that Ian compiled of 'the empty hours of my life' – up there with being in hospital, on watch at sea, listening to bad opera, and hawk hunting in Kuwait – he counted 'fishing Scottish lochs in the rain'.

Ian characterised Scotland as 'wet rhododendrons' and 'dripping evergreens'. At Glenborrodale Castle, 'I spent some of the unhappiest years of my youth.' Black Mount made him no happier. As another family poem put it:

Here we are, Black Mount again:
Same old smells, same old rain

He once warned Hilary Bray and his wife against living in Scotland. 'For God's sake, don't or you'll both end up growing hair on your cheeks and huddled up in a tartan rug round a peat fire.'

'We were all wild creatures at Black Mount,' says Richard's daughter Sandra. 'We were "put out" after breakfast and expected not to appear until lunch time.' Some guests barricaded themselves in their rooms rather than face their hosts' idea of fun. Prominent among the recalcitrants were Eve and Ian. Eve was nicknamed 'Mie' (mummy-mee) or 'Yer' ('She's *yer* aunt,'

the cousins would say). She liked to go off and practise on her violin in the stag larder, a green corrugated shed outside. 'Her nephews and nieces used to wait until she was inside,' says Mary, 'and then run up and scrape their nails down the corrugated iron.' Ian followed his mother's lead in opting to stay behind and listen to music. 'To the exasperation of my family, I had a weakness for the Hawaiian guitar, and I played records of the Royal Hawaiian Serenaders when I should have been out of doors killing something.'

Indoors, Robert Fleming's frugality set the tone. You were not allowed sugar on your porridge, it had to be salt. Robert disapproved of alcohol and would not employ anyone who was not 'absolutely free from any tendency in that direction'. Success had not lightened his dourness. Rupert Hart-Davis recalled 'a pathetic, dithery, little old man with a red face' who was apt to let slip a bit of food now and then on his moustache, whereupon Kate would say '*Essuyez*, Robert! Something clings!' – an expression that became part of the family's parlance when someone had food around their mouth. His wife resented the fact that he was getting old. In London, a policeman would stop the traffic to let him pass. He enjoyed no such dispensation from her. 'Robert, hold your hands up!' she shouted at bridge. 'Your cards are shaking,' and kick him under the table when he seemed slow in answering a question. 'Make conversation, Robert, dear! It helps to keep the larynx clear.' His grave reply: 'Kate, Ah'm naw entir–r–e–l–y deaf!'

This was the ethos and regime that shaped Ian and his brothers, says James Fleming. 'Rain was better for one than sun, little good would ever come from something that could be done easily, smoking was disgusting . . . more than a glass of sherry and one was leading to perdition.'

It was a regime that tolerated no crying, and no hugging, says Richard's daughter Mary. 'We were absolutely not physically demonstrative, except in sport, and would run a mile at the thought of being touched. If mum had said to me she loved me, I'd have been sick. Love was meant to be Launcelot and Guinevere, and had nothing to do with parents.'

If the next generation of Flemings loved you, they teased you, observes Peter's daughter Kate. 'When Fleming meets Fleming their first instinct may not be to hug, but it will be to make the other laugh.'

Putting Val's stalking glass to the eye, there is a tempting explanation for Ian's stormy childhood. What he had been starved of, what had fed his melancholy, his saturnine expression, his fussy 'hunger for things', was Eve's undivided love at a time when Ian needed it most.

His elder brother's illness had dictated Ian's first years and robbed him of the most important early attachment that he could share with his mother. At the moment Ian was born, weighing just short of nine pounds, Eve's focus was wrenched from him when Peter contracted colitis. Peter said: 'It wasn't recognised in those days and I was more or less despaired of.' He suffered unbearable stomach pains, on one occasion vomiting for fourteen hours. A stammer wore off, but Peter was left with no sense of taste or smell ('I once saw him put pepper on peaches,' said a friend). He also grew up shorter than his brothers. In a state of permanent concern, the Flemings travelled to Lausanne over four successive years for Peter to undergo a month-long treatment under the supervision of a Swiss specialist.

All this attention on his delicate brother proved too much for Ian, who, aged five, made a great scene 'and had to be carried screaming and kicking from the Beau Rivage Hotel'.

Back home, Peter's stomach pains continued. Eve wrote in her diary in July 1914: 'We were going to Scotland to Glenelg Hotel to watch the building of Arnisdale but Peter had one of his attacks and a temperature of 104.'

Ian's screaming and kicking did not subside either.

'Of course, we fought like cat and dog for most of our boyhood,' said Peter. 'We were so close together. It often happens like that. Ever seen two fox cubs? It was like that with us.'

Ian nicknamed Peter 'Pudding', after a medicinal dessert that he had to eat at prep school. Peter lashed back with 'Turnip'.

A governess in whalebone stays called 'Mivvy' had prepared them for their prep school. In September 1916, in the second year of the war, the two brothers were sent away together to Durnford House, close to the Dorset coast.

IV
VAL

'There is a tragedy under every roof.'
IAN FLEMING'S 'BOOK OF GOLDEN WORDS'

Durnford House was a converted eighteenth-century manor house in Langton Matravers, set back three miles from the sea on six acres of grounds.

Ian had the surrounding countryside in mind when hunting for his final home. 'The only areas of my childhood for which I have affection are Dorset and the West Coast of Scotland,' he wrote to Ann in 1957, somewhat contradicting his earlier claims. 'The Purbeck Hills are thrilling and covered with snakes and orchids and the Dorset houses are lovely.' Nearby was the Moigne Combe estate belonging to the Bond family, descendants of the Elizabethan spy John Bond, whose motto, *Non Sufficit Orbis*, 'the world is not enough', was pillaged by a later Bond.

This landscape of wooded valleys and stone-walled pastures formed the backdrop of Ian's first romance. A love poem he wrote on leaving Durnford aged thirteen included these lines:

Sunlight over the Purbeck hills,
Flooding the dreamy Dorset street
Bathing its cobbles in sudden gold
Treading the world with gilded feet.

Established in 1893 by Tom Pellatt and his wife Nell, Durnford House was a private school for sixty boys, with a reputation for being 'unusual' in that it operated, said their daughter, on 'the completely novel idea for those days that boys should be happy at school'.

Pellatt, or 'T.P.' as the boys called him, was a pot-bellied playwright with

a thick moustache. Peter considered him a teacher of 'character, genius', and 'a most original man'.

With fees that were the highest in the UK at £90 per term (approximately £10,500 today), Durnford was a feeder for Eton, where Ian's father and three uncles had gone. Pellatt sent three-quarters of his boys there, including the children of two Eton headmasters, Cyril Alington, who would be Ian's headmaster, and Claude Elliott, whose son Nicholas worked with Ian in Intelligence; Ian's admission may even have owed something to Pellatt's position as a lay member of the Admiralty board which interviewed prospective naval officers.

Eve dropped off her two sons on the first day of the autumn term. Val was away at the front.

The person who kitted out Peter and Ian with their school cap was the inspiration for Ian's poem, the Pellatts' seventeen-year-old daughter Hester. She wrote how one boy 'had to be torn, shrieking, from his mother's arms as she collapsed into the station fly. Twenty minutes later, he was playing touch-last in the orchard.'

'Dear Mokie, I like school rather – some things are nice. I hope the war will soon be over lots of love & xxx fr Ian'. These are Ian Fleming's earliest words to survive, penned to his father, then in Ypres. Val had sent him a postcard showing the ruined city centre.

Already, the outlines of Ian's character are present in a letter to his nanny, Miss Perticher, on 10 October 1916. 'The first day I went swimming. I am some body's slave. I am in a hury.'

A letter to his mother ten days later is more plaintive. 'It is the longest time I have had away from you, and it is not at all nice.' There was no telephone. Eve would be kept at arm's length until half-term. Then, in his next communication: 'My dear Mum I dont like school half so much now. Thanks for the knife. Here is a map that I drew at lessons. Some of the boys are beastly. We have 8 hours lissons. Some of the boys say that we are beasts. Peter is a great help to me. We are aloud knives Lots of love and lots of xxxxxxxxxxx'. The term does not improve. 'I am afraid that I do not like school very much I do not know what form im in im in so mony. I am afraid I have not made any friends, they are so dirty and unreverent.'

Herbert Laurie was a schoolfriend who witnessed Ian's early mood swings. 'For some days, he would be sweet as summer and the most delightful of companions. Then abruptly, he would withdraw into a slough of moroseness and to approach him at such periods would be to court a snub. At length the surly phase would end and he would once more be the soul of amiable gentility.'

Another Durnford contemporary was the engraver Reynolds Stone, who went on to provide the illustrations for Ian's edition of Evelyn Waugh's *The Holy Places* and the royal arms on the *Times* masthead and British passports. Abnormally shy, Stone avoided being teased by fantasising that he was a unicorn. He is unlikely to have been one of Ian's dirty bullies; in any event, Ian seems to have returned like for like.

Peter said: 'Ian was basically a naughty boy.' The precise form of his naughtiness is unclear, but 'T.P.' singled him out early on as someone who needed monitoring. 'Ian will be a first-rate little boy after a bit, only he is of course a difficult child in some ways.'

To lift his son's spirits, Val pencilled Ian a longer letter from his miserable forward position in northern France. It was October 1916. He had been away two years.

'My Dear Jocky,

'I hope you are enjoying school fairly well, and getting used to it. I expect you found it a bit funny at first being among a lot of strange boys. And I expect their ways seemed funny to you, but you will soon see that everyone has ways of their own and may be quite all right though they are different from your ways. So you try and get into what Peter and you and Mr Pellatt think are the right ways and if other boys seem different just leave them alone and don't say anything about it. To them or anyone else. You will have plenty to do looking after yourself without bothering about other boys. I hear you have kicked four goals at football. That is very good . . . I suppose you have stopped bathing at [Dancing Ledge]. It must be a topping bathing place at Durnfords. Do you sleep in a separate room with Peter or in a dormitory? Do they give you nice things to eat? Tell Peter I am going to write to him tomorrow. I hope you can

read this letter. I have not got any pens or ink here. I am sitting in a hut I made of old shell boxes. Its nice but the rain and wind come in. Best love, Mokie.'

He was writing from an 'awfully cold and wet' dugout even as a 'big German howitzer' shelled his camp.

Named in the endless rolls of those killed or wounded, the school lost fifty-one old boys in this 'stupendous cataclysm', as Pellatt called the 1914–18 war. Among those to meet their muddy death in battle was the ebullient music master Mr Nowell, who had led the boys in hymns at the upright piano on Sunday nights. The Pellatts' daughter Hester recalled how 'the casualty lists were a real source of terror to us, and we got quite used to breaking this sort of news to the boys'.

Pellatt wrote to Val's father: 'One dreads the post & the coming of telegrams.' Robert Fleming sat every day in his office hoping not to hear news from the front where his two 'good swank lads' were fighting side by side in the same regiment. He confided his worries to a banker in New York. 'It is indeed a time of times in which we live, in which the very foundations of our world's social structures are being shaken, and out of which no man can say what will emerge . . .'

Val had joined his father's bank as a partner on its formation in 1909. The following year, he stood for Parliament. On 15 January 1910, the son of a man brought up in a Dundee slum was elected Conservative and Unionist MP for Boris Johnson's former constituency of Henley, displacing the Liberal incumbent, the husband of Lady Ottoline Morrell – who, according to Peter, was so indignant when the polls were declared, 'she had slapped Mother's face'. Val was twenty-seven. On his election, he decided he must have 'a proper London house'. In October 1913, the family moved to Wildwoods on Hampstead Heath, a grey, twelve-bedroomed house with a billiard room, two tennis courts and a four-acre garden overspilling with rhododendrons. Val renamed it Pitt House, after a previous owner, Prime Minister William Pitt, who had secluded himself in a small room on the third floor. Peter said: 'My mother's bedroom had been Pitt's room and still had two serving hatches so that when Pitt shut himself in there with gout, he could be given

his food without seeing anyone.' Eve was not so retiring. She at once built for herself 'the most original music room, the walls of which are covered with moonlight blue glass', according to *Vogue*. Here she practised her violin while her husband played at being a constituency MP.

Val was 'absolutely a non-politician', said Peter. 'He went into Parliament because it was what was expected of him. It was a duty he had to perform. But he regarded it as a chore.' His friend Churchill observed that 'the fierce tumults' that swayed political life were not for Val. The one time he took flight was in a speech on the Territorial Army. 'I believe if we heard a little less about the rights and a little more about the duties of citizens of this country we should be a great deal better off.' On 1 November 1913, he asked his last question, on 'the lack of accommodation in existing sanatoria'.

Eight months later, the country went to war.

On 4 August 1914, Eve wrote in her diary. 'War was declared early this morning. I had a cold shiver down my spine . . .' Mobilisation orders arrived the following day. Val took with him his white cairn terrier Cluanie, named after a deer forest, plus the telescope he used for stalking. Eve was determined not to weep until he was gone.

Less than a week after Val left for Dunkirk, she was invited to visit him at the instigation of Winston Churchill: as First Lord of the Admiralty, he was making an incognito visit to Belgium. Eve accompanied Jack Churchill's wife Gwendoline on the ferry from Dover. Jack was in Val's regiment.

In the Hussars' stables at Dunkirk, Val showed Eve the greys he had transported from Joyce Grove. 'It seemed so funny to see them there drawing the ammunition wagon instead of the brake from Henley.' The high point of her visit was a dinner with Winston Churchill, who arrived out of the blue, having 'come straight from the battle of the Aisne and had been to the trenches!!' Eve sat opposite him 'and listened with all my ears'.

Churchill's account of the battlefield revealed the fast-changing face of war. 'W says swords are useless and that all the cavalry now have bayonets . . . W said that once the French and Germans were so near, and they had to throw away their rifles and fight hand to hand, and the French bit off the German noses!!'

She went up afterwards and thanked Churchill for letting her come – 'it was he who suggested it to Val'. She promised not to tell anyone about him being at the front.

Val's was the first territorial unit to see action. He and Philip, who served as his second-in-command, would be in France on and off for three years.

On 14 November 1914, Eve wrote in her diary following the first battle of Ypres: 'I hear on all sides of his bravery.' She had learned from an officer in his regiment how 'Val crawled to their trench to see if they were all right after a shell had exploded near them', and how 'he saw the Germans bringing up a gun out of sight of the French who were next to them . . . No one but a stalker would have seen them.' Still viewing the war in deer-hunting terms, Val reported to Eve how he had climbed the church tower, and 'pulling out my stalking glass' had seen Germans 'all in grey uniforms looking fat'. He had 'crawled back to headquarters who telephoned to the French & they got the guns on to the Germans at dusk'.

Eve told her children, 'he wrote to me every single day of the war.' He called her 'my sweet of sweets'. She missed him intensely. 'I hear women who can speak French are wanted out there & I would love to go if it wasn't for the children.'

It is unlikely that Val would have welcomed her presence. Four days previously, he had written a sober assessment of 'this astounding conflict' to Churchill. One of the earliest and most graphic descriptions of the First World War, Val's letter is all the more poignant for anticipating his fate. Talk of nose-biting has ceased; his glossy grey horses and sword are history.

'Imagine a broad belt, ten miles or so in width, stretching from the Channel to the German frontier near Basle, which is positively littered with the bodies of men and scarified with their rude graves; in which farms, villages, and cottages are shapeless heaps of blackened masonry; in which fields, roads and trees are pitted and torn and twisted by shells and disfigured by dead horses, cattle, sheep and goats, scattered in every attitude of repulsive distortion and dismemberment. Day and night in this area are made hideous by the incessant crash and whistle and roar of every sort of projectile, by sinister columns of smoke and flame and by the cries of wounded men, by the piteous calls of animals of all sorts, abandoned, starved, perhaps wounded.'

Val's letter to Churchill is a condemnation of war's destructiveness. Yet it was also a defiant hymn to the British Empire and its modern weaponry. With a relish for the latest technology, Val marvelled at how 'all the appliances of 20th-century civilisation can be brought to work and the result is good'. Fluttering above these 'invisible, irresistible machines' were the banners of an alliance that had the glamour of a modern crusade. He ends his letter with an unforgettable scene.

'One night last week, beautifully starlit, I was riding up the reverse slope of a wooded hill round which were encamped the most extraordinary medley of troops you could imagine, French Cuirassiers with their glistening breastplates and lances, a detachment of the London Scottish, an English howitzer battery, a battalion of Sikhs, a squadron of African Spahis with long robes and turbans, all sitting round their camp fire, chattering, singing, smoking, the very apotheosis of picturesque and theatrical warfare with their variety of uniforms, saddlery equipment and arms. Very striking it was to see the remnants of an English line battalion marching back from the trenches through these merry warriors, a limping column of bearded muddy, torn figures, slouching with fatigue, with wool caps instead of helmets, sombre looking in their khaki, but able to stand the cold, the strain, the awful losses, the inevitable inability to reply to the shell fire, which is what other nations *can't* do.'

The lineaments of his son's fictional hero stare out from those sombre English faces. Valour. Duty. A stoical obedience to a noble cause. A taste for the most up-to-date gadgets. The same taste in food even. 'A dish of scrambled eggs and bacon, two cups of lovely coffee and a good whack of scones and Oxford marmalade and butter would be the most acceptable present anyone could make me just when it begins to get light.'

Then these Bond characteristics. Val single-handedly put out the flames on a lorry loaded with ammunition exploding in all directions. Twice mentioned in despatches, his code was *Leave No Man Behind*. When one of his men was badly shot in the shoulder, Val crawled out in broad daylight and had him bandaged. Then, wrote Philip, even though 'they were quite exposed to the Germans', his brother 'carried the man back to the place where the doctor was behind the line'.

In April 1915, Val was again in Ypres, helping Major W. G. Shakespeare,

who was in charge of the hospital there. 'You never saw such an exodus,' Val wrote. 'The RAMC people and we got out 359 stretcher cases in all and carried them to a field $\frac{1}{5}$ of a mile in the rear.' Both men breathed in the same 'great cloud of green gas'. Shakespeare wrote: 'Two of the officers were violently sick and had to be taken off in a motor and I escaped with an hour's difficult breathing and an ensuing mild bronchitis.' Val escaped lightly too. 'Luckily we only got the fringe of it, but it made me cough and spit like anything . . . some were choked on the spot . . . It was the most appalling, inhuman savage sight I have ever seen.' This chlorine attack marked a sea-change in Val's attitude. 'Up to now I have not really felt bitter against the Germans, but now!!! I cannot find words to express my loathing'.

The shelling was incessant, one big shell every two minutes. 'It's absolutely like nothing on earth,' Shakespeare wrote, 'and must be very like Hell', and he described 'the swish of the shell through the air, coming louder and louder every second; the noise is very like the sound of a golf club in the air before it hits the ball.'

Val was extraordinarily lucky. 'A shell burst on top of my dug-out not thirty seconds after I had got out of it, blew my fur coat and both my woollies to fragments, broke my pipe and my stick etc, but not a splinter in my fat form!'

On 20 May 1917, his luck ran out.

He had been back in London two weeks earlier to attend a secret debate in Parliament. Ian was at Durnford for the start of the summer term; for his next birthday, on 28 May, Val would leave behind for him Rudyard Kipling's *France at War*, the last present Ian ever received from his father. Peter was recuperating in Pitt House, having had his tonsils out. 'I remember screaming for joy to see him when he came into my room and hurting my throat.'

It was their final exchange. On 13 May, Val returned to France.

His brother Philip was with him shortly before it happened. 'I remember suggesting to Val to sit down and rest a bit. Not he, though. He hadn't cleaned his teeth that morn so I remember him doing that, then changing his boots and socks, then getting busy writing his various orders for that evening. Well, it was getting late and I had to get back to Roisel, so I said goodbye to them all and went off . . . That was the last time I saw dear old Val – in that cellar there at Lempire sitting writing his orders.'

Val had gone with his squadron to take over Gillemont Farm, a forward post opposite the Hindenburg Line north of St Quentin. At two thirty in the morning a heavy bombardment started up. Val was making his way to the right hand sector of the line when 'he was hit in the back by a big piece of shell', according to the regimental chaplain. 'The doctor who saw him afterwards tells me his death must have been instantaneous and that his face had an extraordinarily peaceful expression. We laid him to rest in a quiet little spit among the trees behind the line.'

His friend and fellow officer Arthur Villiers arrived on the scene moments later. 'It is almost impossible to describe the grief of his men,' he wrote to Eve. 'There has never been a braver man than Val.'

Philip wrote to console their parents, his congestion evident. 'What held that position against the Germans, who tried to attack after, was Val's absolutely extraordinary example of sticking to duty. It was outstanding and held the men – this influence of Val's. It was a hero's death he died. Dear Mum and Papsie, help yourselves by knowing that Val could not have died a more noble death.'

Peter had arrived home, on his way back to school after convalescing in Joyce Grove for ten days, and was walking in delicate steps through the hall at Pitt House with his mother when her younger sister Kathleen came 'as though from an ambush, out of the dining room on our right. She had a paper in her hand. "Eve," she said. "A telegram has come about Val." Somebody grabbed me and bustled me away upstairs. Behind me in the hall were the terrible sounds of grief. I knew that my father had been killed.' Weeks later, a dazed Peter was still saying, 'How awful, how awful, how could they do such an awful thing.'

Abandoned on a sofa upstairs, Peter heard from somewhere the sound of his grandfather crying. For Robert Fleming, who showed emotion so infrequently, the words on the telegram tore open the pent-up grief of his early years and the death of his five siblings. He had overcome and achieved so much. Now this. 'It was a sort of bellowing noise', wrote Peter in a memoir that he abandoned. A pitch of sobbing that would haunt him and reverberate through their childhood.

A colleague of Robert's saw him later that day. 'Poor fellow, he could hardly speak . . . his anxiety about his sons has always seemed to me to be

almost beyond his control.' Robert wrote to Philip in France: 'I cannot speak of Val without breaking down.'

It was Robert's idea to ask Churchill to write the tribute. 'I thought of him at once.' Years later, Arthur Villiers told Peter how pleased Churchill had been when he had finished it, especially the last sentence: 'It is a very good sentence.' The obituary appeared in *The Times* on 25 May. 'As the war lengthens and intensifies and the extending lists appear, it seems as if one watched at night a well-loved city whose lights, which burn so bright, which burn so true, are extinguished in the distance in the darkness one by one.'

Soon after, Churchill went to see Val's grave, at Sainte-Émilie, three miles behind the line. 'It is in a ruined garden,' he wrote to Eve, 'where many beautiful flowers and bushes still survive the havoc wrought by the enemy. He lies in good and gallant company. I picked some branches of great round white flowers and laid them on his grave as a tribute to the memory of a dear friend and a dauntless gentleman.'

At Durnford, Tom Pellatt read about Val's death in the paper. Hester never forgot 'how upset my mother was when she had to tell Ian about it'.

Like Churchill's framed obituary above his bed, the phantom of his dead father loomed over Ian for the remainder of his life. 'In his four sons you will find your only comfort,' Churchill had written to Eve, '& they will find in his life the inspiration and standard of their loss.' Just how significant was Val's influence can be read in this letter that Ian wrote to Peter a year before his own death. 'In my next opus James Bond's obituary appears in *The Times* – "M writes etc" – and I would very much like to put above it *The Times* masthead in the form they use it for copies of obituaries such as the one on Mokie.'

With Bond, and ultimately only with Bond, the son of a Scotsman from the Highlands, would the eight-year-old Ian Fleming be able one day to join his father at the front.

V
DURNFORD

'Don't *be downhearted about the boys having to grow up without a father.*'
TOM PELLATT to Eve, May 1917

Eve's 'expressive grief' would cause her to paint every room black in the new lodge at Arnisdale, even the lavatory.

The day after learning of Val's death, while 'waiting to see dear old Peter off to school', Robert appealed to his devastated daughter-in-law: 'If Val could speak to you now I am sure he would say "If you love me as I know you do, think of these tender pledges. Continue to devote your care & thought on making them men even as I was." ' Quite shocking to a modern audience but less surprising for that era is how Peter was sent back to Durnford within hours of hearing that his father had been killed.

Tom Pellatt contacted Eve on Peter's return. 'My wife is reading your letter to the boys. It was heartbreaking to read what you wrote. Don't say you wish to die. He would not have wished it. Don't say it, try to live for the children . . . I cannot look at the two, your two, without tears.'

'T.P.' was more upbeat three weeks later. 'Ian brought me a photograph of his father.' Pellatt co-wrote plays that were performed on the London stage under the pseudonym of Wilfred T. Coleby. His letter to Eve ended with the theatrical assurance that 'not for one in a million has this opportunity been given of going out of this world as your husband did, in a manner so noble, for a reason so splendid that ever hereafter so long as the world continues his name stands there written in deathless letters of fame to abide when we are long long forgotten.'

This was Val's image that Eve strained to preserve. She seized on Pellatt's

words and Robert's as her guiding rule – to bring up 'those four young fellows to be like him' – and elevated her dead husband from an absent, pipe-smoking, deer-stalker to an iconic figure in the clouds with whom she alone enjoyed privileged communication. ' "The height holds peace". That is what I put on Mokie's cross, and I would have you keep that before you all your lives.' She had sent Val's photograph for Ian to give to the Pellatts and taught him to say in his prayers '*and make me like Mokie*'. It alarmed Rupert Hart-Davis to see how Eve used 'any sort of blackmail to get her way with the boys. "Your father's spirit has spoken to me," she'd say when particularly keen on getting them to do something they didn't want to.'

The impact of Val's death on his sons cannot be overstated. The need to prove themselves like him consumed them. As well as to escape Eve, it motivated Peter to go exploring through the Amazon and Siberian wildernesses. Christopher Isherwood, travelling with W. H. Auden, met him in China, and after observing the risks Peter took described how 'Auden and I recited passages from an imaginary travel book called *With Fleming to the Front*.' When Michael died from his wounds at Dunkirk, a fellow officer wrote to his widow: 'At least he fulfilled his great ambition, he was worthy of his father.'

The pain of Val's death was intensified by the reading of his will, which Val had signed on 7 August 1914. Robert's letter to Philip about Eve's expectations more than hinted at his involvement with its terms. 'She will, of course, be very comfortable. Val leaves the whole income from his capital which as you know is not small.' On Val's death, his third share in Robert Fleming & Company appears to have devolved to his two partners, Robert and Phil. Eve inherited Pitt House, but there was a condition she cannot have anticipated: the bulk of Val's estate, worth approximately £27 million in today's money, remained in a trust fund to which she had access only if she remained a widow. It would pass to their children were she to remarry, drastically limiting her income to no more than £3,000 per year (some £310,000 today), which would have left her still astoundingly well off. It never incentivised Eve to unshackle this golden leg-iron. On the other hand, it freed her to chafe bitterly about 'a bad will', which did not endear 'Mrs Val' to the other Flemings, and drove her to exploit another clause, giving Eve the power to distribute Val's money among their sons as she saw fit, even to disinherit them. For Ian, the canniness that his grandfather had honed in Dundee had consequences that Robert could not have foreseen.

Already cast as the difficult one, Ian took the blow of Val's death hard. It was not merely that he had to live up to his father's and grandfather's standards. Ian was at the martyred mercy of his histrionic thirty-two-year-old widowed mother: her blackmails, insecurities and extravagant, often punitive whims. Adrian House came to know Ian in Kitzbühel in the 1930s and recognised how 'he was enormously affected by the death of his father. This was one of the original sources of his melancholy.' On top of everything, it threw out of kilter his fox-cub relationship with Peter – who had been told by Eve on the station platform, 'You're responsible now.'

No father. Eve in control, holding the purse strings. Peter second-in-command. If there was a moment when the mould set, it was May 1917. Like Peter Pan, part of Ian remained frozen at the age of eight.

Dada would like to come & see you and play with you on the sands, and build big sand castles to keep the sea back.

During that summer of 1917 on the beach at Bude, Ian met the person who became his lifelong friend, a bronzed boy with bright blue eyes, a wide mouth, and a limp from a tobogganing accident which made one leg three inches shorter than the other. 'He was a polished hazelnut colour all over,' says Marina Warner, who knew him in old age, 'except his lips which were full and purplish – like his feet, where the veins bulged.'

Ivar Bryce was the son of an Anglo-Peruvian father who had made a fortune from guano and then disappeared in the war after his regiment wandered by mistake into Holland. There he was interned, fell in love with a Dutch lady and never came back. Bryce's mother would remarry in 1923 and write detective stories after being effectively thrown out of his childhood home: Moyns Park, a Jacobean manor house on the Essex and Suffolk border, which Bryce was to buy back in 1950 and where he contrived to recapture and preserve 'part of the old England which was engraved in his heart'.

When he met Ian, weeks after Val was killed, Bryce's nanny Miss Horniblow was trying to take the young boy's mind off the news that his father was missing. 'Let's go to the beach.'

Under Granny Kate's eye, the four Fleming boys were building a moated fortress in the sand with what Bryce described as frenzied energy. 'The leaders were Ian and Peter, and I gladly carried out their exact and exacting

orders.' Bryce's first impression of Ian was of 'a most egotistical little boy. There was no question of other architects for his sandcastles. As a child, no matter who the people were, he always wanted his own way.' They did not meet again for another four years.

It may have been on this Cornish holiday that Ian went looking for amethyst in a cave near St Ives, found a two-pound lump of thick, grey, odourless paste, and decided it was ambergris (a secretion from a sperm whale's intestines, and used in perfume manufacture), worth the equivalent today of £70,000 an ounce. 'There would be no scolding or punishments ever again,' Ian fantasised. 'I would not have to go back to my private school or indeed to any more work at all. I had found the shortcut out of all my childish woes.' The waiter at the Tregenna Castle Hotel, to which he scampered back, dropping it on the carpet, explained that Ian's treasure was rancid New Zealand butter from a torpedoed supply ship that had congealed in the salt water. For the remainder of his life, Ian never ceased to view the world in its most exotic colours. All his butter would be ambergris; all his bottle tops, Spanish doubloons – an attitude that was bound to set him up for repeated disappointment. Practically the only memory the young Bond retains of childhood is 'the painful grit of wet sand between young toes when the time came for him to put his shoes and socks back on' and 'the precious little pile of sea shells and interesting wrack on the sill of the bedroom window' accompanied by the shake of a female head. 'No, we'll have to leave that behind, darling, it'll dirty up your trunk.'

After one of his wartime missions to America, Ian told Maud Russell that coming back to England 'was as depressing as those dread days in little boys' lives when the holidays end and the good times, and they have to go back to drab, drear school.'

Ian was at English boarding schools for almost as long as he spent writing novels. Forty years after he left Durnford, he received a letter from his first teacher, Basil Maine. The sight of 'the writing which used to sternly mark my childish papers' undammed a reservoir of memories, starting with another teacher, Arthur Worsley, a bachelor and former county cricketer 'who used to pull my hair out in handfuls'.

Among the faces that streamed back were Ian's first love Hester, and her parents, Tom and Nell Pellatt.

In a temper, 'T.P.' could bellow like a bull, his anger taking on 'the colour and appearance of a lacquered mask of a Chinese war demon', wrote another Durnfordian, 'his features contorted, his full moustache a-bristle, his teeth bared and gnashed in menacing grimace'. Hester witnessed one of these ignitions after Eve sent him a letter. '*Dear Mr Pellatt, Will you make sure Ian cleans his teeth. They were quite green when he returned home from school last term* . . . I remember this threw my father into a towering rage. "Pack the boy's trunk," he shouted. "I won't be written to like this by any boy's mother." It took us all a long time to calm him down.'

Ian claimed: 'I was bullied at school'. He told Ann that he was belted on his first day. When he had asked why, he was told, 'for arriving.' Peter questioned the extent of this. 'I wouldn't say that Ian came in for more than anyone else.' Generally speaking, Ian's 'scoldings' were for misbehaviour. 'I had to write out hundreds of lines of Virgil as punishment,' Ian was reminded in 1957 when visiting the cave near Naples where Aeneas approached the Styx.

Three years into the war, Durnford was a spartan school, if not an infernal one. 'It was very uncomfortable,' said Peter. 'And the food was terrible. Ian always objected to that. I remember his horror when an entire head of a rabbit turned up in some stew.'

The lavatories were reached across a courtyard, and consisted of a long row of earth closets in the open air, and a urinal known as 'Vespasian', which resembled 'a loft for gigantic pigeons'. The wall of Vespasian overlooked the cricket fields. Boys competed in trying to relieve themselves over it by drinking water to build up the pressure.

The dormitories were unheated. Every morning at 7 a.m. Peter and Ian raced in the nude along cold passages and up staircases lit by oil lamps, to jump into the indoor plunge pool on the first floor. In Peter's story of a dying explorer in the frost-bound Kum La pass, the hero recalls Durnford's sub-zero temperatures and the big fireplace at the end of a schoolroom, 'before which little boys warmed the shiny seats of their trousers and those who had colds dried their dirty handkerchiefs, from which the steam rose thinly'. The colds could be terrible. Peter rarely admitted to hardship, but he revealed that 'a boy

died while we were there'. The boy had reported sick with whooping cough 'and the matron just refused to take any notice'. Ian exemplified the school policy in a letter to Eve. 'My coff has grown the whoping coff now, please don't tell Mister Pellat, cause just this morning he said that nun of us had got coffs.'

Beyond the cricket field, a wooded path led to a stone summer house known as The Fort, which became a centre for the games devised by Pellatt. One team was designated to build 'houses' in the woods, the other to dam the stream. 'Ian always chose the stream,' said Hester. 'I can still see him as a very small boy standing up to his armpits in the river in the pouring rain.' In her Durnford novel, *Ever Thine,* she described how spending 'an afternoon in the woods gave one the ardent melancholic intensely receptive sensation that comes when we dream that we can do anything – write a wonderful poem, ride a winged horse, swim an ocean, stir up and lead a crowd of staring faceless people.'

As central to Ian's school universe as The Fort and the woods was what Val had called 'a topping bathing place': Dancing Ledge.

In the mountain of lost Fleming material is black-and-white footage of Peter and Ian leaping naked into the sea. The film was taken on a very hot half-holiday in 1918 by a man in a Guards tie and a leather overcoat. He directed Peter and Ian plus sixty of their fellow pupils to jump, 'registering pleasure', into the clear waters of the Channel from the edge of a rock-pool that 'T.P.' had blasted out of the cliffs. Peter wrote, 'I can well remember the chagrin and resentment with which we learned that this scene would have to be cut, owing to our not having worn bathing dresses.'

The skinny dip was a Durnford ritual. Each afternoon of the summer term, between midday and 1.45 p.m., a crocodile line of white-flannelled boys set off on a forty-five-minute walk to the sea. Smugglers had made the cart track to the ledge. It led between steep bramble-covered mounds concealing Iron Age fortresses, down crumbling limestone steps to the quarried rock shelf. The pool was thirty feet by ten, refreshed at high tide. Every new boy had to swim a length under Pellatt's eccentric tutelage. Dressed in a panama hat, and slung in a canvas noose suspended from a bamboo pole, 'T.P.' cried: 'Kick, now – kick – in, out!'

His daughter assisted in teaching the boys how to swim. Hester took them round to smugglers' caves where sea-birds nested. She led them out to

sea, to turn on their backs and look up 'at the burial ground of the men of the Iron Age'. In her mermaid company, Ian was shown where to find sea anemones and feed them with crumbs. 'There's no bathing like this in the world. None,' she wrote. Ian's challenge was to find another place like it.

A significant event of the summer term was the Great Picnic, with diving competitions and 'flying jumps' from the dunes. The artist and set designer Laurence Irving found Peter and Ian in charge when he returned to his old school on a visit. 'Now the school appeared to be captained efficiently by the Fleming brothers; Peter, as later I might have guessed, had appropriated the transport, goading a donkey with its load of sandwiches, garibaldi biscuits and lemonade to the farm where it was off-loaded to boy-bearers for the last precipitous lap of the picnic path.'

Down on Dancing Ledge, Hester had no sense of time. 'I have only to shut my eyes to see again the group round the tea basket, the stacked heaps of food, the captain of the school and two of his subordinates preparing vast jugs of lemonade, the curious greedy gulls wheeling in and hovering over us, the enamel mugs, the scattered shoes and socks, the china-smooth reds and pinks of the boys' faces above their cream-coloured blazers . . .'

The high point of Ian's school week was Nell's Sunday night reading of an adventure story. This took place in the hall, a large room two storeys high, with an oak staircase to a gallery that led to the Pellatts' private quarters. Perched together in chairs, on window seats, on the stairs, the whole school assembled to hear Hester's mother read aloud from *Treasure Island*, *Moonfleet*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* – and in Ian's final year, *Bulldog Drummond* by Sapper (the pen-name of H. C. McNeile). Dressed in an elegant tea gown, Nell lay on the long sofa with her silk-stockinged feet up over the laps of two boys who were required to tickle them. 'Considerable prestige was conferred by this honour,' recalled Nicholas Elliott. 'Boys competed to be the lucky pair.'

Ian sat enthralled, listening to Nell change her voice for each character. On sweltering evenings, she read aloud under the chestnut trees on the lawn. Tales of pirates and buried treasure and galleons stranded in the Sargasso Sea. Her 'special' voices became a part of the children's lives, wrote Hester. 'I remember a rich, bubbling voice for Mr Bultitude; a creepy dark one for Long John Silver . . .'

The effect of this Sunday ritual on Ian, his first real taste of story-telling, is worth stressing. Elliott wrote: 'Not one of Nell's successive audiences would read again those books she brought to life without recalling the tone and inflexion of her voice, the thrill of her delivery of the last line that precluded a week's suspense.'

Out on the playing field, Ian was starting to emulate the athletic skills of Robert and Val. 'I am in an awfully good bait about the sports because I have won the hurdles.' Not only the hurdles but the long and triple jump. 'What I am in the best bate about is that I beat the whole school by 1 foot 3 inches & I jumped 18 foot 10 inches.' With any luck, he would get a cup, he wrote to Eve – 'because I do want to repay you by getting a little Renown at any rate at sports & I would be so glad if only to repay you for always being so naughty.'

To be renowned at sports gave Ian the hope of blunting her disapproval. Illustrated with a drawing of 'me long jumping', Ian made a list of resolutions to pacify his mother:

1 I promise not to be naughty at all
2 tell lies
3 be rude
4 not to say nasty things to you
5 I promise to be very good always
6 to help you
7 work at school
8 not to be greedy
9 not to worry you
10 not to be disobedient

He was unable to keep even one of these promises.

By contrast, Pellat had identified Ian's older brother as 'a brilliantly clever child' whose précis of Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* Pellatt kept as a model. 'When Peter was with me, I felt "in my bones" that he would distinguish himself quite early in life.'

In 1920, after his 'effortless assumption of responsibility as head boy', Peter went on to Eton, failing to gain his expected scholarship because at

exam time he was in bed with measles caught at a circus. It was all very last minute. Eve suddenly discovered that Val had not put their names down at birth 'and there was something of a panic to get us in'.

Aged twelve, Ian now enjoyed his first Peter-free year. His behaviour improved. Hester said: 'It was difficult to go on being naughty at a school where you could really do what you liked.' He won a shelf of sporting trophies, including a couple of prizes for golf on the course that 'T.P.' had laid out between the playing fields and woods. Deep in the woods, Ian swapped damming the stream for house-building; his playhouse in the trees was an early prototype of the one he erected three decades later in Jamaica. He assured his mother: 'My house is getting on alright. My spots have nearly gone and I am so glad.'

The last meaningful ceremony at Durnford took place on the final evening of the summer term in July 1921. This was 'T.P.'s pi-jaw'. Ian was summoned to the headmaster's room adjoining the hall, and there in the dim lamplight he was initiated by 'T.P.' into the mysteries of sex. 'You have no sister. If you had, you would see that where you have something dangling down in front, she has a hole. If you want to have a baby, you put what you have dangling down into her hole and you relieve yourself into it. Goodbye and good luck . . .'

The irony here is that the person who aroused these mysteries in Ian was Hester. 'He had a passion for the Headmaster's daughter,' said Mary Pakenham, to whom Ian later confided that Hester was 'the only woman I have ever really been in love with'.

With Hester, Ian had built a house in the woods. They had dived together off Dancing Ledge, explored caves, discovered the secrets of the sea. He had held Hester's waist in dance classes, wearing a white shirt with a number stitched in red. He told her long afterwards that 'his number Twenty-six had become a symbol of good fortune and that he constantly and successfully betted on it during his visits to Monte Carlo'.

A breathless kiss in the dim half-light
The last soft touch of a lingering hand
Dreams which we shared with a careless love
Schemes for the future, minutely planned.

Ian was in his final term when he composed his poem to Hester. Another thirty years would go by before he again experienced such emotions. 'So you see, my sweet, I am lost and gone and sold down the river,' he wrote to Ann Rothermere in 1946, 'and I haven't felt like this since the headmaster's daughter when I was twelve and lying in a field of mustard with the sun in my eyes eating a piece of plum cake which she had stolen for me.' Hester had afterwards married a man who had then run away with a gym teacher from Bournemouth.

On Ian's last night, after they sang 'Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us,' accompanied on the upright piano beneath the staircase, 'T.P.' turned to address the leavers, a group that included Ian, Reynolds Stone and five other boys headed for Eton.

'I've only this to say – try in the best sense, to *enjoy* as much of your lives as you can . . . try to be alive to everything that comes your way, and to get something out of it, and then nothing you do – nothing you feel – will be wasted. Whatever you are now, whatever you become, is your responsibility.' Pellatt hoped they would grow up 'to take the place in some measure of the beloved "special" ones we have lost in the war'.

Four years had passed since Ian had presented Val's photograph to 'T.P.' The pressure for him to be more like Mokie had not lessened as he prepared to join Peter at Eton.

VI
ETON

'English public schools are supposed to grow people up very quickly and teach them how to behave.'

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME

Eton College, founded in 1440 by Henry VI on the edge of Windsor, principally for the education of seventy poor boys, had a view of the royal castle across the Thames. When Ian arrived, the 1,118 pupils, all male, were distributed among twenty-nine boarding houses. The fees were £230 a year (approximately £12,200 today), and boys generally stayed for five years. In many cases, they were marked, as Ian was, for life.

The novelist Phyllis Bottome taught Ian in Kitzbühel immediately after he left Eton and was Ian's 'first contact with a "famous writer"'. In her 1946 novel *The Lifeline,* she based the character of Mark on Ian, after observing how much of his identity came from being an Etonian. 'You said the word "Eton", and instantly, Mark thought, the Castle walls were there, the Park, the silver gleam, the Castle itself, moving silently into the mind with the stateliness of a swan rounding the curve of a river. You could turn your back on them – as many boys did – oblivious, contemptuous, self-absorbed; but long years afterwards – all over the world in the strangest places, if someone said that word again, up the picture sprang, and there was an emotion at the bottom of the heart to match it – so that for ever and wherever you were, you felt fundamentally linked to that unspoken symbol.'

Hilary Bray, whose name Bond uses as an alias in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, once returned to Eton with Ian, who, on inhaling the scents of cricket pads, urine and cabbage, claimed that he was instantly carried back to adolescence. ' "Ah yes, it even smells the same." But it didn't. And all the