

Author's note: In channelling my inner Dame Judi I have imagined that I am James Bond's new boss.

A New Mission

“Good morning Mr Bond. Please sit down.”

He was taller than I had imagined, still handsome with hair just beginning to go grey. His immaculately cut suit and the faint drift of an expensive French cologne in the air completed the picture of smooth sophistication I had been led to expect.

He sat opposite and looked intently at me, as if it was me that was being assessed and not the other way round.

“I have read your file 007 and I can see that you have completed a number of dangerous and important missions on behalf of Her Majesty's Government”

“That's true Ma'am but the danger was always exaggerated and the success of the missions was my pleasure”.

“You need not try to charm me 007. I can assure you that as your new boss and one who has worked in espionage for a very long time, I am immune to such tactics”. This, of course, was a lie. The man could charm the birds off the trees.

I flicked open a new file and passed him a photograph.

“I have a new task for you and I cannot stress too much how important it is that you should succeed.

The woman in the photograph is Dr. Lydia Cheung. She is currently working as an epidemiologist for the Chinese Government and was, until recently, leading the team working on the production of a Super Vaccine which, it is expected, will be able to vanquish all corona viruses. She is the most highly qualified scientist in this field.

The problem for us all is that she has disappeared and our intelligence network tells us that she has been kidnapped by a new group calling itself Carpe Mundo which I am sure you know James means.....”

“Yes Ma'am – Seize the World”

“Your mission is to find her and to bring her safely home. Our scientists would wish to de-brief her before returning her to China. “

James Bond studied the photograph and looked up at me with a knowing smile.

“Dr. Cheung is certainly a beautiful young woman M. What can you tell me about her?”

“Lydia Cheung is the daughter of an English mother and a Chinese father. She was educated in this country and graduated with a double first from Oxford before going on to Harvard, where she turned down a professorship in her specialism, in favour of a top research job with the Chinese Government.”

“Excellent” said James. “She’s beautiful, intelligent and obviously speaks English. This is going to be fun.” The smile that spread across his face showed that he still relished the challenge of the chase, in more ways than one.

“Oh really”, I snapped, “Can you not take this seriously? The health and survival of millions of people depends on your success.”

James Bond stood and gave me back the photograph.

“Don’t worry M”, he said, “I understand the importance of this mission. Leave it to me.”

With that he turned and strode out of my office, leaving me shaken but not stirred.